

MCLAUGHLIN PREVAILS IN STRATEGIC DUEL FOR VICTORY AT BARBER

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2021 NTT INDYCAR SERIES Rookie of the Year McLaughlin prevailed on a three-stop strategy after starting fourth, while Grosjean and Andretti Autosport used a two-stop tactic. The three-stop strategy allowed McLaughlin to go full tilt during stints and avoid worrying about having enough Shell fuel remaining to finish the race, unlike the drivers who made two stops.

"I call it a 'happy driver strategy,'" McLaughlin said. "I was a lot happier doing that. We went past Grosjean there on a little bit of strategy, and I feel really good about it."

Reigning series champion Will Power finished third in the No. 12 Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet for his first podium position of the season.

Pato O'Ward finished fourth in the No. 5 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet, with 2021 series

champion Alex Palou rounding out the top five in the No. 10 Ridgeline Lubricants Honda in the 90-lap race.

The duel between McLaughlin and Grosjean was set up when they each made their final pit stops with less than 30 laps to go. Grosjean got service for the second and final time on Lap 61. McLaughlin made his third and final stop three laps later, exiting the pits just in front of McLaughlin but on cold Firestone tires.

One lap later, Grosjean made a textbook inside-out move to pass McLaughlin for position in the final turn of the 17-turn, 2.3-mile roller coaster of a circuit. Grosjean inherited the lead on Lap 66 when Power made his third and final pit stop.

McLaughlin hounded Grosjean's gearbox for the next six laps, staying within three- to four-tenths of a second of the Frenchman. Grosjean had used all his push-to-pass by that point, while McLaughlin had some in reserve.

So, when Grosjean went wide in Turn 5 on Lap 72, McLaughlin drove under him and



pounded the push-to-pass button to complete the pass and build a gap, never trailing thereafter. The compelling duel for the lead between the two was fierce but stayed clean throughout, unlike the season opener last month in St. Petersburg when they both hit the tire barrier after contact with each other while racing for the lead.

"We're racers; you just get on with it," McLaughlin said. "We talked it out man to man (after St. Petersburg), and as far as I'm concerned and he's concerned, we race hard and fair and press on. No hard feelings between the two of us."

After losing the lead, Grosjean then had to worry about the hard-charging Power, who sliced a four-second deficit to less than a second over the closing laps. But Power's softer-but-faster Firestone alternate tires began to wear on the closing laps, and he had to settle for third, 1.4845 seconds behind Grosjean.

Grosjean second finished for the fifth time in his NTT INDYCAR SERIES career as he seeks his first victory. "It hurts," said Grosjean, who led a race-high 57 laps. "The three-stop never wins at Barber, but today the pits stayed open. That gave McLaughlin and Power the edge on the three-stop. Look at the two-stop (cars) behind us - 20 seconds behind us. We had an incredible car, drove really well, gave it 100 percent, but we just got unlucky with that yellow."

"Congrats to Scott. He deserved that win."

The three-stop strategy used by Team Penske for McLaughlin, Power and Josef Newgarden got a boost on Lap 38 when Sting Ray Robb's No. 51 biohaven Honda stopped at the exit of Turn 9 with an apparent mechanical problem. The pits stayed

open until a full-course caution was called for Robb's crippled car on Lap 39, as leader McLaughlin dipped into the pits for his second stop just before the full-course caution.

McLaughlin will split \$10,000 with Team Penske and his chosen charity, Memorial Sloan

Kettering Cancer Center, for his victory as part of the PeopleReady Force For Good Challenge.

2022 Indianapolis 500 winner Marcus Ericsson kept the series championship lead by three points over O'Ward, 130-127, after finishing 10th in the No. 8 Huski Chocolate Chip Ganassi Racing Honda.

The fabled Month of May at Indianapolis Motor Speedway is next for the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, with the GMR Grand Prix on Saturday, May 13 on the road course and the

107th Indianapolis 500 presented by Gainbridge on Sunday, May 28.

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