

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday May 27, 2018

Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: First sweep of Indianapolis in the month of May, you're the points leader. None of that matters right now, you're an Indianapolis 500 winner.

WILL POWER: Exactly. Overwhelming. Amazing. It's funny, you forget where you are, you're so immersed in the race. You don't even realize. On the white flag lap I started screaming because I just knew I was going to win it. Unbelievable. Never been so excited.

THE MODERATOR: They handed you the milk bottle. I'm not sure you realized that's what it was.

WILL POWER: No, I knew you drink milk here. Believe me. I've seen a few of my competitors do it. Yeah, no, I just hesitated a bit because I'm not supposed to eat dairy, but I didn't care. I just drank it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You drenched the 500 festival queen.

WILL POWER: I felt bad. When I turned around, the glasses, she was covered in milk. I didn't realize she was behind me.

Q. What did you say to her?

WILL POWER: I'm so sorry. What could I do? I didn't see you behind me.

She was all good.

Q. Can you talk about how you managed your last restart, not knowing the fuel situation. Also talk about restarts with clean air versus dirty air today.

WILL POWER: Yeah, that last restart I was very determined. I knew that I had to get, like, a run on these guys, at least get one of them in the first turn, which I didn't. I got Oriol I think a lap later or something. I didn't want Carpenter to have a shot at me. He was very quick. If he had gotten by, I think it would have been game over potentially.

Very aggressive on the restarts. In clean air, I was very aggressive on the restarts. I started in a different spot every time to get a jump on Ed. I knew if we were fighting into one, it just creates a problem. Very good restarts when you look at it. Never got challenged.

Q. Were you worried about a caution coming out with three or four or five laps to go?

WILL POWER: No, it was all pretty spread out. I knew

after yellows, the potential for a yellow to come out was only after the first lap, first two laps. Once everyone kind of got in the rhythm, I didn't even think about it, to be honest. I just went for it. I had people to pass.

Q. A couple years ago we were talking at Long Beach, because you come to these press conferences, thinking about something else besides what we're doing. Were you ever thinking about this moment? How much does this moment run through your head?

WILL POWER: It runs through my head the last year more than ever because I've won so many races and poles, led more laps than anyone. I just hadn't done it here. I've been thinking, Am I going to finish my career without a 500 win?

This month was one of the best months I've had, very relaxed, in tune with my engineer, just working really well. It just came together. You got to have a lot of determination.

I watched the Super Bowl last year. It was the Patriots, what was the other team, but they had a lot more want. They wanted it more than the other team. That's why they won.

I think you have to have that. You have to have that in you. That's just the human spirit. You got to have that determination. That's what I had. You work hard at something, it comes to you. It eventually comes to you.

Q. That would be the Philadelphia Eagles.

WILL POWER: Right. They played their backs off.

Q. When you finished second to JPM here in 2015, how often did you reflect upon that might be the closest you ever got to an Indy victory?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I thought about that a lot, what I should have done, should have changed this and that. It's just not your day. It kind of worked out that like. That day I did everything, could do. Today I did it again, and it all worked out well.

It was through speed, pit stops, in and out laps, good restarts. It was a fight to win it. It was not an easy win. That makes it much more satisfying.

Q. Was this kind of the last remaining monkey on your back you had to get done?

WILL POWER: Absolutely, it was the last box to tick, to

be considered as a very successful driver. I'm not done. I'm not done. Like, I still have plenty of time left to win more 500s and championships and races.

Q. (Question about two Australians winning.)

WILL POWER: Did Ricardo win?

Q. Yes.

WILL POWER: To be the first Australian to win the Indy 500, that's very special. Maybe they might recognize me down there now. I don't think many people know who I am down there, because we don't have a race there any more. Yeah, it's very cool.

Q. Does a Brisbane-born Kiwi count as an Australian?

WILL POWER: No, I don't think so. Took him under their wing, New Zealand.

Q. At what point in your career did you come to terms with ovals, actually maybe learn to embrace ovals?

WILL POWER: Definitely, like, just in the last I would say three years, been quite good. More than that. More than that. They all kind of come together. You don't realize how the years just tick off.

When I won the race in Fontana, what year was that, '13? I think since then. But it just comes with experience. I would race ovals every week now because I'm just so experienced at it, I really enjoy it, have become quite good at it.

I feel like every time I go to an oval, I have a chance to win. That definitely wasn't the feeling at the beginning of my career. I would always think, Oh, it's going to suck. I never thought I could win. Now I know every oval I go to, like a road course, I have a great shot at winning. Yeah, that's the attitude you have to have.

Q. On Thursday you were talking about checking that last box, what it would feel like. What did it feel like to finally win this race? Were there emotions you got that you didn't expect?

WILL POWER: I just screamed like I've never screamed before. It was just amazing. The last two laps, the last lap, seeing the white flag, the checkered, I mean, you can't explain it. Like I've really come down off the high now, because I've exhausted myself being so excited.

Man, it's what I needed so badly, what I wanted so badly, and it came true. Anyone here knows how that would feel. You want something so much, it comes through to you through hard work and determination.

Q. It was all Liz could do to stand up.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I wonder what Liz was like. I haven't seen the footage. I'm sure she (indiscernible) some bottles there at the end.

Q. How much through the week of practice did Helio's feedback add to the team group? How much did you work with his setup? Was it valuable?

WILL POWER: Yeah, we all kind of went different directions. It was just a new car, so many different options you could run. We all ended up on quite different setups. Yeah, there's so many ways to get the balance.

It was actually a very difficult year. I don't know what Helio ended up with, but he had a pretty bad day on Carb Day. I think he just totally changed the car. I'm not sure how it was.

Yeah, I mean, it was just having lots of information that's so valuable, four very experienced drivers, good drivers, that drive this team. Yeah, it just helps a lot when you have that much information with a new car. You can get confused, too, because there's just so much of it.

Q. Did you feel any concern throughout the race seeing veteran guys spin out on their own, how your car felt in dirty air, clean air, overall handling?

WILL POWER: Yeah, hard in dirty air, hard to get close. My car was very close, a little bit loose, in clean air. Yeah, I really did not take note of who was crashing and whatnot. I don't like to look at the crashes. Yeah, so, my car was good all in all.

Q. The last few years we've seen the race being more of a slingshot, drafting. This year was completely different. Did you attack the race differently, different race strategy?

WILL POWER: This was a race you wanted to lead. At last they had a formula, if you had a good car, the leader could benefit and pull away. I liked it. It definitely made it harder to drive. Put the driver back into it more, where before you could hang back, third, no one wanted to lead.

Yeah, it was a race like it was in 2010 and '11, '8, '9, '10, '11, that kind of race. It was about your speed. The tires would degrade. You're never wide open. It put the drivers back into it more, in my opinion.

Q. You mentioned your attitude changed in the last couple of weeks. In what way? What needed to change?

WILL POWER: There's so much negative stuff out there you can see on social media. You just got to minimize the amount of negative people you hang around, negative stuff you read, and be in general positive.

But winning a race definitely makes you and the whole team be more positive. We had that in 2015 when I won, then I finished second here. I've slowly changed to be a more positive person. It's hard when you're very negative (laughter). Belt out all those bad habits

of thinking.

Q. Whenever you go back to the shop, you're looking down on the shop, pictures of every Indy 500 winner from Victory Lane. All those years you've gone in there, now you're going to be up there.

WILL POWER: Yeah, when you go into Penske, you see all the baby Borgs there in the foyer. In the IndyCar shop, you see all the pictures of those that have won. I've looked at that often and wanted to be up there. Yeah, it's going to be pretty cool to walk in that shop and see yourself up there in Victory Lane from the Indy 500. Pretty cool.

Q. On Lake Norman there's a lot of accomplished racecar drivers that have won a lot of NASCAR championships, but none have won an Indy 500. You're the first.

WILL POWER: Yeah, maybe I can just get a boat that's bigger than theirs, say I won the 500.

There are a lot of great racecar drivers from there, a lot of great racecar drivers that live in North Carolina. Pretty cool racing town. I feel like Indianapolis, I love Indianapolis, I love living here. Maybe when I retire, I'll move back.

Q. When you saw Wilson pulling away, did you think you could catch him or were you worried?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I was trying very hard to get Harvey. I had a couple big runs, pushed out wide. I was giving it everything, thought I was going to get them. Then Harvey is going to pit, I have a great shot at Wilson because he has no one in front of him to help him in the draft. Then they both pit. It's like, the gates opened, it was amazing. Just full rich go, go, hold on.

Q. Can you compare emotions today to 2015? Did you have any idea you would be screaming as much when you won this race?

WILL POWER: I must have screamed a lot? I didn't realize. Everyone is talking about screaming (laughter).

Yeah, no, I was so disappointed in '15. Man, so close. Yeah, this is a very different feeling. I mean, I don't know what to say. It's, yeah, amazing. I'll have to see the footage. Obviously I screamed a lot. I just lost my head.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Will.

WILL POWER: Thank you.