

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday July 30, 2017

Will Power Graham Rahal

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with post race availability from today's Honda Indy 200 at Mid-Ohio, joined by third place finisher Graham Rahal. Graham, it's your fourth Top 5 finish consecutively here in Ohio. Just talk a little bit about today's race.

GRAHAM RAHAL: I didn't know that, but that's a good run for us, four in a row. Yeah, it was a great day. What can I say? We got a lot of points today. Obviously, we lost some to Will and Josef, but they did a great job. We fought hard with them all day, just came up a little bit short.

Definitely pleased with the pace, pleased with the performance of the car. Really, I would have liked to have a better start there and clear Sato quicker, and I think that would have put me in a really good place to challenge those top two.

Obviously, lap traffic wasn't easy today. Lost a lot of time there. Overall, we did a great job. The guys had a great strategy. We put it all together. Can't say much else.

THE MODERATOR: We will soon be joined by Will Power over here. Will finished second today. It is his 60th career podium finish, the fifth of this season. Will did start from the pole today. Talk a little bit about the race and chasing your teammate Josef Newgarden today.

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was, I think, on the alternate tires, we just had a lot of push, couldn't really do much about it. So, yeah, Josef did a really good move, kind of faked to the left and then went right going around to the inside. Nothing I could really do.

Then he was, yeah, very strong, very fast from there on. Kind of was pretty good on blacks. Felt our pace was pretty good on blacks, but we just weren't good enough on reds today to have a shot. Still happy with second.

Q. Graham, Will mentioned the red-black thing. I noticed still seeing purple towards the end of the race, people on reds and on blacks. Were they really gripping up, and was it just dependent on your setup?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Personally, I didn't have a huge



difference between the two pace-wise. The balance may have been slightly different. I spent most of my day behind somebody, and honestly, that changes the balance more than anything else. It would be hard for me to say. I thought that the reds were consistent. I did two sets of blacks just because my pace was good.

And I think, as Will said, both of our pace that second stint on blacks, I think we were chewing into Josef's lead there a little bit until lap cars kind of messed with us. Overall, both seemed to be pretty competitive. Good tire today.

Q. Graham, it looked like there could have been quite a fight for the lead there at certain points in the race, you and Will, but Carlos Munoz with you and then Gutierrez there. Will you speak to those guys? And how much did that ruin your day to a certain extent?

GRAHAM RAHAL: I think we need to have a talk behind closed doors with the drivers. I would say Gutierrez was damn close to taking out the leader. I'm sure you saw it. That's just ridiculous, honestly. We'll talk about it behind closed doors. I think everybody needs a little bit of a shakeup here with just the respect between drivers, but we'll go from there.

I mean, I always get told I'm a whiner when I talk about those sorts of things. I'll let Will talk about it.

WILL POWER: It's actually not Gutierrez' fault. The rules for IndyCar is kind of ridiculous, that the team would tell him to stay and push and he's not even in the lead. He's not even leading. I understand if he was ahead of Newgarden because then, if it goes yellow, he gets his lap back.

Yeah, I mean, IndyCar on one hand wants really good racing, but then you put a bunch of back markers, people a lap down in the mix. It ruined probably a very good battle at the end because Josef was on black tires and we were on reds.

GRAHAM RAHAL: After we cleared him, all we were trying to do was haul ass to catch up again. Same with Munoz mid-race. I lost -- how much time did I lose, 10 seconds, if not more? He was on overtake every single straightaway. It's like come on. You know, come on.

Q. Will, when you look at today, of course you always point to Josef and the championship. Do

you think -- how do you kind of recover from a day where you're on the pole but you come up short here again at this track? It seems to have your number.

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's much better than starting sixth and finishing seventh. So that's as good as we could do. Kind of weren't on the pace all weekend and really got the most out of qualifying. So second, for the pace of my car, that was as good as we could get today. We've had too many seconds in this place.

I had my chances to win, but with the pits closed and all that. That's another thing we've got to talk about at IndyCar. The field is competitive enough now, and we have enough technology to leave the pits open under yellow.

Q. You can both weigh in on this. In some ways, though, as far as championships, it's kind of brought you even closer together. Just everybody being in an even tighter pack than before. You can address what that's going to be like.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Not really. I mean, Josef was ahead of me, and now he's further ahead. I mean, we're close. It could go any way. As I said to our guys before the race, and I've said now, for us to win the championship, we've got to beat them, and obviously Penske's on top of their game. Clearly, we are on top of our game. There's no other team better than us right now other than these guys -- but from the rest on down.

So we're on top of our game. But when you've got to contend with these four, it's tough stuff. It's a great operation with great drivers. So we've got to beat them to win this thing, and that's going to be a tough task, but we're going to put our heads down and keep working hard and try to make it happen.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I don't even know what the lead gap is back -- what is it points back? I don't know if I actually closed or not, from us to the leader.

Yeah, so I actually closed the gap to the lead, which is good, from 50. You've got to be within 20 at the last race, and you can control your own destiny by winning. But it did bring everyone closer together.

Yeah, it's going to be very interesting, especially with a couple of super speedway coming up, where we know that Honda is very strong.

GRAHAM RAHAL: That's St. Louis. You guys will kick our ass there.

WILL POWER: St. Louis, Chevy should be very strong. Although who knows?

Q. Graham, what makes you so good here, do you think? Do you think this being your home race gives you any sort of determination or extra

motivation?

GRAHAM RAHAL: Well, I mean, it helps for sure. You want to do a great job when you come home. So, yes, there's part of that. I think our guys have just done a good job here and the setups have been strong. You know, it's just every time we come here, it feels like it's championship time and we're pushing, we're all pushing and at our best at that time. So it's worked out well for us, but hopefully, we can keep this going. We'd like to get another win here in short order.

On that note, actually, I must say the crowd, the vibe, it's tremendous here. So thank you so much to the fans that come out. It's a blast. I mean, it makes me proud too. I know Ohio people are big sports people. I know people from lots of other states come too, lots from Indiana and up north. But it was awesome this week, and the turnout was phenomenal.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I have to say it looked bigger than most years, like when you get out there. A lot of people there. Impressive.

Q. What could spice the racing up a little bit more here, though? I know it's really hard and it's a lot of almost passes. What would it take just to get some more passing here?

WILL POWER: You would have to have a no reply push-to-pass system. That would create a lot more passing at tracks like this, a lot more, because then you don't have people replying. If they want really good racing, that's -- yeah.

Q. Don't you think the aero kit will help next year?

WILL POWER: The aero kit will help, but if you really wanted real hard-core racing -- because DRS in Formula One is too much. Like the passes aren't real. It's too much. But I think the push-to-pass, it's just getting here.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Like today he could be on push pass at times and I'd be in a really good tow behind him, and it would be similar. It's not like so much that it's -- like DRS. But the problem we have right now is, when you get close behind somebody, you are hanging on to your ass big time. It is a whole different ball game.

And I think next year, when the car develops the downforce from underneath, it's going to be way better racing. I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong. I remember like 20 -- what was the year before we went to this kit? 2014, you could really dice it up. Now every time I went into one behind him at the end, I was just praying that it would somewhat stick through the corner. So --

Q. (No microphone).

WILL POWER: No, actually, I will on the way there. It was a cool looking thing. Really cool looking car.

Q. Can you guys elaborate on how the caution

impacted your races? Whether it was just I got to eat a sandwich like at Detroit or take a breather in any way or the strategy at all?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was good for a breather, that's about it, because everyone had pitted. I don't know if anyone were called out. In that instance, if anyone had gone a lap longer, they literally get a drive-through penalty, and that's what's wrong with closing the laps on the yellow. If you stayed out one lap longer, you'd be at the back. To me, that's so wrong if you've done a good job of saving fuel.

I think they need to find a way to -- yeah, exactly what happened in Toronto. All these guys should have been fighting for the win. Instead, they're put to the back for doing a really good job. I think the field is competitive enough now to make it fair because it's a total lottery for who's in the pits. Total lottery.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Today's yellow was fine for us. As Will said, this championship is too competitive for a race to be decided by -- be decided like Toronto, you know, in my opinion. That's why I was pretty hot after the race, you know. The championship is too close for that to play a role. Today, luckily, it was okay because we could have gone another lap to turn and decided not to. Thank God.