

# IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday July 28, 2018

**Ryan Hunter-Reay**

**Will Power**

**Josef Newgarden**

**Alexander Rossi**

**Robert Wickens**

**Max Chilton**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined now by Will Power of Team Penske, who will be starting second tomorrow. As we mentioned yesterday, Will is making his 200th start at the race. He has three poles here, but not race wins yet.

Will, you mentioned that yesterday in your press conference, but also that you have some championship ground to make up, you will have to make some fairly aggressive moves to stay up front. Do you feel like this qualifying position puts you in a great place to start the race?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it does. Very track position race. I'm sick of starting on the front row and not being on pole. Probably a record for the season.

Want to get back in the game, you know. Nothing worse than turning up to the last race of the season not being in contention. Yep, need to be aggressive.

THE MODERATOR: You've seen your share of front row starts here, whether from pole or the position you're starting in tomorrow. How important is track position at a track like this?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it is. It's important in IndyCar every weekend now because everyone is good. Like, there's no bad drivers. You have to start up front if you want a chance.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Will.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

WILL POWER: Yes, that would help a lot. Just want to have a race where I finish without some issue. I mean, we should be way up there in the championship. We had, like, four or five DNF's. Just a pain considering how fast we've been, how well we've qualified.



500 definitely makes that feel better, but that's on me. A couple little mistakes from me, engine issue one point, radio communication issue, just those little niggling things.

I want five solid, good races here on out to have a good shot at the championship.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

WILL POWER: Man, that's the biggest issue. Rarely works if you're up front and running along. Pit lane kills you at moments like this. You have to keep an eye on that, keep an eye on the guys you're racing to see when they pit. If they start back a bit, they're going to go on a different strategy.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

WILL POWER: Yeah, that's the one thing that IndyCar has done such a great job with everything. The car is great. The way the series is run, the parity, the competition. The competition manipulates results. The guy who doesn't win when the pit closes under yellow, they have the technology to fix that. I hope they do that next year.

Every weekend on road and street courses, that's an issue.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

WILL POWER: Yeah, that's a good question, something I was thinking of. With all the mistakes, I just think in the race, everyone backs it up a little bit. Sometimes you see practice, and there's people having issues, running off. You get to the race and everyone has it out of their system in a way, backs it off.

It's just the series is so competitive now, people just got to find the edge of everything. That's why you make mistakes, and a lot of people are. But the race is a different story. Tire conservation. Yeah, we'll see, that could be the case.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

WILL POWER: Yeah, if you just get a little bit offline, there's just no grip. That gets a lot worse in the race when you add marbles. Once you get the marbles on your tires, you spend like two laps getting them off. People are attacking you. Yeah, that's happened. That happens at a lot of tracks actually.

ROBERT WICKENS: How was your quallie?

WILL POWER: Not good enough, obviously. What about yours?

ROBERT WICKENS: Not good enough.

MAX CHILTON: Same here.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

WILL POWER: I think they could do something with the speed limiter, so for a yellow, everyone goes to the end of the speed limiter. Everyone stays where they are, then they back up after pit stops. It's a normal restart, everything is the same, except the pit doesn't close under yellow because it just ruins races.

MAX CHILTON: I'll back him up on that one.

WILL POWER: Unless there's a bad driver, once the pits close under yellow...

**Q. (No microphone.)**

WILL POWER: It's going to be interesting because we don't have a warmup. We don't really know too much how the tires are going to degrade. Through the race, they degrade a lot. But I'm not sure how it's going to play out.

THE MODERATOR: (No microphone.)

MAX CHILTON: Yeah, I'm over the moon. It's amazing for a new team. Having a test day makes a world of difference. Luckily we were here last week testing. The test went pretty decent. Not everyone is here, so you don't know how to exactly compare to yourselves.

The car was decent. Yesterday we thought we lost something. This morning we felt we weren't a million miles away. I literally focused on getting everything out of the car. We didn't change much between sessions, just fine-tuning it.

I kept Marco at bay in P1. I think Hinch's accident was the rain cloud. Then we got through to obviously our first-ever -- not only our first Fast 12, but our first Fast Six. That was amazing.

My lap time at the end, that was on the 13th lap of the red tires. They were hanging on for dear life, should we say.

THE MODERATOR: Robert, we talked earlier that you tested here last week. How much do you feel that information you learned led to the qualifying results?

ROBERT WICKENS: Pretty similar to Max. We turned up with the car, we weren't competitive any more. We were kind of scratching our heads. We went more or less full circle. The track sort of came to us. Probably should of relaxed, kept driving around. Lesson

learned.

What I've learnt about here in Mid-Ohio, the track changes a lot, even throughout a session. We're kind of chasing the track more than anything. We just need to relax a bit.

Overall I thought it was a decent qualifying. I'm a bit disappointed with fifth because Alex and I had the freshest tires in Q3. He did it, I didn't. I need to kind of look at that, see why we didn't kind of get the grip out of the reds. It's not like they weren't coming up to temperature.

We only planned for two timed laps. It's the only time all weekend I would have asked for a third.

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Josef Newgarden.

Josef, it seemed like the last few laps there was some quick speed. Do you feel you got the most out of your car today?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think we were close. We knew Rossi and Wickens were going to have the best tires of everybody. We figured they would be the strongest.

You never know. We were going to have a go for sure and do what we could. I think where Will qualified is probably about what my maximum was. I think we were a 10th or two shy in our potential. I don't think we had enough to beat Rossi's time. The tire makes a difference, the track evolution. When you run, you have to be the last guy on track.

Fourth is relatively good. We can work with that. The Hitachi car has been a little bit inconsistent. That's our biggest thing for tomorrow. I think if we can figure out that consistency, we can have a good racecar under us.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Ryan Hunter-Reay.

Ryan, you've been quick all weekend. Do you feel like you got the most out of your car?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I think, like Josef said, some guys were able to advance without beating up their alternate tires, their reds. I shagged him pretty good there in Q2, a good lap and a half on him. Just didn't end up having the ultimate pace in the Fast Six.

But third, we can start from there. Great job by the 27 team and Alex for putting it on pole. Congratulations there. Hopefully we can put our heads together and put a good race setup on this thing.

We don't have a warmup, so it will be interesting to see what everybody makes of such a slick track tomorrow,

degradation and everything else. A lot of curve balls coming.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Josef and Ryan, talk about tomorrow in terms of the championship. Seems like it's getting down to the point where guys that are chasing need wins.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Josef, Alex and I were talking about breaking into Dixon's garage, doing something to his car. That's about what we need to do right now for points.

No doubt he's going to have a good day tomorrow. You have to concentrate on yourself, put out the strongest effort you can forward. I don't know what you can do more than that.

Shoot for race wins. I think all of us are looking at race wins at the moment. We're not looking at banking sixths, fourths, thirds to try to beat Scott. It's all about winning races.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think it's always a tough question. This championship evolves crazy fast. I mean, within two races it could be a totally different outlook. So I don't know. I think we just need to focus on what we normally do.

The only thing that does change is you have to be aware and mindful of how people race as they get towards the end of the season, who has more to lose, who has more to gain. That does change a little bit.

Our overall thought process is just maximize what we can for the weekend. If it's not good enough at the end of the day for championship points compared to our competitors, then it's not good enough. We can only try and maximize our performance. That's all we can really focus on.

**Q. Max, a little bit more about the evolution of the team. You made a big jump clearly. Do you feel like you're getting there? Test day was a big deal. Where would you place the team on a scale of 1 to 10?**

MAX CHILTON: I think for a new team coming into the series, I think we're 8 out of 10. I think we're doing a great job. The thing that really hurts is we've got no engineering staff which have done IndyCar before. We have no factory-based team. We very rarely get to test at a track we race on. This was one of the first tracks we got to test at. The good thing with the four remaining races of the year, I think it's Pocono we're not testing at.

I feel like I'm driving the best I have. I out-qualified my teammates pretty much every race apart from two. I feel like I'm driving well. In the races it hasn't been going my way. I know I've got things to work on myself.

Tomorrow is the best time for me to show that. We'll try to get the best result we can for the team.

**Q. Robert, you probably haven't had a chance to talk to James, but how do you relate to him as a teammate? He sets the fast lap, then the next lap he's in the tire barriers. That gets you into the Fast Six, which benefited you a little bit. He went from hero to the tire barrier so quickly.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I don't really understand your question.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: You pretty much summed it up, what happened.

I'd like to think I was going to get into the Fast Six on merit. I was on a lap that was about to be a 64.9. The car was feeling good. I was in the zone. I don't think I needed the reds to get me in.

Kind of a weird way to get in. There was confusion I guess seeing if they did times before the red. A lot of investigations going on afterwards.

Yeah, I mean, our car is fast at Schmidt Peterson Motorsports. We need to have to work a little harder than some of our competitors. We can get the lap time out of it. We have a very fine window where the weak spot is.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I wasn't aware what was going on. I actually asked, Why is Josef's car going back into the pit lane because he was 10th. I saw him on the big screen getting back into the car. Oh, what's happening? Then they said one minute till green. We went out and qualified in the Fast Six.

I didn't think I was at risk of getting bumped out because when I entered the pits I was seventh, then he got his lap and I was in sixth. Felt like I was going to make it anyways, so I don't know. Try not to pay attention to that anyway.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thank you very much.

We'll welcome up our polesitter, Alexander Rossi of Andretti Autosport. A new career best start here at Mid-Ohio, actually the ninth race this season where Alex has set a new personal best qualifying result at a race, his third pole.

Alex, the last lap, take us through it. Seemed like you were confident in the package you had, went out and ran your lap.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It was a little bit of a surprise because yesterday we thought it was a pretty big disadvantage. For some reason we were getting it on lap one with reds, other guys were getting it on two and

three. That was something we were concerned about overnight. We didn't really resolve it, but it played to our favor today.

For whatever reason, we had a one-lap car on reds, so that was a unique thing that's happened for us this year. We used it to our advantage. That's the reason we sat there. We knew that was where our car was going to be best, one lap, going out.

THE MODERATOR: You've competed at this track a number of times. What are some of the characteristics that make it stand out from other tracks on the schedule?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: That's a good question. It's all rhythm based from, like, turn four through turn 13. There's no kind of weird sections. It's all very much that turn four leads into the rest of the lap. They're usually broken up by straightaways.

You really need to be confident and comfortable with yourself and the car from really entering turn four all the way through. With that, it's pretty difficult to pass because there is no real straight braking zone until you come back around to turn four again.

It is a tricky place to pass, so it's an even bigger relief and positive thing we got pole.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. What is it like to win a pole? You seem pretty calm. Will Power was talking earlier this week, you're the fastest man on the lot basically for a weekend when you can really throw it out there. What is the sensation like for you of winning a pole?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: This one was really special to me. Honestly, I think road courses have not been my strongest kind of attribute in the rise in the IndyCar Series for whatever reason. It's something that has been our biggest focus really from the middle of last year. We haven't really been able to execute very well on road courses this year. We had a couple Fast Sixes, but we weren't ever really confident that we were going to get a pole.

To be able to do that here on arguably the hardest road course we go to is a huge thing, and one that there's a big wave of happiness and relief that kind of washed over me when I was told we got pole.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: He's the king of a lot of things. Yeah, no, it's good. I was more concerned about Ryan honestly. I know I have a pretty similar car to him. On a one-lap shootout like that, all the pressure is on us drivers to get it done. He had just as good of an opportunity as I did. He kind of had the better of me yesterday. To be able to work on it overnight and make

positive changes for this morning leading into this afternoon is a testament to the 27 team, my engineer, the working relationship that we have.

**Q. If you have tires that turn on quicker than everyone else (indiscernible)?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know, to be fair, because we don't have a warmup. I'd like to be able to be like, Yeah, I know.

I think our deg, I did 11 laps on the set of reds yesterday afternoon. It wasn't horrendous. I don't know that the two correlate because you have different packages for qualifying performance and a race setup, as well, especially around a track like this where you're sliding around so much. I don't think the two correlate because the car is going to be pretty substantially different.

**Q. (Question regarding the Long Beach pole.)**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Absolutely. We've kind of excelled in those situations. Watkins was another warmup-lap situation. That was kind of my background in Europe, I guess, with the other tire manufacturer. You kind of only got one lap anyway. I feel that I can do better than people in that scenario. It's not two and three where we continue to improve, and I might not get the last 10th or two out of it.

There's a time advantage, there is an advantage to be able to beat your gap the way you wanted to, go out and try to get it done.

**Q. Scott is lurking back there, but yesterday you were saying what you need now is wins, need him to have a few trips here and there. Is today kind of what the doctor ordered?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's a step in the right direction. But, I mean, I don't think that ninth is anything to be comfortable with Scott Dixon. As we've said before, he can start anywhere and still win a race. We just have to go out and try and win.

It's a points game on the other people, right? Where he finishes is nothing we can control. We just have to make sure we do our job and make sure no mistakes happen and we execute the pit stops right, we can just manage the race fine.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I mean, as much as I have to be aware of Josef and Will. I don't think Ryan is any different than the other four that are all in that bunch that are trying to get ahead.

**Q. You were part of the review in round two. How much were you aware of that or were you aware of that?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Review? Phoenix?

**Q. Round two here qualifying, qualifying review.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think there were eight or nine guys under review.

**Q. You weren't concerned?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Absolutely not.

**Q. Can you describe any differences in the physicality of this car compared to last year.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's pretty much the same. There's less steering load, in a sense. The strength demand is lower. You're hustling a lot more. I think they balance each other out.

**Q. Where is the worst bump here on this track? Seems like two-thirds of the way through the carousel you almost catch air. Any part of this track that unsettles you from a bump standpoint?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Considering we race at places like Detroit and Iowa and Toronto, I mean, no. I didn't even think of a bump until you mentioned it. Yeah, there is one in the carousel, but by our standards it's a pretty smooth racetrack. Just a lot of grip and fast and flowing.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.