

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday August 17, 2019

Press Conference

Scott Dixon

Chip Ganassi Racing

Alexander Rossi

Andretti Autosport

Will Power

Team Penske

Josef Newgarden

Team Penske

THE MODERATOR: We welcome to the media center a pair of outstanding NTT IndyCar Series drivers. First five-time series champion, Scott Dixon of Chip Ganassi Racing. On his left, Alexander Rossi of Andretti Autosport.

Fellows, welcome. It's been a little bit of a break here. I guess first eager to get back at the racetrack. Any fun things on your vacation that you got accomplished.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, no, it's always good to be back at the track. For me, I actually went to two tests in the downtime, but it was just to watch. Not that much fun.

But, yeah, it was nice to actually be home, sort of chill out for a little bit. Kids went back to school. Enjoyed that prep, as well. They weren't too happy about going back to school, but so be it.

I think for a lot of us at this point of the season, you kind of just want to get it knocked out. Looking forward to the next three in a row.

THE MODERATOR: Alex?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't have kids, so I didn't do that. Went to a wedding. That was cool. Yeah, had a test in Portland, which was great to kind of get back in the car, stay in the car, yeah, ahead of what's going to be a pretty important race of the season.

Good to be back here. As Scott said, I think everyone's excited to get through these and see where we end up.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, any back-to-school shopping?

SCOTT DIXON: I always do the back-to-school shopping. I missed the date. Now on most of those forms, there's a link, they deliver it right to the school. But I missed it.



ALEXANDER ROSSI: Like Amazon Prime.

SCOTT DIXON: Amazing. Yeah, you turn up and the stuff is there. They probably charge you a lot more to do it. But I missed it.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Go to Staples.

SCOTT DIXON: It sucked. I got it done.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions for the drivers.

Q. Alex, you just said you had a test in Portland. Any important things you discovered there for the upcoming race?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know. Testing is always hard. These Firestone tires are pretty specific to ambient and track conditions. It was a pretty cold day actually.

Yeah, we went through a test list, got through some things. It's always a little bit of an unknown how much of it will translate until you get to the racetrack.

Q. Alex, I read where you feel these four races set you up pretty well for the championship race. This has been a track, obviously, you won it last year. You ran well at the other three tracks left on the schedule, two of the other three tracks at the schedule. You're pretty optimistic?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I think so. I knew once we got through Toronto and Iowa, we were kind of back to our better places. It was important to get through those as well as we could.

Yeah, I mean, it's hard. You can have past success, as we saw at Mid-Ohio, we were good there in '18, struggled a bit this year. Things change. People get better. There are different parameters that you have to execute on each given day regardless of your past results there.

Yeah, for sure, I think we're confident, more confident at these upcoming tracks than we were at kind of some of the tracks at the middle of the season.

Q. With qualifying not being held today, what does the preparation look like in a two-hour practice session as opposed to dividing your attention in two different objectives?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think it definitely simplifies it. Everybody will just be looking at race running. Some different changes this year with the tires, then also the aero package a little bit, too. That changes that up.

I think everybody's just keen to get out there, see if the track has evolved much from last year with bumps and things like that. We came here with a pretty different kind of outlook and approach that we had last year just because it was not so good.

Yeah, it is what it is. You got to go with it. I think for us, it's probably a little bit better maybe with qualifying out of the books just because we can focus on trying to get a better racecar, whereas last year it was really just qualifying, then nobody really did any long running. We'll see how it plays.

Q. You're both former winners here. Should this be the last race that INDYCAR has at Pocono Raceway, how important were those victories? This is a very challenging oval.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, no, I think you're proud of any race win in this series just because of how hard they are to come by. This track is no exception. It's obviously the second 500-mile race we do. Those are very hard to win with all the different variables that come with that, that length of race. Yeah, it's definitely one you'll cherish.

Fingers crossed we can work something out and we're all back here next year.

SCOTT DIXON: Following up with what Alex said, any race win is big. I think for me that year, it kind of put us under a run to capture another championship. I think it was definitely a turnaround point in our season.

I don't know. I love this track. We haven't probably had the best runs in the last couple years, but that's what makes it so good when you do get it right. It's very difficult to get the combination with one and three correct, feel comfortable around the circuit.

I hope we do come back. We just have to wait and see, I guess.

Q. Alex, I know you finished second in two of three ovals so far this year. Do you feel there's anything missing in getting that one spot better or is it just a matter of the circumstances of the race really?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, I think both those races were circumstantial to a certain extent, different circumstances. Ultimately you can't blame it on that. We need to look at the areas where we were deficient. Yeah, we just were short on both Indy and Texas. Hopefully, that's not the case here. We can go one better.

Q. Alex, at Indy I think you indicated you may have lost that race because a little bit of a horsepower

deficiency. Is this track more of a handling track or more of a horsepower track?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, well, it's everything. You got to have it all working for you here because there's a lot more lifting in theory here than there is at Indy. I think the car balance plays a pretty big role in it.

Also because it's 500 miles, who knows what's going to happen. We've all seen my example of '16, we weren't the quickest car, but we were on the right strategy. I think this race lends itself to have outcomes like that, as well.

Q. Scott, I think I've heard word that you're going to be testing the new aero screen here soon. When you sat in the car in those pictures that were taken in the facility there, was the windscreen on the halo or were you looking through the halo to see if there was any obstruction of vision because of the structural part of it?

SCOTT DIXON: It was just the frame, which I think several other drivers have also used it just on the simulator. Yeah, the first test I think September sometime will be the first on-track with the actual screen.

I don't know if there's any kind of test previous to that utilizing the glass or whatever it is.

Q. Is it the same shape as the one you tested previously or have they redone the screen to a different form factor?

SCOTT DIXON: I believe it's different in shape and also material.

Q. Alex, whether it's endurance racing, the Baja 1000, now with the Bathurst, how important is it for you to try new things, what would you like to try in the future?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Jet-ski racing. I don't know.

The opportunities have presented themselves. I'm fortunate to be with a team at Andretti Autosport that's kind of understanding of that and want their drivers to go do things that make them happy I guess is the easiest way to summarize the answer.

It's very cool that obviously, Andretti Autosport has a partnership with Walkinshaw Andretti United in Australia. It will be an awesome experience. I'm well aware it's going to be very challenging and unique to anything I've done before. Should be a good time with James. Hopefully, we don't embarrass ourselves too much.

THE MODERATOR: We welcome to the media center Team Penske drivers, Josef Newgarden, the current NTT IndyCar Series points leader, and Will Power, who has won two of the last three races here in the ABC Supply 500 at Pocono Raceway.

Welcome, fellows. We've already introduced you. We'll start with Josef, who is the series points leader. You get to start on the pole based on interim points and rules when qualifying is postponed. I assume you're happy with that despite the fact that you don't get to go prove it.

WILL POWER: Should be from the previous race's qualifying, I think (smiling).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I was advocating for blind qualifying, I thought it would be entertaining.

WILL POWER: Which means we're all blindfolded, try to make your way around, who does it the fastest.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Good luck (laughter).

Obviously, we're not dissatisfied with where we have to start. We're all starting in a good spot, the top five guys in points, we're all right next to each other.

It could be worse. We could have qualified in a worse position. We'll take it, I guess. It would have been nicer if we could have just had a normal day, got the practice in, then qualified and had the rest of it.

Obviously, we can't control the weather. We couldn't get the helicopter here. It is what it is. We dealt with the rain now. I think the focus needs to be on getting everyone ready for the race, which is the most important thing. I think that's what we're doing.

We'll try and make the most of our two hours of practice and make a fast car. We'll kind of see where we shake out towards the end of the day.

THE MODERATOR: We've seen five, six, seven cars wide approaching turn one. It's almost like we're going to start seven wide. Will, it's pretty thrilling starts at this race. Looking forward to it?

WILL POWER: Thrilling. No, actually the starts, I tell you, more the restarts actually are nuts. It depends on how the guy in the front there, how he accelerates.

For the most part, I don't like the seven wide. I only like it from the one on the inside. If you got two either side of you, it's not a good feeling, especially when they start to close in on you. That happened to me. Montoya and some other geezer over here decided to close in. I lifted. Otherwise, there was going to be a massive shunt. Someone has to be smart enough to go, Let's not do this.

THE MODERATOR: Will, let's talk about your success here. First, first and second in the last three years. You've shown yourself to be pretty good on these 500-mile races. Very strong on the big ovals. There was a time in your career when we might not have said that.

WILL POWER: There's a time in everyone's career where you would have said, He's just not an oval guy.

THE MODERATOR: But you are now.

WILL POWER: Now you'd probably go, Yeah, he's pretty good. He's pretty good. Not good enough, but pretty good (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Agree, Josef?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Oh, yes, yes. It's so difficult to be up here with Will at times.

No, on a serious note, Will is a very good speedway driver. He's a very good driver all around, but he's gotten very good at places like Pocono and Indy. He had a winning car I would say last year, drove a winning race in a lot of ways. If you get it right, get in the comfort zone as a driver, I think you can have really strong races at these types of tracks. You want to get that everywhere. That's the goal. We go to so many different types. But, yeah, sometimes it takes a little longer to find that happy balance.

For drivers, it's different. Sometimes you pick up to that quicker at certain places than others. I think Will is a very strong 500-mile runner. It's good to have that, too, because you can kind of look at -- for me, I know I look at Will, his style, try to learn a bit from him, what makes him good at these types of tracks.

THE MODERATOR: Is there a secret for 500 miles than maybe one that's half the distance? Are there more variables, something that requires a little bit more?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, you've got a bit more time, you got a bit more time to not take a risk and kind of sit back, plenty of stops for it to unfold, get the car right. You don't need to get too desperate at the beginning.

I was a lap down, I came back and won. Actually, as I was sitting a lap down, I was thinking, If I get our lap back, I can have a top five because the whole field is actually bunched up. I actually won the race.

Take your time, as we saw last year. Man, you don't want to take too big of a risk on that first lap. You just got to make smart decisions on superspeedways, everything is so much faster. Do you know what I mean? Once you've done a few miles, you don't realize how fast you're going. When something happens, then you do. It's never good.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Josef, you've always run very well here, had success on the ovals already this year. What needs to happen this weekend for you to knock out the

goose egg here in the win column?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We just got to get it right. Last year I think we missed it by a little bit. I don't want to put it on time, but we kind of ran out of time last year to just nail the setup.

Obviously, it's a really tight, tight window. I think Will was in the right place. You saw in the race he was strong. We were just slightly out of it. We were on defense all day last year, just trying to stay in the top five. It was really a struggle.

But we've also been here, like in '17, had a strong racecar. I think we've always kind of managed to be there at the end at this race. That's why we've got good results.

Like you said, we don't have a win. I don't know. I think it will come at some point. Kind of like Texas where we've had strong cars there, I felt like we could have won that race. Finally this year it all kind of fell into the perfect window where we were able to do it.

I don't know what it's going to be. We just got to keep staying close. I think if we keep putting ourselves in position, top three, top five, one of these days we're going to win this race. That's all we're focusing on right now.

Q. Aside from Will and his saxophone performance on social media...

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: So good. Beautiful actually.

WILL POWER: But I honestly believe that's what's missing out of music. You don't see these awesome saxophone solos. It's like the saxophone has disappeared.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's a shame.

WILL POWER: It is a shame.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's a lost art.

WILL POWER: Just go to the '80s. So many cool saxophone solos. Even in porn back then, funny enough. Not that I ever watched it (laughter). Whenever people talk about it as a joke, they're always like, Get the sax music out.

I don't watch it (smiling).

Q. Anything else exciting on your two-week break?

WILL POWER: No, actually. That's why I was doing those videos. Not that much excitement going on. Kind of had nothing to do.

As I said, I don't look at it (laughter).

Q. I don't know how to follow that up, but back to Pocono here, Will, you've had the recent success.

You're still looking for the first win this year. How confident are you that you can dial it in this weekend and knock that out?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, I feel like we have a chance at the next three races, for sure. I like the tracks, have done well there. Man, it's just a matter of it falling in place, getting the car right. Everything has to go right these days. Too many good teams and drivers for you to leave anything on the table.

Would love to get a win before the end of the year. Would absolutely love to just for all the reasons that go with winning.

Q. Josef, when you won in 2017, you were leading the points standing coming into Pocono as well. Did you enjoy the feeling being out in front, being chased, or did you feel pressure, any mis-step could erase that lead?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I prefer to be in front. I think it's always better to be in the lead because then you can control it more so than chasing. I don't remember how I felt necessarily going into Pocono. I just like we were in the points lead, that was a good thing.

We've had that pretty much for the most part this year, which has been good. But it can change. I think history can rewrite itself pretty fast. Just because it worked out the way it did in '17, doesn't mean it's going to work out the same way this year. We have to stay on top of it.

If you could choose, you would always want to be a leader in the championship. It's always better to be leading than chasing.

Q. Josef, are you in a better position as a driver in 2019 than you were in 2017 given the experience of having been a champion?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yes. I would say as far as me as a driver, I think you should get better every year personally. I feel like I've been better every year I've done this sport. That's why the veterans do so well, is because experience really pays quite a bit. It just does.

There's so many types of tracks, they change so often, you're going back and forth. There's not a lot of consistency. That experience gets you better and better at this every year.

So, yeah, I definitely feel like I'm a better driver than I was two years ago. I'm a better driver than I was five years ago. Every year you try to improve. I think you don't ever want to flatten out that learning curve. You always want to be getting better every single season.

Q. Will, it remains to be seen whether Pocono will remain on the schedule in future years or not. The fact that you've won here, it's such a difficult triangle actually, difficult racecourse to master, how proud are you to be a Pocono winner in an Indy car race?

WILL POWER: I love the track. I love it. Obviously it's always a proud moment when you win a race. If you win back-to-back 500-milers, it's a big deal.

It's a cool track. I feel like the more ovals, the better for me. I really enjoy them. It would kind of be disappointing if it went away. Obviously I had nothing to do with that. It's obviously INDYCAR negotiating.

Yeah, hopefully I can get another one.

Q. Josef, your last race didn't end the way you wanted it to, I'm assuming. Did it take you a while to get over that or is that something you move on from immediately? Does the long break make that harder?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, they're all different cases. Normally it takes a good I think 48 hours. I want to say 24, but it's a little short. 48 hours, then you're kind of over it typically for me. If you make a mistake, you regret doing something, then, yeah, 48 hours is a good amount of time to probably leave me alone.

It's just hard. I mean, this is a sport that you are competitive at, there's a lot of emotions, there's a lot of care that goes into it from everybody. We don't do this because we just want a paycheck. We're all here to be competitive and win.

Whenever a day like, yeah, Mid-Ohio happens, it's tough. It takes a little bit. I think 48 hours, ready to roll. Ideally you would like a race weekend directly afterwards. That would be lovely. If you could race the next day, you'd love to do that. But that's not the case. You get to sit on it for a little while.

I think the breaks are good. When you get a couple weeks off, for me, I like to get away from the racing world. I don't do anything in racing. I'm at home on completely different things. It actually helps when you come back. You feel that energy. You feel that enthusiasm. You're excited to be there. It's almost nice having a little bit of a break, getting to miss it for a bit.

Q. With the entrance of McLaren coming in as a full-time team for next season, with both their history and the current technological things they can bring, with IndyCar being so susceptible to unintended consequences, what could you see coming from that, a little bit bigger technology companies coming in?

WILL POWER: Yeah, not much. I mean, when I look at all the series around the world, top-tier series, (NTT) IndyCar (Series) has the most parity. I can't think of another series that has parity like INDYCAR. It's very well-controlled.

I think that's Tice's teams to come here, not big teams, but you have some of these low-budget teams that can win races. You really can't say that for any other series in the world.

It's very, very well-controlled. I think that's the right thing to do, honestly. Nobody wants to see a superior car win every race.

McLaren obviously has great resources. They got to abide by INDYCAR rules. There's not really much technology they can bring to actually improve on what we are already doing here.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think at its core, McLaren is a racing team. They're a big technology group as well. They have different divisions within their corporation, under their umbrella. When it comes to the core of McLaren, they're racers. This is going to be a great addition for them to come back to. It's something they've been a part of in the past. Makes a lot of sense.

It will be very different to their Formula 1 team, what they do over there. That's not a negative. It's just a different program. It will be a very pure sport for them I think. I think they're going to love it. I think they're going to really enjoy being back here.

For us, we're going to enjoy having them. It's just good to have pure racing teams in the sport. They're absolutely one of the ones at the top of the list.

Q. Championship-wise how much are these three races in three weeks important? It's three different racetracks, a triangle, D-shaped oval, and racetrack in Portland.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, from a championship perspective, obviously a lot can change in three races full of points. You just don't know.

For Josef's position, it would be very important to execute, you know, maybe be a bit conservative. I don't know. It depends. With double points at the end there, really you've got to be within 20 points of the guy and you can control your own destiny by winning the race.

I think you can't really manufacture it. Every race is different. Every circumstance is different. You just got to go out there and do the best you can. Obviously if you're leading the championship, you probably think about it a little bit more, playing off the guys closest to you, which there actually are four legitimate guys in the game.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I would agree. Look, four races to go with double points, there's over 260 points on the table, it's huge. That's a big swing that can happen.

I think you see it throughout the year. You see these gaps open up. It's hilarious to read the articles because people will be like, The championship, it's wide open now, because it got close. It opens up again, Oh, it's only down to two, those are your two frontrunners. It yo-yos all year.

Until we get down to Portland probably, then you leave Portland, you go, Okay, where is everyone at with a hundred points in Laguna, who is really in this battle? Then you can start really narrowing in on it.

It's going to change over these next four events one way or another. Maybe someone will rip a gap, it won't be close, or maybe it will stay tight, yo-yo a bit. You don't know what's going to happen.

You have to maximize each weekend. That's the most important thing. Just get the most out of yourself for each weekend, that's our goal, then the points are going to shake out how they're going to shake out.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks. Appreciate your time.