

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday September 18, 2016

Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll begin our Verizon IndyCar Series post race press conference. Joined now by Will Power, our championship runner-up.

Will, I know it's probably not exactly how you wanted this race to end, but you're smiling, you seem pretty relaxed. Your perspective on how things shook out today.

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was obviously disappointing to have that gearbox problem. I think Simon was going to be tough to beat as far as the championship goes. Maybe we could have beaten him for the win, but I doubt it if everything just played out as it was.

Yeah, I mean, that was that. But honestly it was still a very strong year. Four race wins. I won a 500-mile race. Not the right one, but still a 500-miler.

Yeah, it's a 1-2-3 for the team, which is really good, considering how it finished last year. I think the team is really strong now. Yeah, another second place (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: A lot your comments right now and really this whole weekend from your teammates have been team-oriented celebrating Penske's 50th anniversary. Unless things went really crazy, it was likely going to be a 1-2-3 finish in the championship. How does it feel to know you've played a very strong role in that?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I just think after last year, only winning three races as a team, we were so determined to come back. We all contributed. To win 10 out of 16 races is pretty strong as a team. Also 11 of the poles.

I thought when Simon joined the team it was going to be really hard for anyone to beat us in the championship for a while, especially with how strong Chevy is, how great their body kit and engine are, and obviously the team itself.

Yeah, so it's a great position to be in as a driver.

THE MODERATOR: With that Chevy also wrapped up the manufacturer's championship today. Your thoughts on their relationship with Team Penske?

WILL POWER: Yeah, we're so blessed to have ended up at Chevy as a manufacturer because they're first class. I just think those guys do everything the right way. They don't miss anything. If they ever fall behind, they catch up real quick, get themselves back to the front.

Yeah, a great organization. To partner that with Team Penske, it's a pretty fierce team.

THE MODERATOR: Are you ready for the off-season, a little break?

WILL POWER: Yeah, ready to meet my son. Well, that's not going to be a break. It's going to be interesting to see how the whole sleep pattern thing works. He's going to be on our sleep pattern (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Will.

Q. During the post race interviews, Alexander was talking about how he'd like to come race for Penske. Looking ahead, you talked about how with Simon on the team, you guys have such a strong core to continue Penske's tradition of winning. Does any of that get mixed up, the chemistry get disarranged with somebody new coming in, having three cars instead of four?

WILL POWER: I think when Simon came in, I thought it would be pretty good for the team just because I knew he would be very competitive. I've been teammates with him before. Just added to the fierce driver lineup that it was.

But, yeah, someone else coming, I don't know. I'm not sure of any of that. I think everything is just staying the same. Honestly, I don't know.

Q. You have a baby at home. Things are going bad. Does it enter into your mind, it was a longshot anyway, does that enter your mind on the racetrack?

WILL POWER: No. I was just focused on the job at hand, trying to get the most out of the day. I think we kind of executed that in the first pit stop, jumping Helio. Then it was a matter of saving enough fuel to do it in two more stops. Unfortunately we have the miss-shift

thing. Obviously at that point I knew I was not going to win the championship, so then it was just a matter of salvaging second.

As soon as I get out of the car, see my wife pregnant, start thinking of that.

Q. You had a frustrating day. Would this be on the top of your list?

WILL POWER: No. Just considering the year that it was for me, that I won four races, I've had much more frustrating ends to seasons than this, I can promise you that. Leading the points, something happening, that's happened to me.

It was still a great year.

Q. Talk about how has this championship battle been different fighting with Simon as opposed to somebody who is not with Team Penske.

WILL POWER: It hasn't really been different. I was just clawing back for so long, I was never in command. It was just a matter of constantly trying to get more points. Yeah, so it was a different type of championship in that respect because you had to come back from a pretty big points deficit. I'm not sure I've done that before.

It was very calm for me this year, very calm, with the way I raced, clean. Yeah, it was a different style of racing for me, for sure, in comparison to what I had done over the previous two years where I was quite aggressive.

Q. Is this a new, mature Will Power?

WILL POWER: Yeah, well, it just comes with experience, I think. Dario was so good at that. I was so quick, won a lot of races, but he won the championship. He was just very experienced and good at that. Yeah, I was just talking to him about it before.

Q. More fun?

WILL POWER: It's definitely fun attacking. It is just a game of chess almost as you go along through every race, and you work out the move that's worth doing and what's not. Once you start hitting the marks every time, it feels good.

Q. The clutch control unit, can you tell me what you were trying to do to get it restarted.

WILL POWER: I don't know what they did or if they changed the box or the computer box, the control unit. Basically I shifted, we call it a daub to daub, the gears don't engage properly, then it got stuck in gear, then it wouldn't shift, and then it went into anti-stall mode at the hairpin because it got down to a certain rev. It just wouldn't get out of anti-stall mode. Stayed in neutral.

It's dangerous, that's a fast section. I was really worried. There was nothing else I could really do.

Yeah, it's tough, frustrating at that point. You just want it to click into gear and go. It wouldn't. You just watch people roll by. That's it, championship's over, yeah.

Q. It seemed like you were doing fine pace-wise. Did this just give you no warning when you were going up or down the hill? Normally can you reset something?

WILL POWER: Yeah, sometimes you can put it into like a manual mode they call it on the dash where - what do they call that - emergency mode. Tried that. Did nothing. Even switched it off, then switched it back on. Actually the clutch reengaged, then it went right back into anti-stall mode.

Yeah, there was nothing I could do. Just a strange occurrence. That was that.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: I'd be surprised if that one's happened before. These things come up. I had things like this even with the old car where it got stuck in gear, suddenly it corrected itself. But, yeah, try to understand why so it won't happen again.

Q. I know the season just ended, but when you get a chance to look back on it and reflect, what are some of the highlights you'll be looking to? Individually, do you look at this season in a positive way?

WILL POWER: I definitely look at it as a real positive. The team finished 1-2-3. Chevy won the manufacturer title. I won four races. I won a 500-mile race. I won on an oval, on a street course. Did I win on a road course? Yes, Road America. Two tracks I hadn't won on.

It was a great season for me, it really was. Obviously coming into this race, it was somewhat of a longshot. What happened to me could have happened to Simon. It's a different story. But that's racing.

Q. You talked about Chevy. I noticed this morning after the warmup, it might have been Helio was talking with his engineer after the session ended. It seemed to me he was talking to the Chevy person. He was describing some things. Do you actually have a chance to talk to them and then they go back and make some kind of adjustment before the race?

WILL POWER: Yeah, we have an engine guy dedicated to each car that has a Chevy engine. They work with you every single practice, every race. You're constantly working on that stuff, like shifting. Obviously

there's a lot of stuff to do there.

Yeah, that's just normal. That's what we do. Yeah, I mean, they do a fantastic job, they really do, from the standpoint of the body kit, the engine. It's just been first class. Been really fortunate to be involved because you've got the best equipment. Full credit to those guys.

Q. Pretty phenomenal you were in the hunt at all this weekend given that you basically gave the rest of the field a one-race head start. How much satisfaction do you get out of how well you were able to dig yourself out of that hole?

WILL POWER: Yeah, that's why I feel it was a very good year. It started off pretty badly. Then I have to say, the first few races I didn't feel very good either. Definitely not race-fit. Kind of just hanging on.

So, yeah, it was just such a great middle part of the season there, really good results. Yeah, put me in a position to be a contender again. It was a great year. It really was.

When it's your year to win a championship, it's your year. It was just Simon's year through and through. Everything fell well for him. He just did the things he needed to do, which is this weekend he got pole, led the laps, made it as difficult as possible for me. He just did a great job.

Q. (Question regarding changing diapers.)

WILL POWER: See if I can get it down to five seconds. Everything is about speed for me (laughter). See how quickly can get that done. Liz is real happy about that, that I'm excited.

Q. (Question regarding the off season.)

WILL POWER: Actually, going to go to Hawaii and then on to Australia from there for about a month. Go back and see my family back home.

Q. Past championships, you've lost to a driver on another team. This one is to a driver on your team. Does that temper it a little bit?

WILL POWER: Yeah, to get the 1-2-3, I was really happy that we got that. When I had that problem, there was a chance I was going to fall down the order. But, yeah, it was just a good year because of obviously the way it started for me. The fact I won four races, I'm satisfied with it. I'm not going to feel bad about this one at all.

It's always good, because you can come back the next year and work on the things you were weak at. That's what's great about this sport.

Q. Concerning the gearbox problems, it's a spec gearbox. Are you consulting when you're preparing the cars also with the engineers of the gearbox? With all these frustrating things going on today, from a driver point of view, do you have any ideas concerning improvements for future gearbox designs?

WILL POWER: No. It was just a freak, strange thing that happened. I don't think it has anything to do with the manufacturer of the gearbox. I forget the name of the computer that controls it. It got confused, put anti-stall on. It was just a strange other occurrence. I'm not sure it's happened before. It's not a manufacturer problem. It had nothing to do with the team building the gearbox. Every now and then you get a daub to daub, we call it, where a gauge doesn't engage properly, and that confused the computer where it wouldn't shift, then it ended up in anti-stall mode. No one did anything wrong.

THE MODERATOR: Will, congratulations on a great season.

WILL POWER: Thank you very much.