

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Josef Newgarden

Team Penske

Tony Kanaan

A.J. Foyt Racing

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by today's race winner, Josef Newgarden. It's win number 16 for Josef. That ties him with Dan Wheldon for 30th on the all-time list.

Josef, talk about the race off of pit road with Pato O'Ward and how close was it.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was very close, yeah. Honestly I wasn't sure, I thought he was going to maybe back out. We were just slightly ahead thanks to my crew. My pit crew has been just unbelievable. I don't even know what to say. I think they've been fast or fastest in the majority of races we've been in. They're so good on pit lane. We've been dialed in, the way we stop, launch, everything dialed in metrically.

We just got ahead of him. I was curious. I moved on him just a little bit to try and show him that we were ahead. I thought maybe he would lift out. Made sure I hit the button just right on the cone so he didn't get a good jump. I was just kind of surprised to see him holding on the outside. He did a great job.

We gave each other room. We went two-wide. We raced all the way to turn three. I think the first thing I would say is he's doing an amazing job himself. Pato has been a real talent. I always believed he was a strong driver, was going to do well in INDYCAR or anywhere he sort of ended up. It's nice to see him find his success and doing a great job.

He drove me well, drove clean. Certainly deserved to be up there and had a shot at winning the race, as he should. Pretty fun to be in that fight at the end.

THE MODERATOR: The two guys who have 16 wins in INDYCAR, you and Dan Wheldon, someone you looked up to coming up. How much does it mean to you to be tied with Dan?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I didn't know that stat. I didn't know Dan was at 16 wins. Yeah, he's a phenomenal -- he was a phenomenal ambassador for the series and for motorsports. He was just a wonderful person, as many will attest. He was a really great guy.

It's really a shame. Right when I was coming up in Indy is when the unfortunate accident happened with Dan. I got to spend some time with him in karting when I was a kid. That's where I kind of became a fan of his. He would come back to the karting tracks, hang out with us. Loved seeing the kids coming up. Was very passionate about motorsports overall, not just the top level, but where the new kids were coming in from, going back to his roots with karting.

What an honor to be at the same wins with him. I never thought one day. I never thought I would be in INDYCAR one day. It's all kind of cool when you mention it.

Chevy did a great job today. We had the engine to beat, without a doubt, great power, everything else we needed. Having Hitachi on the car with their support is always great. Pretty pleased we were able to close one off today without any odd yellows or anything holding us back.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions for Josef Newgarden.

Q. You're the only other multi-race winner this year, other than Scott Dixon. Kind of seems like you're still out there fighting. There's still a lot of racing left. To nibble away on his points lead, how important was that today?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, it's critical. Yesterday hurt. The 500 hurt even more. It's a shame, we've just been bitten one too many times this year. Normally I feel like the cycle kind of comes around, it starts to ease up on you and starts to hurt someone else. This year it's just not seemed to ease up on us a whole lot. We've had a lot of yellow situations which have gone against us.

I think yesterday was the third yellow that really hurt our race, just has taken us out of contention. We've had a couple other issues here or there that some of them were self-induced, some were out of our control. We've just not



had a very smooth year.

In all honesty, I think we could have had four or five wins by this point. We're not there. We're a little bit behind. But we're trying to chase and catch back up and do what we can. We have to keep fighting and try to claw back. That's all we can do.

We seem to keep losing ground. Two steps forward... We normally take a step forward and two back. I think if we can reverse that trend, we can fight for a championship.

Q. The way the Indy 500 went for Team Penske and Chevrolet, how important was it for both your team to get two guys up on the podium and Chevrolet to have a bounceback after an untypical Indy 500 for them?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, it was disappointing. We were really in the Indy 500 with a shot to win at the end. Most people probably don't know, but we actually passed Sato in turn three out of the last pit stop out of the pits. We were sort of there. We just faded and we weren't in the conversation any more.

So I guess I mention that because I think Chevrolet was there. They had a presence. They definitely gave us a good opportunity to compete at the 500. I just didn't work out this year. We left there not having what we wanted, certainly not with the 1 car. As a whole camp with Chevrolet, we didn't get what we wanted.

This weekend, to your point, we had everything we needed: good power, reliability, fuel mileage we needed. Nothing to complain about this weekend. It was great to see them finally get a win. A 1-2-3 is even better.

Yeah, proud to be Chevy backed. All my wins have been Chevrolet backed. I always have faith they're going to bring me what I need.

Q. If this does end up being Tony Kanaan's last race, do you have a favorite Tony story?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't have a personal story to share, no. What's always stuck with me is the gratitude that the fans have shown Tony at the Indy 500. Whenever you hear Tony announced, it's quite amazing to see the response he gets. I think that speaks to what he's done in his career, trying to make the fans very inclusive, being gracious to the fans, just really doing a great job of being an ambassador for INDYCAR. He's been one of the best.

That's what I'll remember him for is his cheers. He's one of the best that's ever done it, always represented the sport very well. Like I said, that's what I'll remember him the

most for.

Q. I spoke to Gavin recently. He said he thinks maybe you've had better cars this year than last year. Is that something you share? So many of the missed opportunities this year have been strategy or things not falling your way. Is that frustrating feeling like you have better cars than last year and not quite being able to challenge Scott closer?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, definitely. I mean, look, it's hard to complain about bad luck because at the end of the day it is what it is. You're going to have things that go against you, you're going to have things go your way. A lot of time you can't control it.

I just felt like this year, to Gavin's point, we have had really good cars. We've had good cars to compete, running up front, led a lot of laps. We've just had too many races that have completely gone against us. It's unfortunate because the races that go against us, or Will Power, they seem to go Scott's way. He seems to be the benefactor of our misfortune more often than not.

I don't want to harp on it because it's racing. I've had years where we've had everything go our way, and Scott has been on the opposite end of that. It kind of ebbs and flows. You can't complain too much because it goes back and forth.

This year we've been doing a great job. Gavin is doing great. Had three poles. Close to another one yesterday. Not like we're doing a bad job. We have had good cars. We've bitten one too many times with bad luck. Just been hoping it's going to stop at some point and unfortunately it hasn't completely stopped yet.

Q. Have you had a chance to reflect since the 500, middle of your career, not a time to reflect too much, but is it getting to the point where a 500 is more important than a third championship, and if it isn't you just go for the championship and take what you can get?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it's the latter. I've said it many times now: Indy is a tough place. Look, there's a lot of guys have gone their whole career and it's never shined on them. That's okay. That's how it is. Sometimes it will shine on you four times, like our four-time champions at the 500.

I don't think you can force it. You never know what is going to happen. I'm kind of at peace with the fact maybe I'll never win that race. That's okay. You have to give your best effort. We gave our best effort last weekend. We

were there. Unfortunately we were kind of in the fight into the last pit stop. I mean, we were literally right there with Dixon and Sato. I came in right on Sato's gearbox on that final pit stop. We even beat him out into turn three on that final stop. It's not like we weren't there.

It wasn't the right place, right time. We didn't have exactly what we needed for that moment in the race. It didn't work out. So you just have to get yourself that opportunity every year. Hopefully everything aligns, it ends up in a victory. If it doesn't, it doesn't. You go on to the next race, try to take as much as you can.

Yeah, I think it's that attitude where you give yourself an opportunity. If it never works out, it never works out.

Q. The points gap, do you think it's doable for the rest of the season or is it too much?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's getting hard now. Yesterday was just tough. It's just tough. We keep taking, like I said, a step forward and then two steps backwards. If we can flip that where we take at least two steps forward and maybe a step back, it's okay, you're coming out with a net win.

But we just keep washing with less. We can't quite claw forward. We just can't have situations like yesterday where the yellow bites us. We can't afford that. We cannot afford that with the amount of points we are down.

If that type of situation keeps happening to us, then unfortunately you're never going to claw back where we're at right now. It's just not going to happen. But I believe we can.

If those things stop happening, I think we can fight him with. What do we have, five races to go now? It's tough. We have to have some help. But it's possible. Anything is possible with that amount of races left.

THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome in Tony Kanaan, driver of the No. 14 Big Machine Vodka Chevrolet for A.J. Foyt Racing.

Tony, not the way you wanted to end the season, finishing a lap down, but a good weekend for you with a ninth place yesterday and then today.

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, I mean, yesterday was actually a pretty decent result for us. Today was a bit frustrating. I think with the way the race went, I think everybody has some room to complain. It was honestly quite a boring race, this one.

It is what's. I had a pretty good day yesterday, so it's nice to see some fans in the stands supporting us. Not the way I want to end my last race, but it is what it is.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions for Josef and Tony.

Q. Josef, yesterday's yellow flag, obviously it screwed you and Will, Harvey over. How much moisture was there? Was there any driver calling for it's getting damp out here, it's dangerous, that kind of thing, or was it just something that race control decided to do?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I couldn't tell you. From where I was sitting, I didn't see anything. I didn't know why we were going yellow. Then Tim told me. I still didn't see anything.

Yeah, it's just one of those deals. I thought someone was in the wall was more what was happening. Yeah, I don't know what it was for. Just obviously was very poor timing for us.

Q. Do you think you will look back on that as one of the things that damages your championship chances should you not be able to overhaul Dixon?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'll look back at that one, I'll look at the GP, I'll look at Iowa race one, and I'll look at Road America with the (indiscernible). All four of those will be very key deciding factors where we should have either won or finished second and we finished way back.

Q. Tony, this marks the end of your last lap for this season. You've been vocal about wanting to come back next year for races. How are you approaching today's race mentally with the hope that you'll be back in an INDYCAR but not knowing that will be for certain?

TONY KANAAN: Well, I have to be realistic, right? For my liking, I think it's not fair that I would go out this way. It's not fair for my fans. It's not fair for me. But it's easier said than done.

Today I approached the race as was my last race. I have nothing for next year. I have no sponsor. I have no team. Everybody that was involved with me knew about my decision. Obviously I changed my mind.

It's going to be a challenge. It's going to be a challenge to try to see if I can put something together to do the same what I did this year.

I can assure you, like, when I announced this thing in

February, I'm not coming back a full season, that's for sure. If I can put a deal together to do the five ovals again, that's what I'm going to work on. As of now, I'm done.

Q. Have you begun talks with any teams preliminarily? Is there a chance something could come through? Are you waiting for the off-season or next couple weekends to start pursuing?

TONY KANAAN: I have not talked to any teams yet. I actually went back to my sponsors. We set up some meetings for this week. I think the best approach was going to be let's see what kind of money I can raise, then I can go talk to the teams.

Obviously a lot of people have heard what I'm doing. My boss actually approached me to talk this weekend. Things are going to develop pretty quick. I think all my sponsors are onboard as far as wanting to talk to see what extent they can do something, if they can do something.

I would say I'm not going to wait till the end of the season. The next two weeks I probably will know something, then we'll start talking. But we'll see. It's going to be really hard.

Q. What will you take as the highlights of this season?

TONY KANAAN: I mean, the team has improved quite a bit. Every race I ran, one way or the other, we were in the top 10. Some of them we didn't finish there, but we were running up there. I think we improved quite a bit. I don't think I was that consistent last year, the whole year, even doing a full season.

The highlight I think was Indy when we started all the way back there, were running in the top 10 pretty much all day until we had an issue on the last stop. I would say it was a very consistent season, if I can call that a season, with the five races that I did.

It was nothing like I had planned. I had a lot of plans to enjoy with the sponsors, the fans, everybody else. I would say the highlight was just to be a part of it.

I think after 23 years I feel pretty fortunate to be able to do this. It was my 384th start in INDYCAR, third of all time. I have no room to complain. Second of all time. They keep correcting me. That's how much I know of my stats (laughter).

I had a good run. I made good friends. I appreciate just to be part of it. If I'm able to move forward, fine. If not, it is what it is. I had a good run.

Q. Tony, you're a hard-nosed, tough guy on the

racetracks. Seems like all the competitors coming up, rival drivers and crew members before the race, how emotional was that for you?

TONY KANAAN: It was weird, man. I mean, it was really tough. I wasn't expecting that. I think I kind of had forgotten. Without the fans and people that could get access to us, I thought it was going to be a lot easier because there would be less people.

It was tough. Especially when you have the adrenaline kicking in right before the race. You try to, like, concentrate. It was hard. I obviously got extremely emotional. But it's nice. I didn't expect that, I didn't plan it.

Q. He went fading off into the sunset...

THE MODERATOR: Looks like he was in his car, so he may have hit a bad cell.

Q. Josef, some of the races that we've seen this season have looked really difficult for cars to pass each other. Looking forward into the future, do you think it's something that INDYCAR should look into either going to more aero with more horsepower for some ovals or increasing the tire deg?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Definitely, yeah. I would say the ratio here was not ideal. It's just hard sometimes to get that perfect. Yeah, you need something here. You need more tire degradation, more dropoff, a lot more power.

In truth a lot more power is coming. That's on the plan, is to introduce quite a bit more power to the cars. I think if we had that with similar aero, it would have made a difference, or more tire dropoff.

I'm quite surprised we didn't have more tire dropoff. I think Firestone did too good of a job. I was expecting a lot more with heavier cars. I expected the cars to be more difficult over a run, but they weren't. The tires were really good. You almost could get faster through the runs sometimes.

Yeah, not the right ratio. We just have to tune on it. It's an experiment every time.

Q. Does it have anything to do with the Aeroscreen on top of the car? Has that affected passing at all?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No, I wouldn't say so. I think it's always historically been tough here at this track. Some years have been a little better just depending on that package, how much downforce you have versus power. Some years have been a little simpler.



I don't think the Aeroscreen has added a negative effect because of that. It was just the perfect storm. The amount of downforce for the tire deg and horsepower was not the right package for being able to pass. It was kind of easy to run a lap over and over and repeat it. You couldn't really make a difference to everybody even as the tires started to drop off.

THE MODERATOR: I see Tony is back.

Q. Tony, you were talking about how weird a feeling it was because the adrenaline was flowing...

TONY KANAAN: It was extremely unexpected, especially at that point. The adrenaline is in, you're trying to focus. I got extremely emotional. It was really cool.

I'm not a type of person that needs attention or wants that attention, but it was really cool to see how people appreciate what I've done to the sport. It was cool. It was good to get a hug from a lot of my friends, a lot of the drivers. My engineer came in and I made him cry. The last time I made him cry was when we won the 500. I was kind of making fun of him. It was really cool.

Q. If there's any bit of symmetry to all this, it seems like your last weekend was the emergence of a driver who may one day be a driver like you, Pato O'Ward. Does he remind you a little bit of yourself?

TONY KANAAN: I don't know him that well. I mean, he's been driving a heck of a season. I think INDYCAR, I would say since Josef came in from Indy Lights that impressed the hell out of me, this is the best year as far as having new talents. We have really, like, four really good rookies. It reminds me back in the day when me, myself, Helio, joined INDYCAR. We're talking about a long time ago.

Yes, I mean, he's aggressive. He's fast. He's been doing a great job.

Q. Great career, but I'm sure it's not over.

TONY KANAAN: I hope not. Thank you.

Q. Josef, even on the races that didn't necessarily go your way this year, your pit crew has been amazing. How has it been to have a pit crew help you out the way they have?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't believe Tony. I think we'll see him at the 500. He has too many fans, he's too good there. I think we'll see him in May, which is very good.

TONY KANAAN: Thanks, buddy.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: To your point, I said it today. I didn't win the race today. My pit crew won it. I'm not shy to say that. I'll take it however I can get it.

I felt like we had a great car. We stayed in position all day. We just needed an opportunity. It was very, very hard to pass. So, you know, if you had a bobble here or there, you needed to be in position to take advantage of it. It was just great. They gave me an opportunity to race O'Ward at the end. We raced out of pit lane. That's what won us the race.

Yeah, if you look at the charts, I think my crew has been P1 on pit lane I think five or six races. Maybe not that many, but four or five of the races we've been fastest on pit lane. They've been doing an amazing job, deserve all the credit, no doubt. We had a fast car, but they put it over the top to get the win today.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, everyone, for joining us for our press conference.

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