

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday May 2, 2020

Media Conference

Scott McLaughlin
Conor Daly
Santino Ferrucci



THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining the last of the post-event video conferences here in the INDYCAR iRacing Challenge. We are joined by our podium finishers today, Santino Ferrucci, Conor Daly and our race winner Scott McLaughlin.

Hopefully you, like us at NBC Sports, for Marty and for Townsend and Paul and myself, we thoroughly enjoyed this six-race series, so it definitely filled a void. It gave us something to look forward to each and every week. However, we certainly did not expect it to finish in the way that it did today with the First Responder 175 presented by GMR, just a crazy and wild finish. Thoroughly enjoyable, though, and thank goodness it was in the virtual world, but congratulations to the driver of the No. 40 PIRTEK Dallara, Scott McLaughlin. Scott, your second win in the series. I'm sure you did not expect it to end that way.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, not at all. Yeah, look, I did my best Steven Bradbury impression; that's an Australian term for really won it from nowhere. Yeah, we were bent there for a while. I was just really trying to hold on. Santino was coming with fresh tires. I let him go with I think two to go or something, and then my best bet was just to try to hold off Conor and hopefully there was a couple wrecks that I could get maybe a top three.

Yeah, I got third right on the run to the line, and then eventually I got first about 50, 100 yards later. Look, privileged to race. Thank you to PIRTEK for jumping on board with me, and also I think just to INDYCAR for allowing me to be a part of it. Really enjoyed it, learned a lot, and yeah, hopefully I get a chance one day in real life.

THE MODERATOR: Given the practice races that had transpired in the lead-up to this afternoon's race, were you surprised, even though it ended in quite a crazy and in some ways violent fashion, were you pleased with the way that everybody raced for the most part?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think from my point of view, everybody raced pretty clean. I was trying to stay out of trouble at the start and then it become a bit of a fuel race and the second caution happened, and it was sort of everybody got a bit safe there, and we managed

to come in for tires, and yeah, I mean, I was probably a bit overcautious throughout the race, so I'll look back on it and take that as an experience thing, but really, yeah, look, like I said, I enjoyed it. From my point of view it's all about the show, and hopefully we put on a good TV show for everybody in America, and I know a lot of people in Australia were watching and New Zealand, as well, so that's really cool.

THE MODERATOR: Conor Daly in the U.S. Air Force Chevrolet for Carlin, jumping over to Carlin this week. Conor, you are just tremendous on social media and sharing what you think and your feelings and your experiences, and I read one of your posts in the lead-up to this weekend saying for the first time in my life there will not be INDYCARs running at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in the month of May, so with that in mind, although and albeit in the virtual world, congratulations on finishing on the podium in today's race, and I guess that's some kind of consolation to not racing for real.

CONOR DALY: For sure. Honestly as potentially the worst sim racer on the grid, it was a very fun day. Yesterday when we were doing the practice races it wasn't quite going as well, but they changed the track conditions overnight to not make it as much of a pack race, and it really suited me. This morning when we did a practice race, Marcos and I were like side by side for the last three laps, and I finished second in that one, too. So like I thought we actually had a decent shot at it, but of course we got caught in like three different crashes at the beginning, which was hilarious, and we were on a good strategy there at the end, so I knew Santino and I had fresh tires.

Will was a little bit upset that we weren't working with him, obviously, but you know what, this is the internet, so that's to be expected, but yeah, it was fun. It is what it is. We've got to do the best we can with the situation we've got right now, but I actually did enjoy it.

THE MODERATOR: Santino Ferrucci, well done, third place in the No. 18 SealMaster Honda for Dale Coyne with Vasser-Sullivan Racing. Let's hear your words. What happened at the end in that wild finish?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, it was a wild race. We didn't qualify too well. On the sim around the superspeedways qualifying comes down to little details, and we fought our way up, and we did a really good job with strategy, and we were sitting fourth going into the

final lap, and I watched everybody get slowed up there coming out of last corner, and I was catching Askew, and I've been running a lot of different series lately, and I was trying to get on his door because of the NASCAR style, and I got a little too close, and I think I turned just a touch too aggressive, and that's my fault. That's definitely my mistake there. I did not mean to come across the line through the air to a virtual finish, but also at the end of the day, we're racing on a video game, and I am second, he is first, and I was doing everything I could to put our car in first place in Victory Lane, but that was generally my mistake, and I am sorry about that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Scott, my first question is for you. You were supposed to be headed here to make your INDYCAR debut on the road course. I know this isn't an equal exchange or trade, but how do you feel about your success in your INDYCAR iRacing, and when do you think you'll actually get into an INDYCAR?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, there's no lies, I've had some previous experience on iRacing, so I was always pretty confident if I got a good run I'd be somewhere there or thereabouts. I've really just trying to make the best what I can of the situation. That means staying fit as well as doing this iRacing, racing with all the other guys. I've learnt a lot, learnt how people race, and some are aggressive, some aren't, some are a bit -- run you a bit tight, some don't. That's what I've really tried to enjoy and learn.

I think you've got to try and make the best of what you can with the situation you've given, and look, I had -- yep, it was all planned for me to race at the Indy GP. Unfortunately that's not happening right now in regards to the same date that it was meant to happen, but hopefully if the calendars align when everything gets sorted in Australia and New Zealand and in America itself, we can work some things out. But yeah, there's a lot more issues at hand before I make my debut for sure.

Q. Santino and Conor, Tony and Alex were talking yesterday about rivalries are being born in this iRacing series. Are there going to be hurt feelings and fences to mend after today?

CONOR DALY: I mean, I don't really think so. Is it frustrating? Yeah, absolutely, but only because we're really competitive. I think there's a lot that's been said that probably shouldn't have been said, but in reality, I mean, we're all probably going slightly crazy. I know I certainly am.

But yeah, I think it's hilarious. Maybe if there's an accident in real racing and something happens -- I dreamt about an interview the other day; it's like, well, I got taken out by this guy; it's the same thing on iRacing. I was like, ugh, no, I don't want to be that guy

saying that. But drivers never forget. You never forget.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I don't know, I think at the end of the day, it's going to be a video game. It's virtual reality. It's not anything that I think I'd find myself doing in a real car. If you look at all the weaving down the straight, it literally looks -- I feel like I'm almost playing Call of Duty with everybody weaving in and out places. I don't think that -- there could be some rivalries born between a few people that have had issues, but those that have been preexisting in iRacing might have made it worse, but at the end of the day a couple or three weeks before we get going again, people will make amends and we'll be going racing again and not have to worry about it.

Q. Scott, everybody now knows who you are, race fans in North America. If they didn't know who you were before this iRacing Challenge began, they certainly know you now. How much has all this experience kind of increased your following and increased your appetite to go to Roger Penske or Tim Cindric and say, hey, let's make this happen for real?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, I've always wanted to have a crack in America. I've always wanted to have a chance across there, and thankfully I've been with the right team in Australia and for the opportunity to make it happen. Obviously like I said before, it was probably going to happen probably next week I think the race was meant to be.

I trust the process of what those guys have got for me and what they're doing. I'll just trust what they're doing and where they're going to put me. For me, like I said, with the amount of American press, the American following on Twitter, you guys use Twitter a lot over there compared to Australia, so my Twitter following has gone up a huge amount, Instagram and stuff. It's obviously all social media platforms.

Look, like I said, thanks to Jay and the team at INDYCAR for allowing me to be a part of it. It's really a bit of a privilege, and to be able to put my name up with some of these guys is really cool, but I've got to be realistic. It's a game and there's reset buttons and I can -- I can't do that in real life. I've got to be realistic about a few things, but yeah, really enjoyed it, and we'll see how we go.

Q. You've won a race on a road course at Barber and today you won on an oval. Are you interested in maybe even trying an oval if you can get an opportunity this year?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'm just interested in INDYCAR, so INDYCAR includes ovals. I'm interested in being the best driver I can possibly in the future to be a part of the INDYCAR championship. Yeah, ideally I've got to learn a lot in real life. I had my first test at Texas a few months ago, and that was pretty mind blowing, the speed and speeds that I have never been before. I can

only imagine what Indianapolis is like in real life, but yeah, that dream will have to hold for a little bit.

Q. This is for all three of you if you want to answer this. That finish kind of looked a little bit like "Days of Thunder" and "Stroker Ace" all rolled into one. What did it look like from the cockpit?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Just drove through the smoke, man. That's all I did.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I had driven through it a few times throughout that race. It was kind of more of a put your hands together and hope you survive. There was a few incidents already, but it's tough. It's tough to see what's coming because the cars go in and out sometimes, too, so there is a lot of luck involved.

Q. Conor, I know you've got a good take on that one.

CONOR DALY: Yeah, I mean, honestly I had a really good run on Scott going, which is kind of annoying, but Askew or O'Ward, whichever one it was, they were coming down from the wall in 4 and I had to get out of it, and I was like, no, that was fourth or fifth or whatever, and then more cars started flying, so yeah, it was a hilarious look. Obviously this is Indy and video games, so I assume you still want to win; we're all competitive and there was all kinds of chaos, but that was a little bit more chaos than I expected.

Q. Scott, Penske only missed one podium in this iRacing series despite the setups are the same. There's no direct performance advantage, so what do you think that says about Penske as a team?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We've prepped a lot. I think the first week, Watkins Glen, I didn't have a spotter or engineer sort of helping me, realized there was a few drivers in there that were using one, and we sort of jacked up the preparation, the data share and all that sort of stuff. Yeah, look, they're professional, got some great people on board, and I was able to use Jonathan Diuguid, my engineer, when I do potentially race, and TJ Majors on the ovals as a spotter. Yeah, it was really cool. Privileged to learn off some pretty experienced guys, and yeah, absolutely, it's a pretty class act at Team Penske, and everything they do they want to win in and are very competitive, and Roger expects the highest level. It sort of carries all the way down with every piece of personnel on the team.

Q. Scott, have you and Simon Pagenaud been approached by Jostens for endorsement having won four of the six virtual rings? And then more seriously, of course, as a driver outside of the series, what is the mystique and the aura that both the speedway and the Indy 500 provide as a driver looking to potentially at one point drive in it?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: You know, no personal deals, no. Just happy to be at the front.

Yeah, look, Indianapolis, for me I've grown up idolizing

Scotty Dixon and knowing what that race has been about for a long, long time, from a New Zealand perspective. Yeah, just the speed of the place, the amount of people that are involved on race day, I was lucky I went to the 100th running in 2016, and then I went a couple years ago for Carb Day, and it just blows your mind, either day, and I'm really privileged, obviously, to race on it in virtual reality, but yeah, really excited to hopefully get a chance one day in real life.

Q. Conor, your first race was the 500 in 2013. I was just curious what the speedway and the 500 mean to you.

CONOR DALY: I mean, this is my home race, my home track. The track is 15 minutes that way, so it's the greatest place on earth. It's meant the most to me in my career. Last year was so much fun to get a chance with Andretti Autosport and U.S. Air Force being a part of our program for the third year in a row is really special, as well. Can't wait to get back there. I have faith in us as a series and drivers and fans that we'll make August potentially the most electric month of August that has ever been, so we'll see what happens, but just can't wait to get back there and turn laps in real life.

Q. Scott, when you had to jump off your Twitch because it sounded like you freaked out that you didn't know if you had milk in your refrigerator, that was quite a laugh. On a serious note, when you're drinking that milk, does this motivate you a little more to say, man, I can make it happen, but now does this bump it up a notch to say I really now want to drink the milk in Victory Lane at Indy?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, it's been a dream of mine since I was a little boy to potentially race at Indy, and obviously everyone wants to drink the milk because that means you've won. Yeah, that's a bit of a G-up. Someone said -- Jonathan actually said, have you got milk in the fridge. I said, yeah, I actually probably should go do that, so I had a drink.

Yeah, look, for me there's no place like it, and the motivation levels, you've just got to look up -- I've got plenty of that. I've been getting up at 3:00 a.m. for the last six weeks, 2:30 a.m. the last six weeks trying to race these guys and learn, and I'm getting over that part. I'm looking forward to just racing into the normal parts of the day, and I think my wife is, as well. So I'm definitely looking forward to probably going back to being a normal husband for a little bit.

Q. Scott and all the guys, NASCAR is obviously going to be the first one to come back in a very modified format, we're not going to have fans, there's going to be a shortage of media. How hard are you guys going to be watching that, not just for the fact that it's going to be racing in the real world on the real track, but for all the series for when you may deal with this when you get back on the track? Are there some worrisome parts for you or do you

think they may go a little too far, or just your thoughts on being observant to NASCAR actually coming back to the track?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Obviously my opinion being a foreigner in Australia, so I can only see so much what's been reported, but look, it's great that there's some sport, some entertainment coming back, live sport coming back. Hopefully they do it the safest way possible, and I'm sure everyone has got that on the side. Australia, Supercars-wise, I just remember reading an article that we could potentially be running midweek events, too.

I think ideally for sponsors, fans alike, for the championships, you need to have a full season or try and do the best you can for a full season. They've got to work it not only for the fans but also for the teams to see if it works, so NASCAR is definitely going to be a great example of that.

CONOR DALY: I mean, I think for some reason over the last few days there does seem to be some more positivity about, hey, I think we're getting things going again, and to see NASCAR do what they're doing obviously is cool. I think it's going to be interesting to see how it works out. That's a lot of racing in not a lot of days, not a lot of practice, but I'm going to watch, so I'm happy for those guys.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yep, me too. I think it will be good to get back outside again to the real thing.

Q. Conor, I know everybody wants to get back to the track here, but are you maybe just a little bit sad to see this end, because to me your Twitch channel, you've been like the breakout star of this series. Alexander Rossi was talking about how you guys provide a lot of entertainment and sponsor value. Are you maybe just a little bit sad to see it end, and can you quantify, do you feel like it's done a lot for you as a personality and exposing you to more people and sponsors?

CONOR DALY: Honestly, not upset about it being over. I was enjoying today quite a lot, but like it's been tough. I mean, people -- there are literally people on the internet like judging you as a driver because of what you are doing on a video game or sitting in my guest bedroom like in 90-degree temperatures because it's a room and not a race car. So I'm excited to get back to reality.

I think a lot of it -- I love interacting with our fan base. I think our fan base and the people and the Twitch community is actually really cool. I think there's a lot of really supportive people that are getting on to Twitch. There's already like -- I've been streaming for like two years, and there's like 15 or 20 people that have always been watching my streams for that long time period, and they're still here and they're still supportive. We've obviously got a lot more now, and that's awesome. I'm just a normal guy that happens to be

very lucky enough to pursue what I love to do. And yeah, was it great? Was it a brand-building exercise? Absolutely, I think so. And I'm not going to stop streaming. Like I think for sure my Twitch channel is definitely out there now, and you can't stop once you -- once the hype train keeps going. We'll see how we integrate that once the real racing kicks off, but I'm excited to keep it going.

Q. This question is for all three. Now with the six weeks completed, in you guys' perspective, what is the biggest takeaway you'll take from this iRacing Challenge that just wrapped up?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Just, I guess, I enjoyed it. I was able to race people I've never raced before and cars that I've never raced before, and yeah, just had a great time. Had a lot of fun, and was able to race on American TV screens, which is something that's really cool.

CONOR DALY: I mean, I think there's a lot to take away from it. I think the driver chat was potentially the most hilarious part of all of it. I haven't got to race with Lando Norris or old Scotty McLaughlin over here, legend of the world from Down Under, so I think that was really cool. There was a lot of things that I learned about how other people react to each other on the internet, which is hysterical. But yeah, overall I think you've got to look at it as it was a positive experience. Really thankful that NBC put us on network television. That's awesome.

I remember when I was a kid, there used to be video games on TV every now and then, and then it sort of died off, and now it's coming back, so it's pretty cool.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, I mean, also I think the fact that the diversity of the types of racing you can do in iRacing with all the different drivers, with all the different series that we did, I think that it was really cool to have everybody come together as one between NASCAR, INDYCAR, even the IROC Racing Series, which I very much enjoy on Wednesday nights. I think it was a really cool thing to do for the time being. I'm probably with you, Conor, on the fact that I'll probably keep Twitch streaming, probably not as frequently as you, but I think it's a lot of fun, and it brings you closer to a lot of these fans, so that would be my take on it.

Q. Santino had mentioned that you guys with drive the virtual sim car a little bit differently than you would the real car, like weaving down the frontstretch. I was wondering, whether it be road courses, ovals, how differently you would treat the virtual car versus if you were out there for real.

CONOR DALY: I mean, I think for me, there's a lot of differences. My own personal style of driving, I mean, I usually do quite a lot of work on the setup before like I'm super happy, and obviously with a fixed setup I was never really super stoked about it, but I also drive a very particular way. Alex Rossi and I last year, we had

very different cars for the Indianapolis 500, but we were sort of running with each other most of the end of the race there, so you can get the speed multiple different ways, and I think for me that was the most challenging thing about this.

But there's some differences. I think there's a lot of similarities that are really cool, and I think iRacing does a good job for the most part, but I'm a big fan of real life.

Q. Santino, do you have anything else to elaborate on given your experience?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, I think a good point Conor brought up there, the setups, to be honest with you, I helped iRacing build the COTA setup that we all ran fixed, and my style is primarily oversteer. I like having a really loose car, and today it was really understeer. But I think in the COTA race you saw a lot of spins, but no, I think it's different. I think, like I said, iRacing, the racing is just -- at the end of the day, you have to keep in mind you're playing a video game, so you have a lot of different variables that you wouldn't have in real life, but I do miss the real thing a lot.

Q. With the changes after the practice race that made the track temperature a bit warmer, did that help anybody, hurt anybody? What were your thoughts on that?

CONOR DALY: Honestly, I think it helped me personally. I was absolutely garbage most of the week, but I just -- there are certain things, the way I turn the wheel in the simulator game is usually a little bit too aggressive, and I just immediately snap into understeer and get a quite aggressive push. But for some reason the track temp, people were lifting earlier and there was a lot going on that kind of changed the balance just a little bit. All you need is just a little bit at Indy on the oval for sure. I kind of liked the change. I think everyone as a group, we all sort of like the fact there was a little bit less pack racing --

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I have to agree with you, 100 percent.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, everyone, for your questions. And thanks to this group for consistently joining us week in and week out to preview and to wrap it up after each iRace. It's been a pleasure, and I think I've been asked, I think like all of us, we've been asked a lot about this over the past six weeks, and I think when you take a big-picture view, we need to remind ourselves that not only for the INDYCAR regulars and some INDYCAR drivers on the fringes, but it's also attracted drivers like Jimmie Johnson and Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Kyle Busch and Lando Norris and Scott McLaughlin and drivers from all corners of the world and disciplines, and it brought Scott Speed back to open wheel racing to show how good he is, and it's got all of us talking about the NTT INDYCAR Series and INDYCAR in general than it would have over the

last month and a half than if we had just gone quiet. We can show as many reruns as we might like or whatever it might be, but to have something where -- I'm sure all of you have examples, as well, friends of mine have said whether it be their husbands or wives have walked past the TV and thought there was a real race happening. So credit to iRacing and to the folks that I work with, my bosses at NBC Sports who have done a really good job because we aren't at Stamford, Connecticut, at the headquarters. We're all in our respective homes, and everybody is still working remotely, trying to make a masterpiece out of a 7-Eleven store. It's been a wonderful team effort, and to everybody, all the drivers in INDYCAR, we've all joined hands and tried to pull together and do the best that we could with what we had, and I think what we had as a pretty damned good product at the end of it all. Thanks so much for all of you being a part of it.

Congratulations to the top three again on the podium, and let's hope we get to do it for real on June 6 at Texas Motor Speedway. Thanks so much. See you soon.