

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

Alexander Rossi

Andretti Autosport

Will Power

Team Penske

Josef Newgarden

Team Penske

THE MODERATOR: We have Team Penske's Will Power, finished second today. Will, it's best in class today for you. Is that how you saw it?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I actually never saw (Alexander Rossi) Felt like I was in my own race with Josef (Newgarden). Yeah, that's all we had. It was a very clean day for us. Good start, no mistakes, reasonable car. Yeah, we simply did not have the pace to run with Alex. I've rarely said that in my career.

THE MODERATOR: You had a battle with your teammate. Obviously, he's the points leader. Had to behave to a certain degree.

WILL POWER: Yeah, absolutely. I actually got an overboost penalty on that out lap coming out of the carousel. Got a big run. So I had to just play it really clean, safe, keep ahead of him. Obviously if he got a nose ahead or something, I would have probably just let him go.

Yeah, then it was a matter of pulling a gap. We weren't in the same proximity to battle.

THE MODERATOR: I'm sure there's a lot of races where you're saying you would like to have a yellow to bunch things up. Do you think it would have mattered?

WILL POWER: I don't think it would have mattered. Yeah, I don't think so. Rain may have. Rain would have been the only thing that might have helped us today, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You said 'reasonable'.

WILL POWER: Day?

Q. Reasonable car.

WILL POWER: Let's say if Alex wasn't in the race, I would have said I had a good car. But he's in the race. You can't look at that pace and go, 'What are we missing?' It's kind of tough to pinpoint that because the



car did not feel bad. It was a reasonable balance. Tires kind of went off a bit at the end.

Yeah, hard for me to understand how he can be so fast over a whole stint.

THE MODERATOR: Joining us also from Team Penske, Josef Newgarden. Josef, maybe the best thing to be said is you're still the points leader in a third-place finish. Will was just speaking of how dominant Alex was today. That was half a second a lap he put on the field.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That's funny, that's what I figured it was, half second a lap.

Yeah, we obviously didn't have enough today. We were a little shy. Probably a lot shy actually. But we were trying to do what we could to catch back up, hold our ground.

I think even guys behind us were very quick towards the end. Trying to hold our ground was tough in a lot of ways. Alex and Andretti, they were too good for us today. We've got to come back to the drawing board, try to figure out what we're missing.

I have confidence we'll do that. I think Chevy still gave us a great package today. We have to keep tweaking on everything, find out what we need from the car, the engine, make it a bit stronger.

Having REV Group on was great. Still an OK day. Just disappointing when you don't have enough. I think we'll work hard to go find what it is.

THE MODERATOR: How was it racing with Will in the middle section?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Just trying to do what I could. Lost a lot of ground in the start. The left side was not the place to be on the start. Once I got passed by the Rahal Letterman Lanigan guys, it was trying to get back by them, catch up to Will, give a little go to him. I just didn't have enough. I think we were pretty equal. Kind of yo-yoing a bit. He'd pull out, I'd catch back up, he'd pull out again.

Hard to do anything. We were kind of in lockstep most of the day, pushing as hard as we could. What you saw is what we had.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Did you see in the breakdown of the sectors where you were losing out to Alex? Is it an ominous sign for Mid-Ohio in terms of which corners he was superior to you guys?

WILL POWER: We'll have to actually dissect the data.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We haven't seen it yet.

WILL POWER: We saw it in qualifying. Just a bit of everything. We'll have a good look at all the sectors during the race, the tire dropoff, that sort of thing.

Yeah, for me to knock off half a second a lap would have been, man, using a bit of 'push to pass' every lap type thing.

Q. With the Chevy fuel consumption, was it dialed down? Was that part of the problem? Did you have your engine full lean all the time?

WILL POWER: Yeah, for the most part, we ran lean a lot.

Q. You have had races like Alex has had today. How difficult is that when you're that far ahead, you don't see the rabbit jump out in front of you, something unexpected? Probably harder than it really looks to us.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I find it quite lovely when we have that much of a gap.

WILL POWER: Yeah, you have a gap like that, yeah, you don't want your mind to wander a bit. Yeah, no, it's nice. You just pray there's not a safety car, rain, something like that, that takes your lead away.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That's a big thing, you don't want a caution, stay green. Other than that, it's really nice.

Q. What about the debris in Turn 7? That chunk of asphalt.

WILL POWER: Is that what it was, the track coming up?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, that's what it looked like.

WILL POWER: Wonder if they're going to resurface this joint at some point. It would be expensive to do the whole thing.

Q. Could you see it. Was it hazardous?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was offline.

WILL POWER: The track is good. It's nice, a good track. If they resurfaced it, it would be big. That would be expensive to do this track. Maybe just do the corners or something.

Q. The chunk of concrete, you weren't lobbying for

a caution or anything?

WILL POWER: I actually thought it was, like, dirt. That's what I thought. Yeah, I was a bit careful over it. Yeah, it's a challenge sometimes, get stuck under your car, you head off in a wall.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was offline enough that I don't think anyone was complaining too bad about it.

WILL POWER: We should have been. Where is my caution? Dangerous, dangerous!

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Not sure it would have changed the day much, to be honest.

Q. Josef, you said earlier that Chevy gave you a great package, you have to figure out where you can improve to catch up with Alex. Do you have already an idea where the car can be improved, engine, chassis?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it's both. They work in unison. It's about optimizing both together.

But I think we have some ideas of where we can be stronger. It's just a matter of implementing them. You can only do things so quickly. We only have so much test time.

I think there's ideas that we have of where to be stronger. It's all around really. I think it's a unison between the chassis and the engine where we've always got to be continuing to push forward.

I feel confident that we have the best of the best. Chevy, they're stacked with great people. They have so much potential to always turn things around, do a great job for us. I feel the same way about the team. It's a matter of always making those the strongest together.

Q. Will, can you leave here feel going about how you ran, you did everything you could? Do you leave a little bit disappointed in that you got your butt kicked pretty bad anyway?

WILL POWER: I think we'll leave trying to understand how to go faster. It's something we review pretty extensively to understand how we can come back next year and be closer.

Yeah, once we get all the sector analysis report and all that stuff, we'll understand more. Yeah, I mean, it's hard to win in IndyCar these days. For someone to have an advantage like that, got to have a pretty close look.

Q. Are you lobbying for a repave job here?

WILL POWER: It's fine. No, it's fine. Of course, it would be nice if it was repaved, but it's actually a cool track. Yeah, I'm not lobbying for anything. I'm just wondering if anyone knew. I was just lying in bed last night, Hmm, that would be expensive, quite expensive.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That's just a genuine thought. He's just curious. If anyone has the answer, just get it to him because he wants to know (laughter).

Q. Maybe you want to chip in for one?

WILL POWER: No, I don't want it that bad. I'm fine with the track. It's good. Makes it hard.

Q. Alex has been really strong. How good is Alex driving his racecar?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think their team is very strong. You see throughout the organization, including Colton, they've just got very strong racecars. All their drivers look good consistently, which I think speaks to the strength of their organization.

Like I said, I'll just repeat myself, I feel confident in our organization. I think we've got the best of the best. We can take the challenge to them no problem. They're without a doubt a tough competitor right now. They're very, very on it. Every track we go to, we have to worry about them.

They're going to be tough all the way through to the finish. I don't think they're going to have any places where they're weak actually.

Q. Throwing this out there. Do you ever sometimes think what it might be like to have Alex as a teammate?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That would be cool.

WILL POWER: Yeah, Josef really wants him as a teammate.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it would be awesome.

Q. What about you?

WILL POWER: I'm good, whatever, man.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: As long as you're not kicking me out.

WILL POWER: As long as he's not replacing me (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll see you in three weeks in Toronto.

We have race winner Alexander Rossi, from Andretti Autosport. That was pretty impressive.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Half a second a lap for 55 laps in an hour and a half. That's probably as good as it gets.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, for sure. I mean, it was probably one of the best racecars I've ever had. Huge hats off to the 27 team, (engineer) Jeremy Milless) and (strategist) Rob (Edwards) and the whole group of

guys.

I mean, we have been quick through the whole season. But, yeah, we just haven't really had it come our ways many times as we want for one reason or another.

It was good to be able to look into things after Texas, kind of understand what was our mistakes, what was bad luck, and the source of it. To come out and be able to do what we did today is a huge testament to the whole organization.

It's what we needed, for sure. We'll enjoy tonight, get to work on Toronto tomorrow morning.

THE MODERATOR: As I saw it, there was one moment in the race for you, that was the first corner, first lap. Tell us about that battle with Colton (Herta). Did you have anything else the rest of the way?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, I was able to get a pretty good tow off of him into turn one. I knew that clean air was important. When I had the window there on the outside, I went for it. Clean air gives you the ability to manage your pace and tires and fuel, kind of just control it from there. That's what we were able to do.

The hardest part of the race was for sure the first stint with the Firestone alternate tires. There's definitely a performance advantage, but the degradation was quite high. Yeah, it was about getting to our target lap on those tires. For sure, the last three laps, it was moving around quite a lot, but it was obviously the same for everyone else.

THE MODERATOR: Difficult to keep focus when you're 28 seconds up?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No. You're pushing every lap regardless of the gap, right? You got to stay with that mindset, in the zone. Obviously when you have a gap that big, your concern is yellow. With how things have gone for us this year, I was waiting for it. I was just hoping it didn't happen. Fortunately today there were no yellows and we were able to bring it home from where we started.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. On the potential yellow, we had a couple pieces of asphalt down in Turn 7. Did they ask you about it? Did you mention it? Did you say, No, it's fine?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, they didn't ask. I think the race direction and (Race Director) Kyle (Novak) has proven this year, really ever since he's been involved in the series, that he's not interested in upsetting a race for kind of irrelevant things. I mean, we're not an oval. There's no safety concern with debris being off line.

Yeah, it was a non-issue. I think that's how it should

have been called.

Q. It never came up, cross your mind that might be the yellow?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Not really, no.

Q. I think Jeremy, to see how you think, said if you pitted two laps different, you would have led every lap of this race. Is this about as close to near perfection as you've had in your career?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I suppose so, yeah, from a numbers standpoint. Yeah, probably. I mean, I told the guys on the radio, once I crossed the checkered flag, it was the best car I've ever driven. I think there's a lot of truth to that.

I don't care how well you're driving, what sort of talent level you're perceived to have, you can't do anything without a car underneath you. The Andretti Autosport group I think was strong all weekend. Ryan had some bad luck in qualifying, otherwise he would have been right up there, as well.

This is something that each weekend we're trying to improve upon our weak areas. We're able to continue to chip away at it.

Q. Now you've added Road America to a list that included the 100th Indy 500, Watkins Glen, Long Beach Grand Prix. Those are pretty big jewels.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: For sure. For whatever reason, we haven't had a good result here. Took four years to even get in the top 10. As I said at the beginning of the weekend, we've always had pace, but just haven't closed the deal on Sunday. To be able to not only close the deal, but do it in the way we did, feels good.

I love this racetrack. I love the crowd. I love the energy that exists here from the fans. It's a special one for me, I'm sure.

Q. Were you bummed at all you didn't lead every lap?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No. Unless there's a point for that to be missed, no, doesn't really matter.

Q. You've been second three of the last four races coming in. How frustrated were you getting finishing second, trying to get back into Victory Lane?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know that 'frustrated' is the right word. I think it was more disappointment because we don't show up to finish second, right? It wasn't that we were upset with second, it's that we were getting beat by the guys we were fighting in the championship. That's where it was hurting us.

But the thing that I was telling everyone is, We have pace, it's not that we're finishing second or tenth because we're struggling. We're there fighting for wins. We're just not getting it done.

It was a good one today to be able to close the gap to Josef. Yeah, I mean, there's a long road ahead of us. By no means is it over. There's a lot of fighting left to do. There's going to be tough competition.

Q. How great that the rain held off? Victory Lane it starts pouring.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: You never want that. You either want it to start wet and be wet the whole way or not rain at all. When you bring in intermittent weather conditions, there's variables and things that can be out of your control.

I'm glad that it stayed dry for the whole race, glad for the fans and the people camping out there. I'm sure it wouldn't have been fun if there were a downpour in people's tents.

Q. Were there concerns maybe there was trouble with the fuel consumption? Did the team make significant changes chassis-wise for the race?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: We were pushing, but we were hitting our fuel numbers. There was never a concern. That was a good thing. The car balance was just there to allow us to do the lap times.

No, we didn't change anything really overnight. We did some fine-tuning things, but we felt that the car that we had in qualifying was good. We just missed the conditions a little bit and didn't anticipate there being as much grip as there ultimately was in qualifying.

Yeah, we knew we had a great racecar. We were quickest in P2 on Friday. Had an engine issue in P3, which Honda did a great job to get a new engine for qualifying, which is no easy feat, to be able to bring it up to the performance level in such a short period of time. The fact they were able to do that, to give us a front row start, made quite a bit of difference today. Huge hats off to Honda and HPD.

Q. Bearing in mind the Penskes finished half a minute behind you, does that weigh into your consideration where you want to drive next year?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I have no considerations.

Q. None whatsoever?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No.

Q. Is it in somebody else's hands?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's in God's hands.

Q. Is it?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It is.

Q. How bad were the tires at the end?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: That's not deg. We go around, pick up marbles for other reasons. The deg was pretty high on the red tires, for sure, which is something that we knew going in. I mean, you get a lot of performance

out of them, but they fall off harder than the primary tires.

I think the Firestone primaries were fantastic. They're consistent throughout a run, what you'd expect.

Q. You won your first race with execution, perfect execution on fuel at Indy. Now you've won with kind of a dominant execution. Both wins, but which win is more satisfying?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Indy, for sure.

Q. Even as dominant as today was?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, if I won Indy, yeah. Still Indy 500, right?

Q. Not getting results (here) the previous years, were there particular things, any commonality in what held you back?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No. I don't remember '16. I think we just sucked. '17 I crashed with Tony (Kanaan). '18 we had a mechanical failure on the car. All three different things.

Q. How motivated have you been this season coming so close to the championship last year? What did you learn from last year's championship run carrying into this season?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think the big thing is just not making mistakes. We had a good year last year, but Scott just had fewer mistakes than us. That's ultimately what cost us. Same amount of wins, similar amount of podiums. Ultimately he just had one or two less bad days than we did. I think that's the big thing.

Obviously this year I think our competition definitely closed the gap to us in terms of kind of car performance, new aero kit last year. I think we came out of the box pretty strong. The fact that Andretti Autosport has been able to answer to that really from the first two, three races we weren't great, but we were able to self-diagnose what we needed differently.

There's different tire compounds, generally it's a new year, different conditions all around. We've been able to adapt to that pretty quickly and pretty well. I think that's always hard to do.

It's always hard to take a fast car and make it faster. It's very impressive that they've been able to do that. Obviously can't do it without Honda's continual development, as well.

Yeah, in some way I think it's minimizing mistakes and just trying to take advantage of the days where you have the car that's best in the field.

Q. Kind of a cool factor in you've won at a track that you won at early in your career in Formula BMW?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I guess. I mean, from

where we came in in 2016, my last time here was 2008. Eight years had gone by. I felt things kind of came full circle just by being here, competing in IndyCar. The fact now that we've been able to win here is pretty cool.

There's not a lot of tracks that I raced at in Formula BMW that I'm currently racing at. Yeah, for sure. I hadn't thought about that. Thank you.

Q. A couple races last year that didn't go to plan, obviously Detroit, here. As a team you targeted those races to make improvements. How satisfying is that?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: The team is doing the utmost. We've run into this year, I mean, with an unbelievable amount of motivation to win this championship. We felt we made mistakes last year. We had some bad luck, especially in Portland. I think it paid in the end result in the championship.

We know we have the capability and the team and the performance to do it. This off-season with a lot of soul searching for all of us, trying how to figure out how to go one better, I think that's why there was a lot of the frustration the last couple weeks because we've been close but missing opportunities to the Penske cars.

Today was a good day to be able to kind of right that ship. Hopefully we'll start a trend for the second half of the season.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, thank you.