

IndyCar Media Conference

Monday May 28, 2018

Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, champ. We can call you that. Indianapolis 500 champ. Did you get a chance to see the video last night, the excitement that was in your face and your family?

WILL POWER: I did just see Liz briefly before. She was super excited.

THE MODERATOR: What kind of night and morning have you had? You look pretty refreshed actually.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I didn't drink anything. Once I got out of here, went to dinner. What's the name of the place? I can't remember. Tried to sleep, but I couldn't sleep. Just could not sleep.

Yeah, just with all the stuff going on.

THE MODERATOR: Did you replay moments of the race through the night?

WILL POWER: Yeah, not really. Usually you do that when you have a bad day. You replay it, replay it. This is probably the first time I didn't even think about the race. Like, normally you do something wrong in a race, I could have done that better. This was the perfect day. No mistakes from me, no mistakes on pit lane. Just as good as it gets.

I just thought of the celebration and the feeling of winning this race. Just couldn't sleep with the adrenaline.

THE MODERATOR: You kept saying, Finally.

WILL POWER: Yes, finally. Such a weight off of my shoulders. I don't have to have those questions any more about: What it would mean to win the Indy 500? Now I know. Can't put it into words.

THE MODERATOR: One stat we uncovered last night, you won seven oval races, four of them 500-mile races.

WILL POWER: I was aware before that that I won three 500-mile races. Yeah, this was the one that I just couldn't get done. Now I have.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. All those years in the early part of your career where you were absolute best on street courses

and road courses, couldn't get a victory on the oval. Finally you got the win at Texas. It was part of a doubleheader that night. Was all the racing just something you were bound and determined you were going to become a master at and finally conquer?

WILL POWER: No, yeah, it was interesting when I started because it was a very different formula, which I didn't like, where you really take the driver out of the equation. We were wide open everywhere.

Actually I came to enjoy that sort of racing, the pack racing. I got good at it and kind of liked it. Didn't really win any races. There weren't that many ovals on the schedule to win, so it was tough.

I think since 2013 probably I just got better and better and better at ovals. Yes, just absolutely love them now. Just understand them so well. I know exactly what I want, exactly how the car should feel, know how to drive them, know when to take risks. That just took time, like everyone.

The time I wasn't winning oval races, neither was anyone else in my team. It was kind of spread across the field. People would win only one or two ovals. The only guy I can think was winning ovals was Ryan Hunter-Reay. He won like two in a row or three in a row or something like that.

But, yeah, now I would race them every week if I could.

Q. Have you talked to Roger about NASCAR?

WILL POWER: Oh, yeah. Got some pretty good drivers in there. He needs me in IndyCar. I actually need him, need that team (laughter).

Q. How big was the problem to go on with the heat during the race?

WILL POWER: Me, I felt fine. I wasn't really that hot. Pretty fast air coming in. It just made it more difficult to drive. I mean, it was slippery. Definitely lost a lot of grip and downforce out of the car. It was quite hard to follow. You really had to drive. You were rarely wide open. I probably did one lap completely wide open the whole race. Yeah, but it was the same for everyone.

Q. Both Tim and Roger talked since the win about 2009, how you said, I'll do one race, two races, whatever you need. Going back to that time, did you have to take the Penske opportunity no matter when it came? Did you turn down any rides? With

all the changes in the sport, that was your only option?

WILL POWER: I was out of a ride with KV. They were going to just take drivers with money because they didn't have sponsorship. I wasn't one of those drivers. I didn't have money.

I was talking to Dreyer & Reinbold. Obviously I had met with Roger. It was really just I think only testing guaranteed when I signed with Penske. Might have been one race maybe at the time. I didn't care. I just wanted to get a foot in the door. I just wanted to have a chance in a good team.

Yeah, I think that's actually why they picked me, because they had other drivers that said, I will come if you give me a full season. With me, seemed so willing to not demand to have more races or anything, but give me a shot.

Q. Then you got hurt at Sonoma shortly thereafter?

WILL POWER: Yeah. Fortunately I won a race, had been pretty competitive. I'd done enough to show them it was worth giving me a shot the next year, whether that was part-time or full-time. Ended up being full-time. Then once I had a full-time ride, I really was able to show them what I could do.

Q. The one line I think a lot of fans remember from the race was in the heat of the moment you saying, Respect me. Did you ever feel, whether it was on ovals or here at IMS, there was a lack of respect?

You had a bunch of guys come over and congratulate you afterwards, so there's respect.
WILL POWER: That had nothing to do with drivers. It was just the whole frustration I've had through my career of winning a lot of races, winning more poles, more wins than anyone probably the last almost 10 years, but not winning this race.

I felt like I had those feelings where I was going to finish my career without even really being recognized as a very winning driver because I hadn't won this race. It kind of came from that, I guess.

It was just like, you know, there.

Q. How does Craig and Kevin discover you? You go back to those years when you arrived in America, you were known as having the unique name of Will Power. It wasn't long before everybody saw when a great driver you were. How did they discover you?

WILL POWER: I remember I was racing, Craig Gore actually had a car, was running an Australian in Champ Car. I went and met with him. That's the first time I met him.

Then I think Derrick Walker was looking for a driver that would be competitive for him, because they had a guy there that wasn't really doing the job. 2005 he

called me. I hadn't met Craig before that. But Derrick Walker was the guy that really got that ball rolling.

Obviously then a couple years later, Kevin Kalkhoven and Gore got together. I kind of had to go where the sponsor was, which was KV. That's how that all happened.

Q. Was there ever any competition within the team between you, Simon and Josef? It was kind of a race to see which of the three of you might get the 500 victory.

WILL POWER: I think we were all wanting to be the first one. You're teammates. You have a very competitive relationship. Yeah, I was thinking I've been there a long time, I really need to win this race, I really do.

Yeah, I'm sure. They're human beings so they definitely would want to be the winner.

Q. How much does it mean to you that the guys came over and congratulated you, and what were some of the messages?

WILL POWER: I saw Rossi, Ryan Hunter-Reay, Graham walk out to congratulate me, and Oriol. They're all guys I respect massively. Yeah, just guys that are great for the series, too, especially the Americans. That means a lot to me. Dario came up, meant a lot to me. So many people were really happy to see me win.

It's such a great group of drivers we have in IndyCar right now. The most competitive set of drivers we've ever had. You look down the field week in, week out, there's not a guy you would say, He couldn't win a race.

When you get the continuity of drivers, where they're coming back year after year, comes a lot of respect. When you're racing those guys, you come to understand it's a really good situation actually. It actually makes the racing safer because everyone has respect for each other, the guys that have been around a long time, which is a lot of the field now.

Q. You had a nice moment with Ed Carpenter, too.

WILL POWER: Yes, I just saw Ed. I had a great battle with him basically yesterday. He was the guy to beat. I knew if I beat him, I was going to win the race.

Ed is one of the best oval drivers around. You got to give him full credit for what he does for young drivers, young American drivers. He gives them a chance. You get some of these guys, they come, they only get one year. It's just so hard to prove yourself.

Ed, he's a team owner in the paddock that gives young people a shot to show what they can do, like Newgarden. Without him, Josef wouldn't have been able to get to Penske, end up in a full-time ride.

A great person for the sport, great family man, great racecar driver.

Q. You said you didn't sleep, couldn't sleep last night. What did you do?

WILL POWER: I was just lying in bed. It's that kind of half sleep thing where your mind is just going and going and going. Probably got up at 5, 4 a.m. Looked at my phone a little bit, tried to sleep some more.

I slept so well the whole month, even the night before the race. It's the best I ever slept for a whole month. Then, yeah, won the race and...

Q. A lot goes on in your head. You weren't replaying the race? What were you thinking about?

WILL POWER: I just think I was just going through the whole celebration after, doing the parade lap. I think my body had so much adrenaline in it, it just wouldn't go down, my mind. Pretty good rollercoaster ride, to be honest.

Q. When you came to Team Penske, you were the young guy. Now of the three that are racing full-time, you're the old guy in the group. How have the dynamics changed for you?

WILL POWER: Yeah, that is true. Kind of the team leader. I don't think the other guys would say that (laughter).

Yeah, no, it's good. I mean, we all learn off each other at the team. I don't know, there is no real team leader, you could say, there. We just all work very well together.

With all the data and everything that's available these days, you basically rely on your teammates to show you things. Even if he doesn't want to, he has to, because the information is there.

We have a lot of fun together.

Q. Who is the biggest joker?

WILL POWER: Well, I don't know. I mean, Josef and I have a very similar sense of humor. We think very, very alike. Some of the things that we come up with in our head. Yeah, and Simon, I've been friends with him and worked with him for a long time. We also have a similar sense of humor. I really get his French sense of humor. It's great.

Q. Have you had a chance to take a look at your brother's tweets?

WILL POWER: I haven't, no. I didn't see them.

Q. They're quite clever, really funny.

WILL POWER: Are they? There's not any pictures in there, is there?

Q. A couple.

WILL POWER: He did show me one. I didn't think he'd put it online. God, that guy (laughter).

Q. Is there something about what he does that is similar to what you do?

WILL POWER: When I look at how much homework he has to do, how much studying, working, writing that he has to do, how many shows he has to do before he puts a whole show together to see how different jokes and bits work, how people react.

It's the same old story. The best comedians in the world are the guys with a lot of experience and work hard at it. Write a whole new show every year. Louis CK, Carlin were the first ones to do that, write a whole new hour of comedy every year.

Any line of work or sport, it's always the guys that are there working harder than anyone else end up at the top.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.