

IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday August 25, 2018

Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with our Verizon IndyCar Series post-race press conference. Joined now by the winner of the Bommarito Automotive Group 500 here at Gateway Motorsports Park, Will Power, driving the No. 12 Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet for Team Penske. Will's third consecutive podium in the past three races, also his third win of the season. This is his 35th career win, which ties Bobby Unser for seventh on the all-time wins list. Will, last year you started from pole in this race, and unfortunately ended your race a bit early with an early crash that pretty much ended your championship battle. This one might get you back into the championship hunt, moving 68 points behind Scott Dixon. Take us through your race and ultimately how your thoughts are heading out of this race and into the final two races of the season.

WILL POWER: Yeah, pretty determined to at least get past Turn 1. That would be a start. But you know, the car was not that good last night. We had to work -- have a really good think about it and spent a little time speaking with my engineer, and we came up with a really good setup, or what we thought would be a good setup, and it ended up being one.

It was just a lot of fun out there. I was so happy to win my first race with Roger. I was just wondering when that was going to come because I didn't get to work with him in Indy and obviously won two races there. That was my first win with Roger, and when he told me I could go wide open and not save fuel, that was a great call and a lot of fun, to chop through the field, passed -- I've never passed so many cars in a shorter period of time. Yeah, I have to thank IndyCar for a great package, as well. As you could see, last year it was very difficult to pass, and they came up with a package this year where you could definitely pass and run close.

THE MODERATOR: How aware were you of the strategy that Alexander Rossi was taking and if you were going to be able to get around him heading towards the end of the race.

WILL POWER: Well, all I knew was Roger said go wide open and the other guys dropped back and tried to save fuel. So I figured that there would be a bunch of guys trying to do it, and I saw the number you had to get for us, and I was like, you have to go so slow to get that number, and I thought that we could probably make that time up if we just ran wide open, and that

was the case. Yeah, it was the first time in my career where I'd gone that way instead of saving fuel because obviously I'm very good at saving fuel, but so many times I wish we could just go wide open. When you've got Roger on the radio, he's always pushing just to push, to go, if you've got a fast car, and that's what we did.

THE MODERATOR: We're heading into two permanent road courses to finish out the season. You have a win at the Grand Prix of Indianapolis earlier this year. How are you feeling about your chances heading into those last two races?

WILL POWER: It's going to be very tight. It's really hard to close a gap at this point of the season because as you can see, the same guys are finishing in the top 5 every week, and they're all the guys you're racing. I need those guys to have a bad day and for me to win a race. We have been so quick everywhere all year, we've just had -- amongst the guys I'm racing, between them they've had one DNF. I've had five DNFs, basically five. I've had a lot to make up, and we're on the way there. Still a big chunk of points, honestly, when you're only gaining maybe 10 or 12 a race.

Q. When you went to the inside of Rossi, I don't know if you're aware, but he went on to have the mother and father of all saves to keep it off the wall; were you confident you wouldn't get caught up in whatever incident he went on to have?

WILL POWER: No, not if you're on the inside. I tried on the outside of Dixon and that didn't work, so I figured you'd have to go on the inside. That's why I tried to do the fake and get alongside the wall and then get the inside.

Q. And you did basically the same over on Scott, as well?

WILL POWER: Yeah, yeah. After I went up in the marbles, I thought, man, I lost so many spots. I was so mad. I was trying to get back in the game and win a race, so there was a lot of determination there, and obviously a very good car. I felt like we had a better car than Dixon from the beginning and Rossi. Just following them, I'm like, they were saving good fuel and I'd run very close to him, and I could see they were struggling a little bit, so I knew if we got either clean air or got by them, we'd be in pretty good shape.

Q. How much detail can you go into about what you changed on the car?

WILL POWER: We changed a lot, actually. We changed springs front and rear, we changed toes, we changed aero, everything, cambers, all of it. We had to make the car better, and we did.

Q. You just mentioned you were in the marbles or close to the marbles. Was this a scary moment?

WILL POWER: Yeah, because at Phoenix we did the same thing. You just go up to the wall so quick. I had that same feeling, like no front, and I was like heading up there, and yeah, didn't get to the wall. Yeah, we kept it low from there on.

Q. From yesterday to today the other dramatic change was the weather. Was there any change in the track conditions that you could feel?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it wasn't really. Like there was so much grip. It was amazing the speed you would carry in 3 and 4. The cars are really hooked up. Yeah, it's a good -- definitely a better package than last year as far as following. I think these guys have nailed it at a lot of places, obviously fine tuning at other places, but yeah, the car was fun to drive.

Q. It used to be -- well, before I get to that, your final pit stop you got that splash and you came out and Rossi was just ahead of you, and he was having to save fuel and you could give it full throttle. How important was that?

WILL POWER: To get the fuel?

Q. You got the fuel, to be that close to him where you could come out so that you could just blow by him.

WILL POWER: Yeah, he would have had to have a significant gap to beat us because once I had a two-second gap, I just backed way off. But we had so much speed in hand, yeah. It was kind of fun, like I've never passed so many cars. You just keep knocking people off one after another. I had no clue who was leading or what it was when I went out of the pits until Roger said, you're the leader now. I was like, ooh, that was good strategy.

Q. It used to be you could win everywhere but the ovals, and this year you won the two biggest oval races on the schedule. Talk about that.

WILL POWER: Yeah, ovals are where it's at for me in the last two years, last two or three years. I've won more oval races than road courses and street courses. Got to pick my game back up on road and street courses now. Seems like ovals -- I love ovals. It's my favorite part of IndyCar racing. It's what separates IndyCar racing from everything else, and just enjoy the whole process of putting a good oval car together and driving and where to run and air, and it's just so much fun. Yeah, favorite, favorite part of racing in IndyCar.

Q. I keep on hearing you say you've never passed so many cars, and yet I walked up and down pit road after the race and Sato and some other

drivers said they couldn't pass at all. What was the difference?

WILL POWER: Yeah, well, I guess that's what's good about a package where they've taken some of the downforce off, although it didn't feel like that, is that some people will struggle, so that's how you get the variance between the cars. When you have so much downforce, everyone does the same speed. It just masks all handling deficiencies. You have to take some grip away so people are not so -- only a couple of people nail the setup and there's some in between and there's some that really struggle, and then you get racing, and you get a bit of tire deg and you get mistakes, and that's what IndyCar has tried to achieve with this car, and they have it. A lot of the short ovals for sure this year have been like that, and obviously road courses, as well. You never see passing at Mid-Ohio, and there was a lot of passing.

Q. You said it was the first time in your career that -- not saving fuel, but actually pushing paid off; does that factor into the future, these situations, or is it just situational?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's been more like -- the last couple years I've been like, man, I'm not going to save fuel anymore. I'd have like 10 more race wins to my name if I'd just taken off back in the day instead of saving fuel and getting caught by a yellow or something. Yeah, that's the most fun way to go racing is when you can just go hard, you don't have to think about lifting and being in a lean fuel slot. Yeah, we'll see, maybe we'll do that the next two races, see how it works out.

Q. With your position in the championship, are you going to take more risks than usual as you come into these next two races, especially with double points in Sonoma?

WILL POWER: I think we have to strategy-wise, but it will all depend on where the guys we're racing -- teams like Rossi and Dixon are the main guys, and Josef. He's in our team. But if they're at the front, yes, I mean, we have to take risks. We have to make things happen. Kind of like tonight, we just said, let's go, let's run hard. We've got to beat these guys. We can't finish behind anymore. So I'm going to be aggressive with them racing-wise. If there's a half gap there, I'm going to go for it. You have to. They know it; they've got a lead. I've got nothing to lose. That goes for strategy, as well.

Q. As far as the difference between Chevrolet and Honda, would you say -- there were a lot of people pointing out that I think the top six or seven cars in practice last night were all Honda. Was that just a byproduct of, in fact, Penske struggling a little bit, nothing to do with engines?

WILL POWER: It was nothing to do with engines, pure handling. That's the great thing about this package is you have to get your car right, you can't just rely on downforce to mask issues. There really doesn't -- it's

hard to see any difference between the engines when it's like that.

Q. You talked about the championship early on; can it be done? Can you catch these guys in the last two races?

WILL POWER: Yes, we can absolutely do it. It's mathematically possible. When I turned up to Indy, it was a single points race and a double points race. I was about this amount of points behind, and I came out two points ahead with two wins. So yes, absolutely.