

# IndyCar Media Conference

Friday April 7, 2017

## Will Power

## Marco Andretti

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with today's Verizon IndyCar Series post practice press conference. Joined now by Marco Andretti, driver of the No. 27 Honda for Andretti Autosport.

Marco, it's a momentous start to your season so far, fast pace both in St. Pete and here today in practice. What have you attributed that success so far to?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Just a lot of work in the off-season. It's not just one thing. It's a lot of things. It's attention to detail. It's I think our whole approach as a team. You know, the way we test, the way we do shaker, the way we do everything.

I think this is as confident as I've felt and as fast as I've been in off-season testing and stuff like that my career. I don't remember being in the top two or top five the whole off-season. And in practice and in St. Pete, I think St. Pete didn't really show what the 27 had. We had those problems in qualifying, then it turned into a fuel race.

I think we have the pace. Now the goal is to convert that to, you know, a race win really. But results, you know, finishing seventh there was not a reflection of our pace. That's a good thing. Last year, it would have been, seventh is OK. There, we were a third or fourth place car. Here we're showing some pace. We need to convert it. That's the goal.

THE MODERATOR: A best finish of sixth here. Today from practice, anything specific that stuck out to you from today's practice?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Obviously, the reds. That's a new thing this year. I'm a fan of it because it takes the guessing out of it for tomorrow. Being able to try the reds today, I'm a big fan of. I think that way tomorrow everybody is absolutely rung out and you're not sort of guessing at the balance.

It will be small changes for us from now until then.

THE MODERATOR: What is special about this race? It's obviously a very storied event. Your grandfather won the first IndyCar race here. What is it about this place?



MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, there's a lot of history in general. For our family, it's definitely a special one. My dad actually won his first and his last race here, which is pretty cool. I want to win my third race here, if it's this season.

Yeah, I mean, there's just so much history, even going back to F1 and stuff. It's just a magical place. The weather is probably great. It will probably rain tomorrow, now that I said that.

Yeah, I mean, just the fans. It's a fun event.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Marco.

**Q. Marco, Will mentioned to me after the first practice that on the resurfaced back straight there's a bump right where you're going to brake. They were talking about it quite a bit on the telecast. How much of an issue, if any, is that going to be?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: I had to adjust my style there, for sure, because obviously that corner, it calls for a lot of peak pressure to slow the car down. The track won't take it because of the dive, you know, the attitude of the car.

I just smooth off my brake in there instead of really hammering it. Still a big bump, but it's like it's character, the same for everybody. It's another obstacle you need to figure out how to overcome. I don't think it's going to ruin anything.

**Q. Each team is getting an extra set of tires. Is that going to be an advantage for all the teams, and how?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: I mean, as far as relative to my competition, you know, I think inside the top 10, they don't get an extra set. Everybody outside does. So in my case, I didn't get an extra set.

But to me, it's practice one. Most likely if you start chasing the track at that point, you're going the wrong way. I think it's one of those where it's the same for everybody. I actually like the outside the top 10 rule. It changes things up a lot. It's one of those that's the same for everybody.

**Q. The hot start the Honda seems to get off to. You had pace the first race of the year at St. Pete. So far in practice. At what point in the year do you feel it's not a small sample size? Is it Indianapolis, after**

**that, where you can say it does seem that way, not just a misconception?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: Honestly, I think St. Pete, because it was one of those where all through off-season testing, we're like, Wow, we're faring OK. I always think in my head, Are they showing everything? Come St. Pete, they actually were. It was a pleasant surprise.

It's just a credit to everybody at Honda, just working really hard. You know, I don't know if it's an edge. As a team we've definitely stepped up. Maybe there's more players this year just because of our gain as well in pace.

I honestly feel that, you know, we can win races outright right now. Last year I didn't really feel that way, for a lot of reasons. I'm not putting it on the manufacturer by any means. I think this year I have an outright shot at wins, which is good.

**Q. We had a better look at the 2018 spec with the new body kits. Basically it seems like we are going back to a spec car almost, as it were. Can IndyCar succeed as basically a spec series?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I mean, I'm surprised with that question because when I look at Formula One, I don't see competitive from top to bottom. I see a couple teams. If you're a fan, you watch a lot of sport and say, Man, anybody can win this race. You get that with spec racing.

This is the most competitive series in the world, it really is. From top to bottom, it's tight, from the teams to the drivers.

I think at this point in the DW12, from the aero kit, we have these things absolutely rung out from both manufacturers' sides. That's what you want to see. The racing is good, our product is good.

No, I'm not worried about that at all. I think taking a bit of downforce away will improve the racing even more. Right now the cornering speeds are so high that it's tough to really see a difference and get passing done because we're not really slowing down that much for the corners. I think next year the product will improve even more, so...

You'll see, you know, tight racing again. I mean, qualifying, you'll see hundredths of a second. That's what the sport's all about.

THE MODERATOR: Marco, with qualifying tomorrow, what, in your opinion, are your keys to success in qualifying, so to speak?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Just putting a lap together. Getting a clear lap as far as traffic is tricky around here, as well. Doing it on a lap that's going to count, hitting my marks. Nothing spectacular, just putting a lap

together. Easier said than done, but that's the goal.

**Q. Marco, you seem a lot more confident this season. I think you're having fun, which you didn't seem to have last year. Can you talk about that?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: It's a combination of everything. When you're running well, it's easier to smile. You're not going to run well if you're not smiling. That's the hole I had to dig myself out of in the off-season.

I think it's maybe 60% that our cars are just better this year. But the rest of it is we need to execute. Now that we're in a position to be fast, we need to really turn it into results. That's going to be the key.

Like 2013, I mean, I was able to lead the championship almost at the halfway point, but we let it go. We need to really stay on it all the way through the year, if we're able to march forward, which will be the goal. So it's easier to have fun when you're fast.

THE MODERATOR: Marco, good luck in qualifying tomorrow.

MARCO ANDRETTI: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We will continue our Verizon IndyCar Series post practice press conference. Joined now by Will Power. Will has two wins here on the streets of Long Beach, and three pole positions, which will probably bode well for him heading into qualifying tomorrow.

Will, fastest in practice today. Going into qualifying tomorrow, what are some things that you noticed or learned from practice today that might help you out tomorrow in the qualifying sessions?

WILL POWER: Yeah, you only get a set of reds for this one session. It's really important for qualifying. It's such a different tire, a lot softer. (Indiscernible) for the balance tomorrow.

Yeah, car feels comfortable. So, yeah, work on it. It kind of sucks if you're quickest because (indiscernible) details, you know. Wish I was fifth or something, it would have been a much better. You don't want to show people what you got too soon.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously St. Pete started similarly, and didn't end the way you wanted to, with a 19th-place finish. What are some of the things you and the team have discussed since then to try to get that momentum back heading into this race in Long Beach?

WILL POWER: Yeah, obviously had a drive-through penalty. But we were still in good shape, had an issue with the engine, a fueling issue. That's been fixed. You hate to be the one to find a bug, but I did. Save the (indiscernible) thing for later.

Yeah, for me, if you count the last two races of last year and St. Pete, it's basically been three DNFs on tracks that I'm really good at. It's about time I had a good run here. Really need to have a good run. It would be great.

THE MODERATOR: You have two wins here. With the history of this race, it seems to many drivers this is a special one to win. With those two wins, then just looking at the event overall, what would you say are some of the special aspects of this event in particular? What makes this race special?

WILL POWER: It's the history. You look at some of the guys you have won, get your face engraved in Victory Lane, which is really cool, especially when you see guys like Mario Andretti, a lot of other big names from the past.

I think, you know, any track, almost (indiscernible) years, isn't it? It's amazing to have a race that long. History creates a big following. That's what it is here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Will.

**Q. Will, 2012 win you had was an interesting strategic deal where you were able to win with one last stop. Do you think the extra laps will help you do it on Sunday or do you think it will take three to win?**

WILL POWER: It will take one yellow to make it a two-stop running start, I think. Even so, like seven laps or 10 laps. You still got to have people go through a big fuel save, or if there's a yellow, just be the same with the rules.

Yeah, I don't know. You know, it's really enjoyable when someone does three, if you are the person that does three, you just out (indiscernible) everyone with one extra stop. That's a fun race. So I'm hoping it's like that.

**Q. Will, let's talk about that little orange line there at pit exit. I noticed during the session, everybody tried to cut it a little bit during the practice session. Just trying to figure out where that stop is, get a reference in your mind for where you can see that pit exit line?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's actually pretty hard. It's pretty easy to trip it, yeah, (indiscernible) draw some penalties. I think a lot of people did. So you really need to be conservative, which it slowed up the exit quite a bit.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

WILL POWER: No. If anything, it makes it a little better. Makes it much slower. But it will stop what happened last year when everyone was complaining, This is why he won. But hang one, we'll go back and have a look. (Indiscernible). Get a lot of that in this series.

**Q. Will, you mentioned to me earlier that your mom**

**was here for maybe the second race in your career. Does that add any pressure for you, maybe excitement? Could you talk about that, her being here.**

WILL POWER: It's cool for her to be here. She's really here to see my son, not me. That's really the only reason she came. She probably won't watch the race. It's too nerve-wracking for her. She'll probably do something in the hotel. Yeah, I'm not sure.

In 2014, she watched the other race she went to when I won the championship in Fontana. She watched the whole thing.

It's cool to have her here, it really is.

**Q. Will, somebody asked me at the end of that session how you could be 3/10ths faster than everybody else in the field in practice. They wanted to know if you shortcut the track somewhere. I looked at them and said, It's Will Power. He's always fast. Is there something about this track that you like, that you found, that sets you apart from the others?**

WILL POWER: No, no. Sometimes you get it right, like the setup. You know, it's only practice. You can show everybody where they're lacking, they'll go back and study it. I was hoping people would go quicker, but they didn't.

But, yeah, it's a cool track. Enjoy it. Street course. Yeah, just try to put the pieces together.

**Q. Under the context that you've won Long Beach, you've won a championship, you're one of the more prolific qualifiers in IndyCar history, do you ever think about your legacy and what races like this, what the month of May can do, as far as establishing your place amongst the all-time greats of IndyCar racing?**

WILL POWER: No, I don't look at that stuff much. You have to say races like this and the Indy 500 definitely put you in a good place in history. But, yeah, that's something you might look at when you're 50 years old.

But, yeah, it's good to be up with that sort of company, if you can be, like Dario, when he finished.

**Q. Will, some drivers, including Marco Andretti before you, were talking about the bump at the end of the back straight and braking. I saw some cars bounce pretty hard on that bump. Does that require you to change your alignment into that turn?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, it actually is pretty difficult, that bump. It's hard, yeah. Actually I've gone past it. But it's right where you hit the brakes. Yeah, hope they grind it for next year, it would be nice.

**Q. Is there any discussion in the drivers meeting about them doing something overnight? You just have to work around it?**

WILL POWER: Kind of work around. It's not terrible. It's there. If you brake right on it, it's pretty harsh. Yeah, there's tracks that are worse.

**Q. When you look back over your career, the last Champ Car series race ever that you won here in 2008, how special was that to you? It was going to be the last hurrah for Champ Car.**

WILL POWER: Yeah, that was a great weekend, it really was. It was kind of sad, you know, to end the whole Champ Car thing, because it was such fantastic cars and great series. On the other hand, it created a super strong IndyCar.

Yeah, great weekend. Not much more to say. It was the best way possible that you could go out.

**Q. Will, we do these press conferences all the time. I always get the impression that you're thinking of something else. You just don't get very excited at these press conferences. Away from the racetrack you're a much more excitable guy. When you walk in this room, what's going through your head?**

WILL POWER: All sorts of stuff. I wish my mind would actually settle down a little bit.

What was I thinking of? I think I was thinking about, yeah, getting back to the engineering office, looking at some data, seeing how it can go better.

But I'm focused on your question right now because I'm thinking about something else, and that's what the question was about (laughter).

**Q. This year you don't have Tim Cindric as a strategist. How is it working out to change someone? Are you guys in sync with each other?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think, you know, having my engineer, I think he had a lot to do with the strategy anyway. I have to say that Tim, I felt like, was one of the best in the pit lane, one of the best guys you could have on the radio, just because he has so much experience and he's just very good at strategy in general, whether it's racing or playing cards or whatever.

But, yeah, you know, I think it was a decision to help the 2 car along, help Josef get up to speed. It's been working well. Honestly at St. Pete, did a great job. Did everything he could. Had a good strategy. I feel like if we didn't have the issue, we would have finished in the top five.

THE MODERATOR: Will, thank you very much. Good luck in qualifying tomorrow.