

IndyCar Media Conference

Friday June 24, 2016

Graham Rahal

Will Power

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with our media availability. We're pleased to be joined by Graham Rahal, finishing first in today's practice session, fastest overall.

Graham, talk about the experience of being here at Road America and what you took out of practice today.

GRAHAM RAHAL: I think it was obviously a good run there, to do that lap. We were really limited on tires because we lost the extra set this morning because we didn't get to complete the five laps in the 20-minute rule. We were down a set. We were a little conservative.

I was pleased with the lap overall. We all know it's Friday. We have a long weekend to go.

The car feels decent. I've got a little work to do. Everybody does. As you can see, it's pretty tough out there right now, pretty slippery, different types of rubber being laid down. It's tricky.

At the end of the first day, we feel decent. But come back out here in the morning, see how we go. Everybody is going to have a lot to work on, and we're included in that.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Will Power.

Graham called it tricky and challenging. Would you agree with that?

WILL POWER: Yeah, the tire never feels in the road, never feels like it has a lot of bite. That is just the surface. It makes it interesting. I mean, it makes it good. You really have to get your balance right and drive it right to get the time.

You see a lot of people making mistakes and pushing the limits. These cars are crazy fast in the corners now, the Carousel. Almost makes you wonder if you could be flat around there. I enjoy this track a lot.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Will and Graham.



Q. (No microphone.)

GRAHAM RAHAL: When we tested here a couple weeks ago, I don't know, we did like 500 miles or 493 miles. We were doing a lot of brake testing. Honestly, we didn't get to work on the car very much till the very end.

The setup, we had to adapt a little bit. Guys that went out this morning, that tested, were struggling. A ton of us were a little bit off of pace. At the end we did a 3.0, at the test we did a 2.8. We're pretty close.

As Will said, this place, it's strange, the sensation you get, it never feels like the tires are biting into the road very much other than the first lap. It's tricky to get it in, but I would say setup is close, overall.

Q. (No microphone.)

GRAHAM RAHAL: It's a weird scenario. I guess one of the antennas that is supplied was faulty. It was frying all of our (indiscernible) boxes. It was like the car didn't even exist. You plug in, do absolutely nothing. Couldn't get a setup. We tried everything we could.

Then we thought maybe the (indiscernible) was going to end our session completely. Like I said before, we lost a set of tires because of it because we couldn't get the five laps in in the 20 minutes. We were kind of behind an eight ball. The car was decent. It hurt us, but we were able to rebound pretty well.

It seems like lately for our team everything that can go wrong has, like the gearbox sailing in practice one at Texas, then not getting the run here. That's frustrating. Our guys keep their heads down, we're going to keep working hard, we'll be all right.

Q. (No microphone.)

GRAHAM RAHAL: Well, I was telling people, somebody was asking me earlier, I spent more time here than I spent at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in my life. This place is pretty cool for the Rahal family. My grandparents won't be here this weekend, but they're only two hours down the road. Yeah, I mean, my dad grew up coming here watching my grandpa race. I did the same with dad.

It's funny. Yesterday I went out on the scooter, cruised

around for a little bit. It brought back so many old memories.

It's a special place for us, without a doubt.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's going to be interesting. Actually the compounds are pretty close, the red and blacks, they're only one step away from each other. I don't think you're going to see a huge gain on reds.

It will be more interesting in the race because you're seeing cords really early in the front tires, you know, almost after like nine laps or something. That's going to be more controlling that, especially on the reds because they're a softer compound.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Like Will said, the blacks definitely show cords pretty quick in the run. They did at the test, too. When I was in the brake test, I was doing long runs, 14 or 15 laps over a fuel stint. They were hanging in there pretty good.

Like Will said, it's going to be tricky. We don't know totally what it's going to be like. It's a risk, even to run reds in warmup, if they are magically better, grippier and more consistent, then you don't want to use them.

We'll see. The tire deg seems to be pretty high from your first couple laps until lap five or six. Maybe in qualifying it might be better, we'll see.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think it will be tough to pass. The braking zones are unbelievably short. It's just tough to get close, it is. Even in the old cars, it was tough. It's a narrow place, lower grip.

'Push to pass', a big chunk of speed.

GRAHAM RAHAL: A lot of speed.

WILL POWER: You can definitely make some hay with 'push to pass'. Actually, I think they should have a non-reactive 'push to pass' system where the car in front can't react and you'll see a lot of passing.

GRAHAM RAHAL: I mean, I would say I used 'push to pass' on the test a couple times. I think 'push to pass' worked like 3/10ths on one straightaway. That's a lot. That's more than anywhere else.

I actually don't think it will be hard to pass because you can force somebody into a mistake here pretty easy. I mean, you're seeing brake zones are short, they're compact. If you lock up, you're going straight off. That's why you're seeing so many cars go off.

If you're behind, you just hound the guy, try to force him into mistakes. I think you can get around people. We'll see.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: Yeah, you just got to get everything right. You want to start at the front. Yeah, strategy. It's just got to be your day, you got to get everything right if you want to win the race. These days in IndyCar it's really difficult.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Everything's just got to go in your direction. You know, we all worked really hard to prepare for this weekend. Particularly the season my team has had, we could really use a win right about now.

As Will said, just got to get it right. Strategy, saving fuel, save your tires, do it all to your best, hope at the end you come out on top.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: You got to remember, 12 laps is a full stint. That's it. You only get 12 laps.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: It depends. You got to remember the curbs around here are very abrasive. The tire is really good, it's just the curbs. I think that's more the issue than the actual tire. Firestone has a really good tire and it is reasonably consistent. When you start using the curbs, it gains you time, but you start tearing up the tires.

You can personally control that.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: That was interesting. When I came here in Champ Car, my race went off horribly, where I actually had to lift off in the kink. It's a different tire now. Yeah, it's hard to say.

Being the compound is so close, I don't think they're going to wear very differently to the blacks.

GRAHAM RAHAL: I hope his reds go off that bad again (laughter).

I mean, it's hard to say. I mean, this place is so fast. The loads are so high. Remember, here it's not like you're running all the downforce that you can find. You need to be pretty quick on the straights. It's a pretty interesting balance, which then even works the tire even harder when you're not loaded up with everything else you can find. It will be fine. Hopefully we can keep the tires under us.

I think Detroit is a little bit of a different case with the

reds than here, so we'll see.

Q. (No microphone.)

GRAHAM RAHAL: Basically it's an antenna on the car. It's got part of the IndyCar telemetry in it. It had a short in it. Right before we ran, it goes under the front cover, when we put it on, because it's all part of the same wiring loom, it fried our (indiscernible) box, which is underneath me. That's the car's brain pretty much right there. So it fried that one. I had to jump out. We replace it. We didn't know the antenna was bad, it had just been supplied to us. We figured it would be okay.

When we plugged the next one in, it fried that one, too. I mean, when we plugged the computer in, the car won't run without having a setup, it acted as if it didn't even exist. Had to take the thing back to Cosworth, replace the box again. It was just a mess. Electronics. Pain in the you know what.

I'm sure Will has been through this. All the guys with the computers are trying their hardest, they cannot get the thing to show that it exists. Honda can't let you run the car, nor will the car even start actually without this. We were just trapped pretty much. It was difficult because we wanted to get those five laps on those tires so we could save them.

We just didn't even get to run for, what, 40 minutes of the session. We just sat there. The five-lap rule here for tires is interesting, because five laps here are half a stint. The things are beat by the time you're done anyway. Still would have been nice to have the extra set.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think it's the temperature more than anything. This track, when it gets hot, gets really greasy. Otherwise I would have expected us to be quicker than what we are, maybe on reds. On reds, when I tested the tire test here, did a 3.3, so I think it's faster than it was.

GRAHAM RAHAL: Like I said, in the test I did 2.8. I mean, I think you'll go a little bit quicker maybe tomorrow. It's tricky. You got so many different series running here, so many different types of rubber. For sure, the first outing I did in practice one still felt slippery compared to when I tested here last week, so...

It's a little hard to say. We're not that far off what we did in the last year of Champ Car. It's a second. Paul was like a high one, race pace was five or six. So I think you're going to be similar.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.