

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday July 27, 2019

Press Conference

Will Power

Team Penske

Alexander Rossi

Andretti Autosport

Sebastien Bourdais

Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser-Sullivan

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Alexander Rossi. Alex, it's been a really good day for you, at least as it relates to contracts, team announcements and so forth. How was your qualifying run, how has your day been?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, it was fine. I think ultimately we came up short through Will (Power) just got pretty clever there, did two laps on a set of tires, but didn't push on the first lap. He had I think a bit longer tire life. Good job to them.

I think our car is really good. I think it's probably the strongest car on the primary tire, which is obviously good for tomorrow. We'll have to go out and try and get the lead early and see what we can do from there.

THE MODERATOR: What happened on your first lap in the Fast Six? You seemed to have a problem, came in and pitted. What happened?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: We were always planning on doing one lap. I just went off in Turn 11, went a bit too quick for the cold tires. No big drama.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Your last two laps out there, you were like King Kong in a lot of ways. Each sector you were faster and faster. Was it a shock given Will's time?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, so we'll have to look at that. I thought we definitely would have it based at that point based on what guys did on their first run. So, yeah, the car was great. We were on for a similar lap. I had a pretty big slide in Turn 4 and 5. I think we just ran out of tire. We'll have to look at that.

I think it's OK. You're always disappointed if you miss it by one or two hundredths because there's a lot of things you can look back on the lap, things you could have done differently. Once there's a gap of that size, it's OK.

Q. We were a little worried about you yesterday.



The team kind of struggled here the last two practice sessions. Did you do a wholesale change on the car?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, actually I think the car was always there, thereabouts. We never got a run on reds. Scott (Dixon) was P17 in the same session I was P14 or whatever. That was unfortunate.

No, I never thought we were in huge jeopardy of anything.

Q. The grip vs. the last race in your qualifying session?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, any rubber that's not on Firestone always makes it worse. It was not a gain at all, it was worse.

Q. I noticed last year your pole time was faster. A half second difference.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Every year Firestone comes with a slightly different tire based on the previous year and the race, things that they found in their post-event analysis. Whether it's something that the teams are privy to, it's not usually. They are always coming up with ways to improve the tire from a reliability, durability standpoint.

Sometimes you just see some tracks you go, you have a tire that even though it shouldn't be much different, sometimes it's a couple 10ths quicker, sometimes a couple 10ths slower.

Q. Do you have to psych yourself going into a race tomorrow when it's going to be in the 90s, humidity will be up, a long day? How grueling is that, how do you prepare for that?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Drink lots of water, don't eat a burger tonight, I guess. There's not much you can do now if you're not prepared for it. There's no overnight pill you're going to take that's going to make you better.

We know this stretch of the season is tough. We know Mid-Ohio is tough. It's always hot here. Nothing we weren't expecting.

Q. How tough is it in the cockpit?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's all relative, right? Qualifying is probably actually harder than the race just because you're having to hang it out there so much, the car is on a knife edge. In the race, the pace is a lot slower, you're looking after the tire and the fuel. I think the hardest day, honestly, is always Saturdays.

Q. You've made your announcement. Now you've had a little bit of time for people to weigh in. Have you started to get the reception, congratulations, so forth?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I haven't paid attention really. I've been focused on qualifying. The announcement was in the middle of P3 and qualifying. We've had a job to do to make sure we start up front and beat Josef. That's what we got to do tomorrow, as well.

Q. Starting a race next to Will, is that a lot of fun?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I think so. I mean, it's always good to start next to Will because you know you're up front. That's a positive. Yeah, no, he races hard. He races clean. Yeah, it's going to be an interesting turn four, for sure. I think we're going to both have one priority in mind.

Q. Two pit stops last year. Do you think a lot of people will try that strategy, or three?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's two, three, four, five, six. Who knows.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Alex.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Let's start with Sebastien Bourdais. You had really one of the drives of the year last year. This place really suits you. I think you went from 24th to 6th, passed 17 different cars last year. Is that still fresh in your mind or have you moved on?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Well, I mean, you got to move on, right? You can't live in the past. Those kind of races, if you got a bad day, it's raining outside, maybe you watch it again.

Yeah, I mean, it was just an awesome day. The conditions were perfect. We had three brand-new sets of red tires, which turned out to be the preferred tire because it got overcast and cooler.

So, yeah, it was just the perfect scenario to try to recover from that mess I created in qualifying. Just an awesome day, great memory. Now it's 2019.

THE MODERATOR: The car is obviously pretty good this time to make the Fast Six. You've shown speed. What are your prospects for tomorrow?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Do the best we can. Obviously we're the little team that could. Trying to take the fight to the big guys. We obviously got some work to do on the rerun. I don't know how they did that. Just really happy for the group, for that No. 18.

I think everybody really executed well. I pulled it off in Q1. Q2 was kind of a bit of recovery miracle there because the 60 went off in front of us, put a bunch of

dirt on the track. I had to abort the lap, so I had to go again. As you can see for us, was not a given to be able to do it on a second try on the tires.

Yeah, just really happy that we could sneak in the Fast Six. Then that rerun on the Firestone red tires, we just lost a bunch of grip. I think the track temp, sun staying out, really impacted us. Overall just really happy with the result.

As far as the race is concerned for tomorrow, it's going to be a fight. All the top guns are out there, going to want to fight it out. You had so many good cars, you got Dixie out there that's going to be charging from a few positions back. There's a bunch of guys who are going to be on the move. We just going to try to do our thing. Yeah, if possible, get a podium. Who knows what can happen.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Seb.

Q. This is kind of like an old-school track from back in your Champ Car glory days. What was it like back then to come here? What was the track like, the success you had?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, I mean, believe it or not, we only came once here with Craig. Qualified third or fourth, something like that. It was actually significantly slower. The balance we have with those cars now compared to the understeer you had to drive with to be able to hold onto the rear tires back then, it's quite interesting.

It's a very different way to drive the cars. I guess the teams have pushed the envelope so far as far as getting the cars just dialed in. It's very impressive.

Yeah, not a whole lot of history here with (Engineer) Craig (Hampson). Yeah, I've been in the mix here for quite a few years. Put the Ford (GT) on pole in IMSA here a few months back. It's a place I really come to grips with, really enjoy.

Yeah, just happy days. It's always a very challenging but super exciting and rewarding place to put a lap together. When you do, it's super flowy, there's no stoppage. It really is one corner that kind of flows into another. When you do achieve that, it's extremely fun.

THE MODERATOR: Will, that's the most excited we've seen you all season, at least since St. Pete and COTA when you were on the pole. This is one you really wanted. The big one still comes tomorrow.

WILL POWER: Yes, that's right. Just after the year we've had, even the last couple of weeks we've had, it's been bloody terrible. Couple mistakes by me. Very determined to get pole here. I'm equally so to win the race.

But, yeah, just happy. I think it beats you down a bit

when you have constant bad runs, things just don't flow your way. Mistakes by myself, that sort of thing, so...

There's always a turning point. That's the good news. When you have a bad race, the good news is there's a good chance the next one will be good. If that's no good, the next one will be good. If 10 of them, like mine, haven't been good, the next one is definitely going to be good.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You say it's a law of averages you had to have a good race.

WILL POWER: Just going to have to be with the speed we got. At one point where God just says, Let him have it (laughter).

Q. Was your reaction when they told you (that) you were P1, you let out that scream, was that just like...

WILL POWER: Sticking it to the years. Yeah, there you go. Take that one off me. He goes, All right, tomorrow.

No, I was just joking. I was joking, please (laughter).

Q. Is there a key part of the racetrack?

WILL POWER: Yeah, there is actually. It's everywhere. It was like everywhere. I literally nailed every sector. Yeah, wasn't a sector... I'd be surprised if there was a sector that I wasn't P1 in. If there is, I'd be really disappointed.

Q. Given your pace on blacks, is this a race you might just go destroy the competition?

WILL POWER: No, it's very difficult in IndyCar because they have a rule where the back marks are allowed to race you, which I think is terrible.

Q. What was it like to have a car that was good in every sector? Obviously you could feel it as you were doing it. Was it unexpected or did you feel it was coming?

WILL POWER: Yeah, when I started, the lap, when I get in that zone, usually I nail it. There's a zone I get to, which is usually only in the Fast Six, that I don't get to any other time of the whole weekend, and it's quite difficult to get to. When you get to that area, it's usually just perfect. It just is.

It's really difficult to understand how you get there, but I get to a zone that's like no other. Very rewarding.

Q. Is it from a mental state? Explain that zone.

WILL POWER: Yeah, just a mental state I get into. It's just a state where I just get it all right. There's no mistakes. There's no thought but what I'm doing. Just absolutely nail it.

Q. Do you talk to yourself as much during that mental state as when it's over? Are you hyping

yourself up or is it just inside?

WILL POWER: It's just inside. Just a state. I'm sure a lot of musicians would talk about it, top athletes would talk about it. When you get that flow state, just a great state to be in. Everything just flows for you, just happens for you. It's a great, great area to get in as a human.

Q. You're still counting down closer to Mario with your number of poles.

WILL POWER: I'm aware of that. I need to average about four a year to get him, so... I'm up to three this year. That's good. Still a few races to go, too. See what we can do.

It would be very cool to be up there with such a legend, and to actually surpass him would be amazing. That is absolutely a goal because it's close enough to be one now.

Q. You're trying to extend a streak of consecutive years with a win. You have 12. How important is that to you?

WILL POWER: Yeah, obviously. I just want to get a win to get all the boys happy. But, of course, there's those sort of records you can think about, too. I didn't know. Is it 12 years?

Q. 12 consecutive seasons.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I had one '07, '08. See if we can do it again.

Q. Rossi did this race last year in two stops. Would you rather be the rabbit and go fast, three stops, or save fuel?

WILL POWER: Yeah, we're planning on three, going pretty hard. That's our plan.

Q. You'd rather just go fast?

WILL POWER: Yeah, just going to go as fast as we can. No fuel saved. Just go.

Q. You talked about putting pressure on yourself to go fast, especially when you have a good car. Mistakes the last couple weeks. Is the pressure off or alleviated?

WILL POWER: It's just typical of me. I just want to win. I just think you can't think about winning, honestly. That may have been my mistake the last few races. You get a bit desperate to get a win.

You just got to take what it gives you simply. You just can't make those little mistakes at the end of races like I have the last two weeks.

Q. How difficult is it to come here with a book from last year?

WILL POWER: The track has definitely degraded. It gets more polished every year, won't take as much rubber. Doesn't grip up as much. I don't know how long they've had this surface around, but it's quite shiny. But

it's a great place.