

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Sunday September 1, 2019

Post-Race Press Conference

Will Power

Team Penske

THE MODERATOR: We welcome Will Power to the media center. Today was a convincing win. How about this: Sixth all-time in IndyCar victories with 37, tied with Sebastien Bourdais.

WILL POWER: Yeah, no, it's definitely a great day. Was obviously disappointed not getting pole, making that mistake yesterday, but as you see, you never know how races can turn out, and it turned out great for us.

Q. You saw Scott Dixon pull off the racetrack. That changes the dynamic.

WILL POWER: Yes.

Q. What was your approach at that point?

WILL POWER: Well, yeah, it was just trying to pull as big a gap to Felix as possible. He was kind of frustrating me today. He went a lap longer, too, so I thought if he goes a lap longer he could jump us so I need to pull at least a three-second gap to cover the pit sequence.

Q. And all through the season as you were not winning races, you said, these things can turn like that. Now you've won two of the last three and have a lot of momentum to carry into Laguna.

WILL POWER: Yeah, no question. It's crazy how things don't fall your way and then they start falling your way. It just goes through cycles. Obviously, at the beginning of this year I was doing everything I could to win races, and it just wasn't happening. Now things start to fall your way, the hard work kind of pays off, and yeah, just drained and happy.

Q. You're one of a handful of drivers that used to race at PIR in the other series. How gratifying is it to not only set the pole last year but now be a victor here? Is there any sentimentality with winning in Portland because of your history here?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I would say, yeah. There's a lot of Indy car history here. There's been some great races and great drivers win at this track, so it has a history. Growing up as a kid, these are the tracks that you looked at. It's like Long Beach, Portland, Cleveland we don't go to anymore, but Road America. These tracks are the ones that you really want to win at just because of the history of the sport.

Yeah, very happy to have -- I love winning at tracks I



haven't won at, too, to add it to my list.

Q. From lap 40 to I think 51 or 52 you were behind Dixon before he pulled in the pits with this battery problem. In those laps when you followed Dixon, was there a chance to attack him?

WILL POWER: No, we had to -- like our car was really good the second half of a stint on blacks. You know, and I think you could see Felix really fell off the second half, and I'm guessing that Dixon's car would have been similar, so that was going to be our chance to get him, but obviously he fell out.

Q. And the second question, from qualifying to race day, did the team make any significant changes to the car?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I did. I did, based on my race last year. The car was different.

Q. If memory serves, you did your first Champ Car test here back in '05 --

WILL POWER: Actually that's true. This was my very first track I ever drove at in the U.S. That was my first test. I forgot that. It was the first place I came to, so it's awesome to win here. I remember that going down the back straight thinking to myself, I could get paid to do this. It was a great feeling because the car had so much power. I was just like, man, getting paid to do this, this would be awesome, and it actually happened. It's great.

Q. A couple of weeks ago over at your shop when you had talked about you had a year in 2013 like this where you just couldn't win and then all of a sudden you finished with win, win, win, is this starting to look a lot like 2013?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it is, actually. You know, yeah, strong results. Mid-Ohio was strong, finished fourth there, and I obviously won at Pocono and crashed out last week, but won here. So yeah, definitely looking that way. It would be really nice to win at Laguna, and yeah, so we'll see.

Q. Would it have been easy to switch to a three-stop strategy if that's the way things had gone because you looked really aggressive on the first restart getting past Jack, re-passing Jack. Were you ready to go flat out if that's what Herta and Dixon had done?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it was an obvious two-stop at that point. Once we had all the yellows at the beginning, it was like, this is a two-stop. As soon as I

saw 10 laps of yellow, I'm like, yeah, everyone is doing -- can almost run hard on a two-stop, you didn't have to save much at all. You can almost bank on every year someone braking too late in that first chicane. Every year. I don't know what it is, it's deceiving or something as you're coming to the braking mode, there's always somebody -- I don't know what happened, but I'm guessing someone hit the back of someone and hit the back of someone. It's just, yeah, standard Portland first turn, people can't help themselves. It just happens here year after year.

Q. How much concern did you have going to the last restart with just a few laps to go?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I was -- I couldn't believe it. I was like, you've got to be kidding me. It's never easy. I was very determined to get a good restart. I'm thinking, I'm not making this easy for anyone, so I made sure I went well. I think Felix's tires had dropped quite a bit anyway, so there wasn't much he could do. My car still felt really good.

Q. Of all of your victories in your great career, do you ever take a moment to step back and kind of reflect on what you've been able to accomplish in your driving career here with IndyCar?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I do, actually. You know what, I get very disappointed in my career because of some of the things I've let go. I feel like I should have been champion more times. But yeah, it's something that you -- look, after you win the 500 you're very satisfied with your career and that paves the way, and then the next year you're like, man, I need to start winning races, and you get just -- it's disappointing. Sometimes you can forget that you've had a great career.

But it's a tough series. It's tough to win races, so any win you get, you're just over the moon. But any win I get at the moment and any pole I get, the pole is getting me closer to Mario's all-time record, and any win I get moves me up the all-time list, and I think you'd be lying if you don't look at that stuff at times. You don't think about it when you're driving, but I know Dixon would most definitely look at that stuff, too. He might say he doesn't. Because you're up amongst drivers that you idolized as a child, as a kid, so it's just kind of surreal that you can put yourself up amongst names like Mario Andretti, AJ Foyt, Michael Andretti, the Unsers, these names that for me, people that always seemed above me because it's somebody you idolized as a kid. It doesn't seem right to have your name amongst them, know what I mean, when you really idolized someone, even if you've reached the same level as them in your career, but it just doesn't feel like -- still feels like they're above you, untouchable.

Q. Does that push you more?

WILL POWER: No, I just think you -- I just think competition and winning is what drives me. I love to win, and the stats are just a bonus. You can look at later in life and go, wow, that was a good career, yeah.

Q. As far as driver all-time victories, the names were always AJ and Mario. Conceivably when you get into the top 5 it'll be you and Scott Dixon, so what does that say about this generation of drivers when you look at the whole history of the sport?

WILL POWER: Yeah, when you look at -- that's what I've been thinking lately. You've got to look at this generation as one of those generations when you had AJ, Mario, the Unsers as -- with Dixon and I'm sure Rossi and Newgarden, these guys are going to be around for a long time. That's going to be an era that kids look up to, like wow, that was a great era of competitive IndyCar racing, probably the most competitive era ever. Yeah, I've kind of been thinking that. You look at the field, the series, the teams now, it's just so cool to be a part of it right now, and it's growing, and the continuity of drivers, new teams coming in, it's fantastic.