

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Friday July 3, 2020

Press Conference

Will Power

Team Penske

Jack Harvey

Meyer Shank Racing

Oliver Askew

Arrow McLaren SP

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody, to our GMR Grand Prix post qualifying press conference. We're joined by the front row for tomorrow's GMR Grand Prix:

Will Power of Team Penske and Jack Harvey of Meyer Shank Racing. We are also joined by our story of the day driver of the day, Oliver Askew, from Arrow McLaren SP.

Will, saved kind of the best for last, turned the fastest lap of the Firestone Fast Six on the very last lap. Talk about the 58th pole of your INDYCAR career.

WILL POWER: I think that's 59th from Surfers Paradise, but we won't talk about that (smiling).

It was a very tight qualifying session all around. We had really good speed from the beginning. I took a little bit of a risk pulling in in the second round. I had the team calling me. I laid a lap down, I thought it's probably going to stick.

I think that kind of gave me a chance to get Oliver because it was just one lap on tires. Jack had done a couple of those, so he had some pretty good sets there. So I saved that for the last run of the Fast Six.

It was tough, man. I gave everything I could. I hustled that car as best I could. I knew Jack would lay down a really quick one. I was really stoked to get pole.

THE MODERATOR: Jack, you qualified third here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway last year. Second this year. Other than the fact that you were battling Will Power for a pole, was there anything more that Meyer Shank Racing could have done to get you P1?

JACK HARVEY: I'm not sure, mate. I think at the end of the day we were just going to (indiscernible) to the difference. Today it was Will Power doing Will Power-y things. He's got a lot of poles. Think he maybe could have maybe shared one of his 59.

WILL POWER: When I get to 67 I'll stop (laughter).



JACK HARVEY: I thought it was a really great day for us. Good recovery from Texas and whatnot. Obviously we went well here last year. Everybody at Meyer Shank Racing has been working so hard, as all the teams are. Really working hard to try to arrive with a little more pace than we did last year, one position better.

Probably to check into the best single-lap qualifier I've ever watched. Yeah, there's no disappointment in anyone today. We were thrilled to be on the front row for the first time. I think we have pace on blacks, pace on reds. Hopefully we'll be competitive tomorrow. For now we'll enjoy this and get ready to zone in for the race.

THE MODERATOR: Oliver, reigning Indy Lights champion, done well at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway road course, and the Road to Indy, five podiums in six races. First time ever in the Fast Six. Speak about the day and how it went for you, then the qualifying altogether.

OLIVER ASKEW: At the start of the day, like you said, I have a lot of experience around here, probably the most experience at this track than any other track we go to this year. I thought it was important for us to roll out of the gate with a good car and I think we did. It was in the window right away. I knew we had a shot at having a good qualifying.

Made a couple of changes between practice and quallie. Yeah, the car was just on rails. The goal was to get out of Q1, and the rest was just going to be gravy.

Yeah, really happy with the car. I think once we were P1 in Q2, I realized that we could really have a shot at pole here.

I wish we were able to put on a new set of reds in Q3. That was the first time experiencing a heat cycle on reds. It's quite a bit different.

Really happy to be in the top six at the end. I think it's a great day for everyone at Arrow McLaren SP and Chevy. Looking forward to tomorrow. Hopefully we can have another good one like we did in Texas, maybe a little bit better.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions for any of the three drivers.

Q. Will, Simon is starting pretty far back. Do you expect him to kind of flip-flop the pit strategy a little bit to try to get his way back up to the lead? Is that pretty much the best thing he can do in that position?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I would expect so. If he can't pass, yeah, those guys are going to probably try some sort of alternate strategy opposite to what the first half of the field is doing, hoping that will work out for them.

But, yeah, I'm sure. It will be interesting tomorrow. If there's enough yellows, it is possible to do it in two stops.

Q. Jack, your breakthrough race came here last year, now you're starting second. Can you almost kind of feel like your first victory is out there, you have a really good shot of battling for this tomorrow, especially battling Will?

JACK HARVEY: Yeah, I hope so. We seem to go well here. Was pretty pumped up. Certainly was today. Felt good in practice.

Yeah, I think just getting the season going, we have a busy next three weeks. I think just getting this block of race is going on a positive note is going to be really important.

Yeah, I mean, we come to try and win obviously. We put ourselves in a good position in qualifying. I've been side-by-side with Will a few times at some starts. Know we'll get through the first corner okay. See how the race plays out and move forward from there.

Just excited to be near the front.

Q. Oliver, to back up what you did at Texas, how important was that for you? You're having a good rookie season so far.

OLIVER ASKEW: Yeah, it's really important especially for my confidence to know that I have the speed to take it to these guys as a rookie. I think it's a great building block going into the rest of the year.

I know that the car's fast. I know we have the resources and the personnel to make it happen. So I think it's just a great building block for the rest of the year. Hopefully we can keep that up with some hard work.

Q. Will, folks have mentioned each of your three poles here, you've gone on to pull off a victory. Lots of poles in your career. Is there a different advantage, mindset, a positivity or anything you gain from being up there at the front?

WILL POWER: Well, you certainly build your strategy around where you're starting, which could be good or bad. Just probably gives you a much better chance of getting through turn one, pretty much control the start. You know you're going to be the first guy to jump. It's such a long run down into turn one that no matter how

good of a start you get, the guys behind will be beside you going into turn one.

Q. With a little bit of a shorter race this year, you mentioned there might be a chance to go two pit stops, a little bit more variability in strategies depending on the yellows this year, do you feel that maybe has a chance to create a little bit more of an exciting race, more than we've had here in years past?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I would definitely say that there's going to be guys (indiscernible) if we get enough trying to do it on two stops. It is a stretch, for sure. With one yellow, it's very tough, very tough.

This isn't a track that usually gets that many yellows. Plenty of runoff, plenty of places to go if you make a mistake, don't get stuck.

Yeah, it will be interesting. You never know in an INDYCAR, anything can happen. You just have to be ready.

Q. Will, as you get further into your career, do the poles get easier? Harder?

WILL POWER: Harder. These young blokes are so fast, man. Look at the Fast Six, you got a rookie in there, Jack who is pretty much a rookie in INDYCAR. Yeah, no, it doesn't get easier. It just got harder. I got less and less poles per year as I've gone on. I really cherish any pole position I get these days.

You're lucky to get more than three in a year if you have a really good year. Same with wins. You get more than three wins, you're winning the championship, I think. It's tough, man. Very, very hard series now. Very hard series.

Q. Jack, you switched to Meyer Shank Racing. Technical partnership changed this year to Andretti. That made a big difference?

JACK HARVEY: Yeah, I'd like to think so. I had a great time with everybody when I was what was SPM at the time. The changes came at a nice time I think. I think we've been able to try to elevate our whole program so when we come into the weekend, we're feeling confident.

This weekend is going how we hoped. Hopefully we get momentum moving forward. But with so many cars, it's a great thing, it also can be a difficult thing to try to keep up with what every car is doing and stuff like that.

Yeah, I really have been enjoying working with everybody from Andretti. My engineering team is mostly from there. A lot of the team really is the same. Yeah, just a combination of two great teams coming together. Hopefully we can replicate these kind of results a little more.

Q. Will, obviously Roger is not a regular on the

team this year. Just wondered if he gave you any message before qualifying or before practice? This is a big weekend for the organization, mainly for Roger as a human being as well. Any sort of parting message that he's not on the team on a regular basis now?

WILL POWER: Actually I haven't spoke to Roger for quite some time. He must be so busy with everything he's doing. Obviously the lockdown. Seriously, I didn't see him at Texas. Haven't spoken to him probably in a few months.

I'm sure he's keeping an eye on it. He's also keeping an eye on everything else that's going on at the Speedway this weekend to make sure it goes smoothly.

Q. Obviously the Aeroscreen, it's the first time it's appeared on a road course now. You two were both here last year. How much has it impacted your setup work, how you approached today? Any sort of significant area that it's impacted on specifically or just a case of adapting the car slightly compared to last year?

WILL POWER: It's actually quite different, very different. Just the amount of weight that's forward and it's high. The car feels quite sluggish as far as change of direction and in general. Certainly beats up on the front tire.

JACK HARVEY: Yeah, I mean, I think the bigger talking point for us this week wasn't even with the Aeroscreen exactly. It was a bit of a mystery. Compared to when the GP normally runs, it's about 30 degrees hotter now, kind of more about how the ambient and track temperature is going to play into that than how the Aeroscreen is going to work out. I think that temperature probably dominated a little bit more of our engineering conversations than the screen.

I don't mind the screen really. It's pretty hot in pit lane when you sit there with stale air. Once you get circulating, it's not too bad.

Q. Oliver, you mentioned that the tires at the end there is what you got you to fifth place as opposed to first. Is that going to be a problem in the race for you? Are you experiencing degradation?

OLIVER ASKEW: I would like to think everyone experiences a similar deg. It's just because I haven't been in that situation before with the tire. That was my first time running on a heat cycle setup of reds. These guys have been doing it for a long time. It kind of caught me a little bit off guard. The lap wasn't perfect, not how I wanted it.

Moving forward, it's going to give me some good experience.

Q. Will, Jack mentioned earlier about the heat. What was the physical demand like in the car today

with all of the heat that you had to deal with?

WILL POWER: Actually, like Jack said, once you get going, you get air circulating through. These cars are just physical anyway, especially in qualifying when you're really trying to get the most out of it.

It's just simply hotter this year. Even if we didn't have the screen, still burning up, be quite difficult. Yeah, we'll see in the race tomorrow. I mean, that's when you're really suffering if you're going to suffer. But I think INDYCAR has done a pretty good job with the cooling.

Q. Looking at the race for tomorrow, if the temperatures stay what they're at, what do you think tire degradation is going to look like throughout the race?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think that's going to play into it. Had a few hot races here. Certainly the tires do drop over a run. I think it will mix the strategies up. There will be a few different things you can do.

We'll see in the warmup tomorrow. We're not really sure how much deg there is yet. It's really hard to tell until you do a long one. We don't even know which end will go off yet.

Q. Will, obviously with the way the weather is going to be tomorrow, how are you expecting that to affect your performance during the race, with the Aeroscreen and heat? You just spoke about that, but do you think it's going to affect you more or less given that it's different temperature-wise from Texas?

WILL POWER: Yeah, the temp is actually very similar. It's just the physicality of the track. I think everyone will be pretty exhausted at the end of the race. I mean, in '18, when I finished the race, I almost fell over I'd been pushing so hard. It's like qualifying every lap of the race. It was quite hot that year.

I'm prepared for it to be a pretty tough race. Obviously done a lot of fitness around that. The only thing, no one has car fitness right now. You always pay a little bit after driving anything, unless you're driving a WP car like Oliver was this week preparing. That's why he was in the Fast Six. He was going to be on pole. He just knows the tire, man. Just shows, you need to buy one of those cars.

OLIVER ASKEW: Nothing is better than training in a go-kart. I'm going to buy one.

WILL POWER: Nice.

OLIVER ASKEW: I'm tired of borrowing one. I'm going to buy one, have it for myself.

WILL POWER: It's a real feather in my cap to have Oliver Askew in one of my cars.

Jack, are you going to buy one?

JACK HARVEY: If we have a good race, mate, yeah, I'll buy one.

WILL POWER: I'll keep that in mind when we're racing (laughter).

Q. Will, towards the end of the session, it was pointed out you were creeping up on Mario Andretti's pole record. What would it mean to match his record?

WILL POWER: That would be amazing to match Mario. Obviously a massive fan of his. When you look at his career, all the different races and series he's won in, it would be just amazing. It's just amazing having your name up there with him, A.J. To get to that, that would be really, really cool. I hope that I could do that before my career is out.

THE MODERATOR: We'll thank the three drivers, Jack Harvey, Oliver Askew, and Will Power for their time.