

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday August 20, 2017

Will Power

Post-Race Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with our Verizon IndyCar Series post-race press conference. Joined now by the winner of the ABC Supply 500, Will Power, driving the No. 12 Verizon Chevrolet for Team Penske. This is Will's 32nd career win, which breaks a tie for ninth on the all dark time wins list with Paul Tracy and Dario Franchitti, his 32nd career win, also his third win this season and is currently fifth in the points standings, 42 points out of the lead held by his teammate Josef Newgarden.

Will, a really strong weekend for you, started fifth and were able to work your way up to the front, but take us through those few laps and battling back with your teammates knowing that Alexander was close behind, as well.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, once Josef got to me, the only place he was going to be able to pass was into 3, so very aggressive with blocking and making sure he did not get up the inside. He got up the inside, it was over.

Yeah, but what a crazy day for us. I mean, we had a really strong car. We were getting back to the front, and then suddenly, boom, the wing broke. Lucky I didn't hit the wall. Went a lap down, and then just was thinking, be smart, just anything can happen. You get your lap back and get through the field, and that's exactly what we did. So very, very good day.

THE MODERATOR: That sounds so even keel, though. Was there any moment in the pits when I think you had to change both your front and rear wing that you were thinking, I don't know if it's going to happen but you ended up a repeat winner of Pocono Raceway?

WILL POWER: Once I got my lap back, I was like, all right, it's game on, I can definitely get back up there. I was thinking like top 5, but when I was pumping out like 217 laps, I'm like, okay, we're going to make some serious hay here. Yeah, we changed the rear wing because that pod was broken, and obviously the front wing broke. Yeah, guys did a fantastic job in the pits having to do all that and still able to go ahead and win the race.

THE MODERATOR: Will Power also the first back-to-back winner here at Pocono Raceway.

Q. Is it amazing sometimes in a 500-mile race something that happens bad can end up putting you in the right strategy to win a race?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, that's textbook IndyCar racing, where the fact that we got off that sequence, and so we had more fuel, so we could go longer and have some clear air and pump out some really fast laps, that's what allowed us to win. And the car was obviously really good.

But yeah, never give up in an IndyCar race, particularly on an oval in a 500-mile race.

Q. Will, first 22 races nobody won back-to-back. What's it mean to you to be the first to go back-to-back here?

WILL POWER: No one has ever won back-to-back?

Q. No, Rick Mears won three, Foyt won four races, but nobody won back-to-back. What's it mean to you?

WILL POWER: It seriously means a lot. I love racing on ovals. Every oval win I get, I really, really enjoy because we don't have many of them. Yeah, to come back and win it again in a very different way this year, it was a crazy race, exciting to me, but yeah, feels fantastic to go back-to-back.

Q. Will, you were just talking about the final stop; was that a combination of you getting that clean air and having fresher tires than some of those guys in the quick pit stops, and also, did you notice when Scott came down early that he really wasn't getting the fuel mileage that you guys were getting?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I wasn't really aware what everyone else was doing. All I knew is that we had clear air as people peeled off to pit and we could pump out some fast laps. I had no clue who was in the game and what, until the end, they're saying Josef is closing on you. I'm like, okay, that's who I'm racing. Yeah. Once we went a lap down, I mean, you just hang in there and then try and get your lap back, and then you're fighting a lot of traffic, trying to be smart on those restarts, like you didn't want to get involved in an incident.

Yeah, just one of those days. Really in IndyCar, you've just got to be smart all the time because anything can happen.

Q. I want to go back to what you said earlier with

the rear wing issue. Did it break without any warning or did you know something was wrong already?

WILL POWER: No, the rear pod was -- when Hinch almost crashed earlier he started to lose it and I thought he was going to spin in front of me, so I started to really slow up, and then Charlie ran into the back of me and unfortunately couldn't see that Hinch was up near the wall.

Q. You mentioned before about in these 500-mile races you have to keep your focus because even if something goes wrong you have the time to come back from that. When you have multiple things go wrong, how difficult is it to keep your focus and keep your head in the game, and do you feel like -- did a thought ever get in your head that this was starting to snowball and that this was really not going to happen for you today?

WILL POWER: No, I was like, if it goes yellow, we'll get our lap back. It had to go yellow at the right time, but -- and once you got your lap back, you can move up pretty quickly as you go through cars. It's just trying to be smart on the restarts when you're a lap down, and you don't want to get in somebody else's accident a lap down, so I wasn't racing anyone really hard. I was very methodical all day. No matter the situation, that's how I was racing, and it paid off.

Q. When you were coming out of Turn 2 and you were diving towards the inside of the track with Newgarden right behind you, was that your idea, or was someone telling you to do that with your race team?

WILL POWER: No, it was -- with how close he was in 2, if I left that open he would pass me and he would win, and he goes through any little gap, so I wasn't leaving any chance of him going all the way to the inside, so I was very aggressive like that, and it paid off.

Q. Will, are you surprised -- basically the second year on the bounce where everyone has predicted like a Honda is going to win because of their superspeedway package and especially now because they're so powerful and reliable, were you surprised how well the Chevys performed compared to Rossi and the two Ganassis?

WILL POWER: No, you could tell like when we came up here, Chevys were definitely in the game. I had a new engine in, so we had a bit of an upgrade. I think the engine was better. So yeah, I think -- look, as you saw at Texas, same deal on the superspeedway. It's a different configuration than Indy. We all have to run the Dallara rear wing, so that seems to even everything out there aerodynamically. But yeah, I think our cars were really good compared to the Honda.

Q. On the next to last pit stop, you came out with over a four-second lead. Did you guys short sell the car at that point, or were you just gaining time

in and out of the pits? What happened there?

WILL POWER: No, the big gain was as people peeled off, I was able to do 217 laps. Like I was able to pump out laps in the 217s, and I think that's close to 3 miles an hour quicker than what anyone else was doing at the time, so I just -- it opened up for me to pump out some seriously fast laps, and that's what got me -- good in laps, good pit stops, good out laps. It all combines to having that big lead, yeah.

I was surprised I had that big of a lead. I had a feeling that we'd come out right at the front because of the speed I was doing, but I didn't expect that.

Q. Could you just clarify, you mentioned the damage on the rear wing. How did the damage on the front wing --

WILL POWER: Front wing was a failure. For whatever reason something failed on the front wing, and it just went flat, and I lost all front downforce. Just some little -- I don't honestly know what the part was, but you get violent turbulence here behind cars, and maybe that's the key and that's what happens. But I was lucky enough to hit the wall.

Q. When you have to win the way you did today, overcoming adversity, is that maybe a little more satisfying than if you had just a dominant car and dominated the whole field?

WILL POWER: Pretty satisfying going a lap down, coming back and winning, I have to say. That was something else. Like I really did not -- but then you think about Hunter-Reay last year, like he got back up to third from a lap down in one stint. Just had to be smart, be in the game at the end, and that was the result.

Q. You have wins at Motor Club Speedway, Pocono, 500-mile wins. How frustrating is it getting to be that Indy is evading you somehow or other?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I keep winning 500-mile races, and I really enjoy it, but I would really enjoy the Indianapolis 500. That would really be something. Obviously high on the list, and man, we'll see. We'll see. Next year everyone has the same car, so it should be very competitive.

Q. When you started in this game back in '05, Paul Tracy was the big dog in town. Now you've won more races than him. Are you going to go by him and thumb your nose at him or anything now that you've won more than him?

WILL POWER: He'd probably beat me up. Yeah, no, it's amazing to be up there with guys like Dario and Paul Tracy in wins because they're obviously legends of the sport. Yeah, cool to be in that company.

Q. Gateway is a little unknown factor. Did you test there, and if not, what do you personally expect?

WILL POWER: I didn't get to test. Helio did. Didn't get to do too many laps, though. I think it's going to be

very nice, obviously the resurface. Kind of like Phoenix, it's so hard, it's so hard to tell until you race there. It's a very cool track. I really like it.

THE MODERATOR: Just to clarify, you did test there in early May but have not tested since --

WILL POWER: Yeah, the test was cut short, but yeah, I tested on the old surface. Yeah, I haven't tried the new surface, which is much different. Much different.

Q. 42 points back, three to go, double-points race. Is this within your reach?

WILL POWER: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. Absolutely. When you think about the finish to last year, which was basically if you're three DNFs in a row if you include a non-finish at a double-points race, it's like the worst finish you can have, so really determined to finish on a high this year, really determined. I don't want to have that again. It was frustrating the way we finished last year, so I'm going for it.