

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, June 13, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. We are joined today by our second-place finisher Josef Newgarden, driver of the No. 2 Hitachi Team Penske Chevy. Josef, obviously a disappointing finish there at the end. Tell us more about your day.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, just our breaking day for sure, finished second, and yeah, just kind of was what it was there at the end. Felt like we had a good car and just didn't work our way strategy-wise and some of the times that we had to pit where we thought we had to pit because a yellow was probably going to come out, I think it all just didn't play into our favor.

Yeah, it is what it is. Move on to the next, but felt like we had a good car. Really proud of our team. I thought they were really resilient this weekend, which is important, and it's a great job for our partners at Team Chevy to get a one-two here, so pretty stoked for those guys and certainly our partner Hitachi and everybody from Penske Corp that was here supporting us.

Q. Last year after St. Pete you were saying Pato is one of the future stars of INDYCAR, in fact you said you were already a fan of him, he was already a star at that time and how clean he's driven you, now you guys have had some battles this year at Texas and then today. What's he done differently compared to last year to this year when you've been racing him?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know that he's done anything different, but he's -- I think he's picked up where he left off last year. They were in the fight last year and they've got strong cars certainly at McLaren. They were in the fight pretty much all the way through last season. I think you're seeing a lot of the same.

Q. How do you think yourself and the team can bounce back from this going into Road America next week?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I'm not sure we have to

really bounce back. It's just we were fast today, hopefully fast next weekend, and hopefully it all works out.

Q. You've been close to a win a couple times this year, just can't quite get there. What is it going to take for you and Team Penske to finally get a victory this year?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, if I had the answer I'd be doing it but I'm sure it'll happen at some point. It just hasn't aligned. Sometimes you get that. You just don't get everything to line up perfectly. I think we've got a lot of the ingredients right. I don't think we really need to change much, just keep doing our thing.

Q. Do you feel the team is taking too risky a calls or anything like that where the cautions could catch you out?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Nope, nope, I wouldn't change a thing. Look, you can't predict these races. You can look like a hero or a zero pretty easily in this sport, so yeah, I would ask anyone to change anything. I think they're doing all the right stuff, it's just not worked out.

Q. Josef, can you describe just how much of a challenge it was for you just to hold off Colton and Alex at the end there? Those tires looked cooked and one little mistake and you'd probably go from second to fourth.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, they were fried. I think probably the worst part was we had to put about 10 extra laps on those tires because we thought the caution was going to come out in that first stint around lap 18 I think we pitted, and you just can't risk missing the caution. If you miss the caution, you're just hosed. It just completely ruins your day.

I think that compromised us more than anything. Then we had to run 25 laps on used reds, so that was not ideal, and then the cautions bunching us up probably hurt us, as well, just brought the whole field back to it. I think we probably could have held Colton off potentially if we just would have run cleanly to the end there. But that's kind of impossible to say. I'd have to see that play out. I think, yeah, just the cautions and the potential caution is more of what hindered us today.

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

Q. You and Pato touched on a pretty quick section of the racetrack. I just wanted to get your thoughts on how you saw that. Was it just good hard racing or was it a bit on the limit?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Definitely I think on the limit, but I think it was good hard racing. There's a kink on the back straight so it's not perfectly straight, so to be fighting side by side, I think you probably get a little bit of contact like that. It's not completely abnormal down in that section of the track. But he was coming like a freight train. My tires were cooked, and he was having great drives off the corner, as you saw.

I think that's what kind of did us in. It almost did us in with Alex, too. Thankfully we were able to hold on to second, but yeah, just hard racing.

Q. My question is the fact that it's been two years now since we've been at Belle Isle. Has the track changed or evolved in relation to the tire wear that you're getting on either the reds or blacks?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: If anything the reds were quite a bit more durable than '19. I think if you guys cast your thoughts back to '19, they were diabolically bad for tire wear. You didn't want to be on them for more than two laps in the race. Certainly they were more resilient today. You could almost make a used set work. A new set would have been preferred, but you could definitely make a used set work for I would say 15, 20 laps. 25 is pushing it, but Firestone made a change and definitely made them more durable, but I think the fact that they are more fragile than the blacks makes it interesting to watch. I think as a spectator it's probably more fun to see that mix-up and that dynamic than them being just both really durable and just a little time offset.

That's what you set here. You get quite a bit of spread. But a lot less spread than what it was in '19.

Q. Looking back through this season, can you consider this isn't a bad one, or can you consider a successful one?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, we haven't completed it yet, so I don't know how to look at it yet completely.

I think looking at half of it, it seems okay. It's not exactly what we wanted, but it's not too bad. We're in the hunt. But we've got halfway to go, so a lot of racing to hopefully still be in this fight.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, good luck next weekend at