

# IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday April 29, 2017

## Will Power

## JR Hildebrand

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our Verizon IndyCar Series post-race press conference. Joined now by Will Power, who finished second in tonight's Desert Diamond West Valley Phoenix Grand Prix.

Will, a third-place finish last year, so you moved up one spot here at Phoenix. Take us through your race and your thoughts on how everything turned out for you tonight.

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was a really good race. I felt like we had a great car, probably the strongest car, I do think so. We just got caught out by that yellow, obviously. Then there were a lot of cars between us and Simon.

I mean, I tried everything I could. I got a good restart, got past two cars. I couldn't get past Kanaan or Dixon, otherwise I would have, you know, had no problem closing that gap and making a race of it.

But it's good. I felt great. Feel energetic. I'm back to where I should be, feeling like I can make the difference. I'm not relying on fatigue or anything like that. Pushed hard the whole race, and felt really good.

THE MODERATOR: We talked about this a little bit yesterday, as well. With your string of bad luck this season, what does it mean to you to get a strong finish here, especially on a track like Phoenix Raceway?

WILL POWER: It was good. I would have loved to have got the win. But, you know, I'll take second. I need the points. You know, that's a championship-type day. Now we need that for the rest of the year, which we've been doing. I mean, we should have won at Barber. Had a great shot at winning here. St. Pete, you know, had the engine issue. Been good everywhere. Just a matter of finishing.

THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome JR Hildebrand to the press conference, as well.

JR, this has to be so rewarding for you to have to miss a race, come back from an injury, then have such a strong finish as you've had in quite a while.

JR HILDEBRAND: Yeah, you know, I was definitely anxious to make good on the speed that we had here



in pre-season testing. Team has a great short oval package. I know that from doing some testing last year.

So, you know, excited to get the result for the team, for sure. The car was bitchin'. I mean, I think at the end of the race we had obviously one of the top three, but I think we might have had the best car on the track.

It feels good to just have that in it, you know, know that we've got that in us for the next couple of races. It's a strong result heading into May. So no complaints, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Will and JR.

**Q. Will, you've been in this movie before where you come to Phoenix, dig your way out of a big points gap. Does this year have a different ending?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, do you mean different ending at the end of the year?

**Q. Yes.**

WILL POWER: Yes. I'd have to say at this point last year I'm feeling a lot better physically. So that's a good thing. Can really push hard now. So, yeah, used to digging myself out of the hole (laughter). So we'll see what happens. We'll keep going. That's all you can do.

**Q. Will, I think at the end the gap was nine seconds between you and Simon. What was the reason for that? Was it traffic related that the gap was so big?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was. IndyCar was letting the leader -- getting people out of the way for the leader and then not us. We just sat there while he got past everyone. So I don't -- it made a bad race of it, honestly. The fact we just had to sit in traffic, you couldn't pass. But there was a blue flag for the leader and miscellaneous other cars. Strangely enough they decide to let cars go so we could race. It was really strange.

JR HILDEBRAND: Yeah.

WILL POWER: I don't understand the rule on what it is, whether they just decided they want certain people to race or not. But that's what was going on.

**Q. JR, I think maybe for you, you had the same troubles with traffic.**

JR HILDEBRAND: I guess for me, you know, the race for me ended up coming down to how you manage traffic. You know, there were guys -- I think the thing

that ends up being tricky at races like this is you've got guys that are a lap down but they're racing for top-10 spots. Usually when you're lapping cars on a road course, there are guys that are at the back, they're struggling, there's no stress to let you by.

We're racing against guys that are racing even harder than we were at times. So that ends up becoming a difficult thing to kind of manage. You have these like different differentials and speed, but everybody's racing each other just as hard as anybody else is.

It kind of became about picking opportunities to pass guys when that's the case. Then I sort of agree with Will, there was a little bit of inconsistency when we were catching up to guys that were already a lap down, were going multiple laps down to try to figure out how that procedure exactly was meant to work.

In the end for us, I can only say positive things for our race. We look forward to being able to make good on that going forward from here.

**Q. How was your hand?**

JR HILDEBRAND: It really wasn't that bad. I think I'll be dealing with some swelling. Going out for that final stint on sticker tires the first couple laps, it was like, Holy (expletive), the steering was super heavy.

In terms of my hand actually bugging me, it was no stress. I think we'll be good to go at Gateway on Tuesday and hopefully be ready to rock and roll for the whole month of May.

**Q. JR, you seemed to be very competitive tonight. I'm wondering about Ed Carpenter's car. I don't know if you know what kind of setup he had. He seemed to be struggling a little more. I know he's been out of the car for a long time. Can you comment about how your team set up both cars.**

JR HILDEBRAND: I definitely don't think it's Ed. You know, coming into this weekend, at the test, we were very much on the same thing, came into the weekend on very much the same thing, feeling good about our reads being exactly the same and all that kind of stuff.

For him, with the limited practice time and not being able to practice because they had a fuel leak or whatever in that first practice session, I think that's kind of where his weekend just went a little sideways. They basically were just in a mad thrash to get the car to go to tech inspection. They didn't really even get to do a full setup on the thing. He qualified poorly.

Then, you know, from here, no matter what, wherever you start, what downforce level you want to run around here. Can work running low on downforce, it can work running high on downforce. It's very dependent on how the track conditions actually develop, kind of how the race itself develops, like how many cars you're running around, is it strung out, are guys getting gapped up

together.

I think, you know, from him being at the back, they ended up just kind of choosing a setup that was a little bit conservative. But in the end he still came through. I think he ended up seventh or something. I'm sure he's not psyched about that. But given the way the weekend went, that was a decent result for those guys. They'll be ready to turn things around in a hurry.

**Q. JR, how much does having a good run here tonight build up some momentum for the month of May?**

JR HILDEBRAND: I think it's definitely just something that we needed in the team, to be able to come to somewhere we knew we'd be good at. The first couple of races have been a little bit challenging, just getting things dialed in. The field is so stacked and competitive here in the IndyCar Series these days, it's difficult to come away with consistent, good results. This is somewhere we looked at on the schedule and knew we would have a fighting chance at it.

I think sort of coming away with a good weekend, executing at a high level, getting through everything, definitely builds some confidence going into the month of May, where we'll hope to do that again.

**Q. Will, had you been able to get to Simon, do you think you could have passed him or could have made a shot at it?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, we needed to do that in the second to last stint because we gained three seconds on him through the last pit stop exchange. I needed to be with him at three at that point. Otherwise, it's the same situation. It's very difficult to pass. He would have had to get checked up or something strange happen.

If he maintained the lead, I would not have passed him, I don't think. You know, something would have had to have happened. I needed to be able to be there for the last stop, then we had a great shot.

**Q. Jones let you guys go. I think you caught Munoz. As a driver, every time JR would get closer, you would run up on the back of Munoz. How do you manage that, clearly having to look in your mirrors?**

WILL POWER: Just managing the gap. I knew the win wasn't possible at that point. I was there behind Ed for quite a while. Okay, now I'm going to sit here, save my tires, no one's attacking me yet, just wait for that situation and start playing the accordion effect where you're making sure you get good exits. That's the game I played at the end there.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JR HILDEBRAND: For sure I'd have taken it. I think it all just comes down to I obviously know what he's doing, I know what the car in front of him's doing. You can kind of gauge how this whole thing is going to

work.

So in those situations, like third car in line trying to pass the second car in line, it kind of just comes down to do we all end up nailing our timing right or not. One out of 15 times, you know, somebody will screw that up a little bit. You have to be there to be able to capitalize on that opportunity.

There was a couple of times where I thought for a split second, like, coming out of turn two, maybe I had enough of a run. In the end, once I caught up to Will -- I was quite good when we were behind a bunch of cars in traffic, to be able to kind of like pick a couple of guys off on the tail end of that. I think we were quite good in that type of situation. But once we got to where there was just one car ahead of something, we were all going a little too quick, and the gaps weren't changing quite enough.

On the flipside of that, I hauled ass and caught up to Helio and Josef. They were catching up to Ryan and somebody else, Hinch or something maybe. Those two guys were battling. At that point to get by the lot of those cars basically in one lap was just timing all the runs to pick apart guys that are checking up.

That's really what the game is that you play around here. Honestly, I think racing here is a lot like how we race at Indy. You're trying to have to get a run a couple laps ahead of time, to build a big run off of guys, off the corner to get the momentum, which is fun when it works for you, but definitely tough and requires some pretty significant differences in what guys are doing.

**Q. We spent the first three races this season talking about how great the Hondas were. Looked like Chevrolet was struggling a little bit. Then we come here a short oval and Chevrolet pretty much dominated the weekend. Is this the start of Chevy's dominance showing this season?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think so. I mean, in the oval races this year, Chevy's had a shot. Obviously some tracks suited the Honda a little bit better. But, you know, I feel like we're going to be good. I mean, we were good at Barber. I think we'll be good at Indy road course. Chevy's been working really hard to have a great engine for the 500, which I'm very confident in those guys because they do such a good job, between Chevy and (indiscernible), I think they could come up with something pretty good.

Just we'll see.

**Q. JR, how big a result is this for your engineer, Justin Taylor? His first oval race.**

JR HILDEBRAND: Boom, podium.

**Q. How much confidence do you have in him? How did the two of you work together to keep the car as good as it was all weekend?**

JR HILDEBRAND: It starts with just the development work that the team has done as a whole. We come into these places feeling really confident that if we don't touch anything and roll the thing out in qualifying or race trim, that we'll be kind of in the window. That goes a long way.

But Justin's been awesome, man. To come into this whole thing and not know the car, we're at a whole bunch of tracks that he's not seen. Certainly the oval aspect of it, it's a lot to get used to.

It's obviously my first time back in the car full-time with aero kits and all this kind of stuff. We're all sort of learning a little bit still as we go along.

It feels great for me and for I think on behalf of him and the team and some of the new guys that we've got to just be able to pull it out here. We knew we had speed here. It's different to execute in the race in a way that you can stick it on the podium. I think it's definitely the start of good things to come for us. Hopefully we can get on a little bit of a roll heading into the thick of the season.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, congratulations. We'll see you in Indy.

JR HILDEBRAND: Thank you.

WILL POWER: Thank you.