

Indianapolis Motor Speedway Media Conference

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Alexander Rossi Christian Lundgaard Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Wrapping up the Gallagher Grand Prix here at the world famous Indianapolis Motor Speedway Road Course. We are joined by the now-once-again points leader in the NTT INDYCAR Series, Will Power, driver of the Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet, his 92nd career podium today, which ties him with Dario Franchitti for seventh all time, seventh podium of the season and retakes the points lead and now has a nine-point advantage over Marcus Ericsson.

Congratulations on another podium. You got the points lead again. You've got to feel pretty good coming out of here.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I do, yeah. Considering the start of the race, yep, great recovery, man. Great recovery. It's amazing some of the runs we've had this year. But yep, just kept my head and did what I could in the situation. I had to get a big fuel number and go as fast as I can.

Very good day. Good day for the team all around.

THE MODERATOR: Outside of Iowa and here, I know you were begging for starts of races up front because it didn't happen there for a while where you didn't have to make up big ground like you did at Mid-Ohio, and so far so good the last three races.

WILL POWER: Yeah, that's right. It's always hard starting fourth or the outside row at this track. You get -- I don't know, you get freight trained. So it's tough going into 1. We didn't make the most of that, but we definitely made the most of the rest of the race.

THE MODERATOR: Final restart and all that, at least towards the end, did you have anything for Rossi?

WILL POWER: No, not with the fuel number I had to get. I had to get a big fuel number because we pitted five laps

before everyone.

THE MODERATOR: And played catch-up a little bit after that because of chasing the fuel?

WILL POWER: Yeah, pretty much all the way to the end we were on a number that was definitely holding us back. We had definitely a lot of pace in hand.

THE MODERATOR: We welcome all of you joining us on Zoom. We'll get to your questions in a matter of moments. Let's begin with questions in person.

Q. Will, you kind of said you made what you had today and you referenced in your post-race interview that you've been playing the long game all season. Are you pleased with where the long game has gotten you with four races to go?

WILL POWER: Yeah, definitely. It's not necessarily the long game, it's just that sort of attitude switch where you know these races are long, the season is long, and you've got to make the most of every situation, even if you're fighting for like 12th. If that's your day to finish 12th, well, finish 12th, not 24th.

Yeah, it's certainly working very well.

Q. You also kind of referenced outside that there's a point at which it switches now in the last four races. Did you have to sort of race points for a week or two here now? How do you look at the rest of the way?

WILL POWER: That totally depends on the situation, how you qualify, who's in front of you, where you're running, and where the guys that you are fighting or you believe will be the people or the drivers that you have to fight at the end. It becomes a little more obvious with three to go.

The next couple races you've got to know, okay, this is definitely the lead guys that we're racing. We've got to cover them on strategies and such.

Yeah, it's still not completely clear. A lot of guys still clustered up -- I think there's probably still five guys are out in the game, so still a long way to go.

Q. Otto told us Thursday that he feels like it's going to

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go down to Laguna obviously but with five guys. Do you expect the same thing? Are you keeping your eye on anybody in particular or do you feel like it's going to be five guys all the way to the end?

WILL POWER: I mean, that's impossible to predict, but it's still pretty close right now. It will always -- it feels like it's always going to go down to the last race. I expect to be having a fight at Laguna. Yeah, we'll see how it plays out. Impossible to predict in this series. There's just too many fast guys, good teams, good drivers, everything. It's just try and pick a winner each week and try and pick a pole sitter. Impossible.

THE MODERATOR: Just 46 points separating the top 5 right now as an illustration of how tight it is.

Q. It's been a while since you've been this deep into the season as the points leader. It happened a lot early in your career. Do you think that experience is beneficial to you to know what it takes to get through the day-to-day pressure that's going to come with that?

WILL POWER: Absolutely. So different to what it was back then. Just know the game so well. Mentally just miles ahead mentally in every respect than I was back then.

Yeah, just a tremendous amount of experience in this series.

Q. Also, I hate to use the term "wild card," but because of its unpredictable nature, do you see next week's race at Nashville as being one of the ones that could cause somebody to go over the cliff?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I hope no one does go over the bridge (laughter), but it could be like Toronto where it could be an absolute crazy race, but it could also be very green. You just can't predict. You don't know. We don't know.

Obviously last year, yeah, with track blockages, this sort of thing, it was pretty crazy, but sometimes a race gets into a flow and it goes. But honestly I think if it goes yellow, it's going to breed more yellows for sure. That's when people go for the big moves.

Yeah, we'll see what happens.

Q. What was it like racing behind the Great Dane today?

WILL POWER: I could only see him as a dot in the distance. He took off. He was too fast.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously joined by Christian Lundgaard, driver of the No. 30 Shield Cleaners Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing Honda. Best career finish, first podium. 92 career podiums for the guy to your right. You pick up your first in the NTT INDYCAR Series today. Congratulations. How does this feel?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Thank you. It feels amazing. I think the best feeling right now is that the team really deserves it. They've worked super hard, and we've had such a struggling beginning to the season, and I think coming to Toronto was when things started to change. We saw sort of a streak where we started to perform better. Even Road America, Mid-Ohio was there. We were on the edge of top 10. To come here and finish second, I think the team deserves every bit of it.

I'm just a guy doing my job really. I want to win, so I try as best I can every event.

Q. A lot of us remember when you showed up here sight unseen for your first Grand Prix on the road course. You qualified fourth. Is there something about this race course?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Must be. I'm not going to lie, I did qualify the exact same car and race the exact same car, so that car seems to work.

No, I think Rossi and Herta did seem to have some more power down than we did today, and I think that's what killed our rear tires and they were just able to take off, and as soon as they've taken off, we're just managing the gap.

I think it was looking like a P3 today but I ended up finishing P2, so I'm obviously super happy for the team.

Q. Yesterday or earlier this weekend, you told me that it was important to execute well, especially at this track, especially after what happened at Iowa. How critical was this weekend for getting everything going for the rest of the season and especially with Rookie of the Year because you're still leading David and everybody else in that standing, in that battle?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, it surely helped in the rookie championship for sure. But no, I mean, this is exactly what I meant. We needed to execute the weekend. We knew coming into this weekend that this was the track we were going to be at least the most competitive at together with perhaps Toronto where we ended up being very competitive.

We came into this event and knowing we were going to have a car that was able to finish in the good end of top 10.

I mean, I wouldn't say we overachieved, but we for sure got everything out of the package we had.

It's a bit unfortunate that Jack and Graham were unable to get further in qualifying because I think for sure they had a car that was able to go further, as well.

For me to get it done, it just proves that the car was there, which is why I really feel like the team deserves this podium, and I hope there's more to come.

Q. Graham started 17th and gained 10 spots. Jack has won here on the road course. How much have they helped you getting a couple of other things fixed up just right to be able to get second place here?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I mean, like I mentioned before, the car I raced today was my qualifying car from last year, so that specific car is a car I developed myself with absolutely no knowledge. I came in last year and just qualified this car, and it seemed to be quick.

Keeping that car for this year I think was a benefit for us and for me myself knowing the car very well.

We have tried to bring it to other tracks and it didn't seem to work, so that's something we need to figure out.

Q. Will, you and Pato and Sato both pitted underneath the first yellow. You're here in third, Pato finished 12th and Sato was 15th. What was the major differentiator? Was it tire strategy or something else that worked well for you?

WILL POWER: I think it was our pace on the fuel mileage we had to get. Definitely we were able to make some hay just getting big numbers that we had to get. We had a great car. Car was really fast. Yeah.

Q. It seems like something wild happens to you pretty much every other race this season, whether it be qualifying or in the race, and you were able to bounce back from that so well. Just wondered if it's kind of crept into your mind yet that you feel like the favorite in the championship based off that because you're able to come back from some of these crazy situations?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, to this point we've had a fantastic year, obviously leading the points right now. Just got to keep doing what I'm doing. I know the game so well, been in it so long. We have great potential to win the championship, but there's four other guys that also do. It's going to be hard fought to the end.

I'm enjoying it. I really am.

Q. Christian, can you talk about your development as a driver since you've come over here? I know you've competed in a lot of different support championships in Europe and internationally and then you've come over here and taken to it very quickly with your performance last season. How have you developed as a driver since you've come into INDYCAR with this new car, new championship, atmosphere I guess, as well?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, one thing that I'm a little annoyed about is that every time race day comes, Graham always seems to find a way to finish ahead. Didn't happen today, luckily.

But no, honestly, Graham has helped me massively, understanding how much you can push the tires. He's extremely good on the long run, making the tires last, making the fuel last, and just being competitive. Even in a car that might not be competitive enough to be there, we've had some good results.

As a team, the drivers work very well together. I'm very pleased to have Jack and Graham by my side and helping me. It's also good for the team that we now have a podium because I think just for the future, it's going to be a massive confidence boost for everyone to keep digging. This is the right path. We're going in the right direction. And also for the two other drivers, Jack and Graham. Like you said, Graham had a good race today, but he always has a good race. We just need to get that qualifying car further up, and having the first Fast Six of the season this season, we need to keep digging.

The two other cars had a little more potential, made mistakes, didn't push hard enough in the first lap. We need to eliminate those issues and get on with it.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously joined by the Gallagher Grand Prix champion, as well. We welcome in the driver of the No. 27 NAPA Auto Parts Auto Nation Honda for Andretti Autosport. Congratulations, Alexander Rossi.

I'm sure you know the numbers, but first win in some 49 starts, Road America in 2019. We added up the days; 1,133 days ago was the last time you won. Eighth career win, fourth driver, as well, to win on the road course here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the Indianapolis 500, of course Will Power being the other one along with Simon Pagenaud and Scott Dixon. Finally back in Victory Lane; how does it feel?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, it's a lot of relief I think is the

main word. We've had some race wins that we've thrown away for sure, and we've had some weekends where we've just kind of not had the pace, and for whatever reason.

I think that we knew things were trending in a good direction this year, and we had a solid test here a month or so ago. I think the one constant has been just the mental strength of the whole team. As challenging as it is for me, it's also hard for them. They go in every day and work their butts off, and when they don't get results, it's hard for them, as well.

I think as a unit, that's one of our strengths is being able to continue to just push forward. It's a big team win and a big thank you to the whole organization. Obviously the cars were fast.

It sucks what happened to Colton but I've had my share of things. It comes full circle, I guess, sometimes, so it's good to be up there.

WILL POWER: It builds up and you just get all of it in one week. Just luck.

THE MODERATOR: Part of the game.

Q. Will, a couple laps in when you're in 16th, what's going through your mind? What's your approach in a situation like that?

WILL POWER: Well, at that point you're starting to think of what can we do, if there's an alternate strategy, then the yellow comes and you're like absolutely, all right, I think the guys understand, and we talked about it before the race, like we'll pit, and try and make it on two more stops from there. Yeah, big fuel number, and that was a great call.

Yeah, never got upset or -- just yep, that's what it is. That's how it rolls in this series. Just kept going.

Q. Obviously you knew you had a chance to take over first place in the standings; is that something on your mind during the race? Is that something you try not to think about? What's your perspective on that?

WILL POWER: You're just focusing on the race. You are aware of championship contenders if you're around one or you do understand if there's one -- somebody racing behind you that you're competing for the championship, you'll definitely do your absolute best to keep him behind, but if it's someone else, you've got to save big fuel, you might not fight him as hard.

Q. Will, you talked a while ago about seeing a dot in front of you, ahead of you, as opposed to maybe

getting up on somebody's tailpipe. When did that settle into your brain that third was going to be the best you could do today? How do you actually settle that into your brain?

WILL POWER: Well, when it all reset and all those guys pit, I had to pit before it went yellow. When we reset, it was, okay, we don't have to get as big a fuel number now, and we're P3, so if I can finish P3, that's a great day.

Q. Alex, do you feel like a weight has been lifted? What is the feeling you have, because we've all seen your close calls, et cetera, pitfalls over the last three years. What is that sense?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Relief, right? Yeah, I don't know how else to describe it. It's human nature to start to question things when it continually doesn't kind of fall your way. You just have to remember that you've done it before, you can do it again type of thing. It's nice to reestablish that, and this sport is so much about you're as good as your last race, it doesn't matter who you are. You have to go out there every weekend and kind of reprove yourself.

It's nice to kind of be back up there, but we have another one in five days, six days, so it all resets again.

Q. Christian, when is your Las Vegas birthday celebration going to take place?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: It's straight after Laguna Seca. Shield Cleansers gave me a trip to Las Vegas as a birthday present because it was my 21st birthday last Saturday.

WILL POWER: Are we all invited? You should do it around when Super Nationals are on around Vegas, the kart race.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Oh, it is. It's straight Laguna to Vegas. Should we just invite the whole grid? I know Graham isn't coming because he's got a second on the way that week.

WILL POWER: If you could get most of the grid --

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I won't tell you where I'll be staying then.

Q. Did ask them or was this a surprise?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: No, that was actually a pure present. They brought me to the Kentucky Derby, and they thought I liked it, which I did, so they thought, why not try Vegas. It's going to be an expensive trip because it's --

WILL POWER: Are they paying for all of it?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I'm pretty sure, yeah. I hope so. I've got to ask them.

Q. Alex, I asked you this on Wednesday so I'll try to frame it a new way, but you've won the Indy 500 with Andretti, you've won several times with them, you've contended for championships. How does it feel to get this win before you exit?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, it would have been a pretty sad story if we weren't able to. That's not the goal, right, because I'm not really thinking about '23. Like you're thinking about just what you can still accomplish in 2022.

But yes, I'm happy that we don't have to have that conversation of like, oh, well, it's been cool, too bad we couldn't win in three, four -- whatever, so I'm glad we don't have to have that conversation.

But yeah, I've had the majority of the same group of guys, probably 70 percent of the same group of guys since 2017. As I said before, it's been hard for them, as well, so it's great to do it as a unit and as a group on the 27 car, to kind of get this behind us, and hopefully we can have a pretty strong run to the end of the year.

Q. In '23 as you arrive with your new team, are you glad we're not going to be asking you these questions in January about when the streak is going to end?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's great to start the clock over, I guess, of you guys counting. A thousand days, cool.

THE MODERATOR: Will, I wouldn't make all the plans because if you win the championship you might be busy the week after Laguna.

WILL POWER: If you win the championship then you definitely go to Vegas.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: He's definitely going to Vegas then.

THE MODERATOR: Is that right? We're going to move everything to the Lundgaard party in Vegas? Fair enough.

Q. Will, this maturation process, you're more settled, you keep talking about experience. How much of that is on the track and also off the track? Beau is getting a little older, the family man thing --

WILL POWER: Yeah, it is on both sides. It simply feels like the older you get, the more relaxed you get, just

understand how life is. Life is not easy, it doesn't flow that way like you expect when you're younger that everything should just go right, but it simply just never does. That's just the way it is. You get more relaxed about that.

Q. Do you enjoy moments like this a little bit more as you get older?

WILL POWER: Oh, yeah, yeah, I'm loving the racing. It's a privilege to feel nervous before a race because there's going to be a time that you don't get to do that for decades. Some people never get to do that.

Q. You get to go into full dad mode.

WILL POWER: Yeah, exactly.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Will Power, and Christian Lundgaard, you guys are good to go. More questions for Alexander Rossi?

Q. You scored your first win here, you didn't really know anything about this place, what it meant, and now you end your long streak and you know more about this place. What are your feelings about Indianapolis Motor Speedway?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, it's a hard one to put into words. Every time I come here, I just appreciate it more and more, whether it's for an event -- I mean, obviously the 500, but whether it's this event, a sponsorship thing, a media thing, giving laps around the track. Like it's just such an amazing place for us.

For me, being my seventh season in the series and knowing what it means to the NTT INDYCAR Series, as well, yeah. I kind of was hoping on the Road America weekend for it to kind of start and end this drought or whatever there, but it actually ended here was actually kind of a cooler story. To be able to go up on the lift with the guys and let them experience that because that didn't exist in 2016, there's a lot of special things about this place. The fan turnout here for us as INDYCAR drivers is always amazing, and seeing everyone with the merch and the autograph session, it's just a very special thing today for sure.

Q. Does winning on the road course feel the same as winning on the oval?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, not quite. But it's still an awesome thing. Like I got another ring, which I didn't know you got a ring for this event, so that's cool. Your picture will get to be on the Pagoda going into May next year, which is great, unless they change that, which will piss me off. I'll

put my own picture up.

But no, there's just so many things that come with winning at Indy that you don't get at another event, so it is more special than other races, but no, it's still a far ways behind the oval.

Q. It looked like there was a good amount of time where it was going to be you and Colton duking it out for the win. Were you prepared for that? Do you think you still would have been here as the winner if Colton continued on?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I mean, maybe. I think Colton and Christian and I were definitely like the class of the field in terms of pace. Our first set of tires was pretty miserable, actually, which was strange because when we put on the used reds, which in theory should be worse, like the car came alive, and we started going quite a bit quicker than Colton and we were closing that gap down.

Obviously he was going to have to run a set of tires that was not good for him in qualifying yesterday, so maybe it would have swung back our direction. I don't know. He's very hard to beat. Obviously both of us have pretty much identical race cars, so there wasn't going to be any big separation there. So it would have been a hard fight for sure.

It sucks that he had a mechanical. Like you don't want to see that to a teammate, 100 percent, a teammate that's a friend, as well. It's not fun to watch. But at the same time, we've had our share of sad situations. It's good to go our way.

Q. TV focused I think about five laps to go on some smoke coming off the inside of your left rear. Was that just buildup bouncing off the undertray kind of thing --

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I'm glad I didn't see that.

Q. Did they tell you?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, they didn't, which was great. Yeah, no, I had no idea. Good thing.

Q. We talked about this a little bit yesterday. Being here so much, having run so many races here, does that actually make it -- one, more relief, but the frustrating part, not being able to knock this off, now you're like, okay, I can have a decent weekend and be fine with something else there?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know that I know what you mean.

Q. Let's put it on the whole season then. Taking this win now, now that you've checked that box, can you just be far more relaxed going into the rest of the season?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I mean, I don't know that we've been stressed. We've had a lot of good runs. It's obviously been in the back of our mind. But no, I don't think it changes anything.

I think if anything we've been kind of chilling since May, but as a group, the uncertainty about what I was doing was kind of gone, the performance of the car was good, everyone was happy, so everything was pretty straightforward.

I think since then, everything has been pretty good. We were close in Detroit, close at Road America, and there's been some chaos between then, but I think the core incentive and attitude and motivation from the team has stayed the same.

Q. Let's talk about the team just a little bit more; you talked on the podium about how happy you were for them. I think you hugged everybody before you even talked to TV. How much does this really mean for the team itself? Is it more for them or more for you?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think equally both. It's been hard for all of us. It's been hard for Michael. It's been hard for Rob, the sponsors. When we started this kind of three-year journey in '19, this wasn't the expectation for the past two and a half years. So that's been hard on everyone.

I think that it's a nice reward for everyone. No one ever quit. No one ever stopped, oh, Alex is leaving, so who cares anymore. That was never a thing, and I'm so appreciative to Michael and all the engineering staff for continuing to push to give me the best possible equipment, because I've been in situations in the past where that's not necessarily been the case, and I think that that is a testament to them as people and as a race team, and we couldn't be here without them, so it's a huge win for myself but definitely for all the 27 guys, as well.

THE MODERATOR: I do want to mention that the PeopleReady Force for Good Challenge continues this season in the NTT INDYCAR Series, so with the win, \$10,000 split between yourself, the team and your favorite charity, and my understanding it's Leilani Mae Horse Rescue; is that correct?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: That and the Drive Pink thing, yes.



THE MODERATOR: Can you talk a little bit about both of those?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, so obviously Auto Nation, the Drive Pink campaign is raising funds for cancer research. That's a huge thing for them. They've raised an incredible amount of money over the years, and motorsports is just a small arm of what they do to represent that Drive Pink campaign.

I grew up with horses and my mom was always into horses and rode horses, and I love animals. A friend of mine introduced me to this horse rescue down in Charlotte and they're doing a great thing. It's a private foundation and I want to support them in any way I can.

Q. When you hear drivers talk about winless droughts, you get towards the end of a race and you're winning, do you start feeling like what can go wrong? Do you play a mental game towards the end?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, I was getting pretty pissy, stressy with the 4 car there. I just -- it's not just me. There's a lot of guys in this series that have had issues with coming down to the end of the race and lap cars are using overtake to stay in front, and it's just very frustrating. That was the only thing because I saw my lead got cut in half, and we burned 60 percent of the overtake we had left to try and get around a car that is in last. That's very upsetting. That was the only thing I was stressed about.

But once we were able to kind of deal with that, I think the pace of our car was still superior, so it was just about finishing the last seven or eight laps of the race.

Q. You talked about how it's difficult to pass back markers. How difficult and frustrating was it for you at the end of the race?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I don't understand. I get it on ovals a little bit because you can -- you want to try and stay on the lead lap to hopefully catch a yellow because you don't want to lose a lap on an oval because on an oval theoretically if you get that yellow and come back to the back of the grid you can in theory make your way forward again if you have a good car. On a road course you're not going to restart in 24th and drive to a position -- that doesn't exist, so it's very frustrating to compromise someone's day for no good reason.

We talked about it. I'm not the only one that deals with it. I'm not saying that that person doesn't have a right to fight for their lead lap, but when they're able to use overtake to defend you, I just think that we're missing something as a series. We need to implement a rule where if you're a lap

down or you're going a lap down, you shouldn't be able to use overtake to defend the leader. That's all.

THE MODERATOR: That sounds like an off-season discussion.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: For sure, for sure.

Q. You've battled against many veteran drivers for wins in the INDYCAR Series over the last five, six years you've been here. Is there anything different mentally that goes through your head when you've got someone that you've never fought against for a race win behind you two, three, four seconds back or as laps wind down?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, not really. Everyone in this series is good enough to go out there and win a race, so you've got to treat them as if it's Scott or Josef or Will. It doesn't matter. You can't take anything for granted. He made sure that he kept the pressure on all race. Like we were a fast car, and he kept the gap between two and four seconds, so a huge hats off to Christian and RLL and the effort that they did, and to get a Honda one-two is pretty cool.

Q. How much momentum does that give you going into the final stretch of the season, and also, what track are you most looking forward to in the final couple of races of the year?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: All of them except Gateway. Like I think we'll be very strong in Nashville and Portland and Laguna for sure, so I don't think that's even a question. Gateway I hope we can pull something out.

It is good momentum. It's great to kind of put this whole thing behind us and just go out there and focus on finishing off the year as strong as we can.

Q. Obviously your tenure at Andretti Autosport is coming to a close. What's your favorite memory or top two favorite memories of the team?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Mid-Ohio is certainly a memory.

I mean, obviously the 500. I can't not -- that's far and above No. 1.

I mean, I was so lucky for so many years to drive with Ryan and Marco, and they became such good friends of mine and people that I rely on in my personal and professional life, both those guys. I think those relationships, the relationship with Michael and Rob Edwards and my engineer Jeremy, those are things I'll



have with me for the rest of my life, which is very special.
I'm grateful to them for the opportunity.

