

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Josef Newgarden

Colton Herta

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the front row for tomorrow's race. Colton Herta, second front row start of the season, second since St. Pete earlier this year. Saving some of the best for last in your qualifying session?

COLTON HERTA: (No audio at beginning.)

-- at 4:00 in the afternoon when we race at 12:00. It's also probably going to rain tomorrow, so we'll see.

It will be a good basis off of what the car needs to be. I imagine you're going to have a little more grip, especially at the rear-end, a little more grip when it cools down for tomorrow's race.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take some questions.

Q. (Indiscernible).

COLTON HERTA: They are the only people that saved. I think Josef and Will were the only ones that saved the black tires from practice. You had to save from practice. I don't think anybody really did except for them. Maybe they were thinking about it the whole time.

But, yeah, I wasn't sure what it was going to be like. It definitely kind of caught me by surprise that he did it on blacks and not used reds.

Q. (Indiscernible).

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, we've done it before. We've gotten poles like that before. You definitely think about it. In this situation, you had to think about it at the beginning of the weekend and not use all your tires in practice, which we did.

Q. (Question about number of stops.)

COLTON HERTA: I think it depends. There might be

some people that really struggle with deg. Who knows, it could be a four-stop. Ever since they put in the two pit speed limiters, the 90 miles an hour down to 45, pit lane has gotten a lot quicker. You don't lose much time.

It all depends how bad the day gets. If it gets really bad, guys might try it.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Josef Newgarden, NTT P1 pole award winner here at Road America. 13th career pole, third here at Elkhart Lake, second in a row, race number two at the Chevrolet Detroit Grand Prix.

Nice start to the weekend for you.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it's great. Our car has been quick. I definitely think we had the right strategy there. I think Colton was going to be a match for match. Probably would have been a really tough battle for pole. We definitely had the advantage. Happy we did that.

But today (indiscernible). Maybe a little bit different tire, track. Pole is going to help keep us up front. We definitely need to conjure up for a consistent (indiscernible) keep the tires underneath you.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think you'll see good and bad cars. Depending on where those good and bad cars in race condition are could create a lot of excitement. On tire deg in position (indiscernible), he may gobble some people up right in front of him moving to top five on the stint. Same thing up front. If we're bad on our tires up front, maybe I'm just trying to hold everybody back.

Just like the Detroit situation. Very exciting race at the end because people were struggling to get tires up to temperature. I was running out of tire life. It just creates excitement.

It's not fun to drive necessarily. It's easier when the tire is really consistent. But when you get that separation with good and bad cars on tire life, it's exciting to watch. I think you could have that type of storyline for tomorrow.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, very similar comments. I think

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you could relate it most to like watching an oval race, right?

Good cars tend to go to the front, whereas on a road course sometimes you can hold guys off a little longer.

So, yeah, it's going to be like Josef said: I think it's going to be a tire race. Tire deg is going to be the talk of it. Whoever has the best car that's nailed down at the rear the most, if they can save those rear tires, especially on the reds, is going to be the best.

It's surprising, too, because even the black tires don't seem to be so good with deg this weekend, too. There is deg at a similar rate of deg with the reds.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, obviously we haven't knocked one down this year yet. It's not been terribly frustrating. The speed has been there. We qualified first or second I think the majority. We've been well in striking distance.

I feel like our cars, at least the 2 car, is really good. It's just not worked out in some of these circumstances. We've not translated to race day perfectly every time, whether that's strategy or just race speed.

But I think we're in the hunt every weekend. We just need to pick it up here and hopefully have some of these results turn our way. That's really what we need here for the second half, just get a couple things turning our way. Other than that it's been a really good year for the most part.

Q. What do you do to create more downforce?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Some of it's inherent to your setup. Everyone has kind of different philosophies with the way they build the car mechanically, whether that's the dampers or mechanical setup philosophy of the car. All this stuff plays into it.

I think you're definitely hoping on a weekend like this that you tend to lean better on the tire life side of things. I think that's traditionally been a strength of ours, but it's gotten tougher.

As tire degradation has become more of an issue in this series, not an issue, but more of a predominant player in how you win a race, I think people are getting better at it. Even I would say Colton is a good example. I thought Andretti used to not be the best on tire life, and I think they've gotten much better over the last couple years.

It's hard to have a huge advantage on tire life. But

everything plays into it. A lot of it's set in. You want to take a huge risk right now and change the whole car to try to make it better in one 30-minute session for tomorrow, you may just make things worse.

Your inherent philosophy setup-wise, you're kind of hoping at this point that it leads to good durability of the tire. You're not going to be able to change much. Little tweaks here and there. Downforce is one of them.

I think a lot of the car philosophies just play into who survives better on tires versus who does not.

Q. Colton, how do you think the team will do tomorrow, given the front row start for you guys?

COLTON HERTA: I think we're getting there. I think Josef kind of nailed it, that tire life wasn't a strength of I don't know about the team but definitely mine. I've worked a lot in the last two years to kind of get better at it. So I'll be trying a lot of different things driving-wise in warmup here in a little bit. We'll do some tweaks on the setup for the race and see what we have.

But, yeah, I think there's a really good chance that we could win tomorrow. We seem to have a really good car. Confidence is high. We've had really good pace the last few weekends. Yeah, I'm really excited for it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll cut you loose, Colton. Congratulations.

We'll continue with questions for Josef.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, definitely. I mean, some guys are easier on tires versus not. Colton just answered that. He was someone that was sort of more aggressive. I think some guys are more aggressive on their tires versus others. Colton is certainly one that you'd see him be strong in the beginning, fade pretty aggressively a couple years ago. He's better at that now. It all plays into that.

You're trying to find the balance of a right pace throughout a stint by pushing enough to be quicker than everybody, but not so much that your average falls down. It's really just about average. You have to find out what's that medium, how aggressively do you want to push the tire.

Most of that is laterally. Longitudinally and laterally is how you're wearing the tire out, how much you're sliding it. There's a of long-duration lateral corners here where you are constantly loaded for five, ten seconds, like the carousel.

You can do a lot of damage to tires if you're too aggressive in those types of corners. There's all kind of sorts of stuff you can do to dial out the wear, but you're sacrificing speed if you do.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: The name of the game is not over-slipping the tire. The tire is always sliding. They generate grip by slipping the tire. You don't want to over-slip it. If you get to the point (indiscernible), then you're wearing it out, you're kind of going over the grip curve.

You don't want to over-slip it. You want to slip it just enough to get good grip, good speed, but not doing any damage.

Q. (Question about pit strategy.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No, I could see that. If you want to do a four-stop race, you could pit pretty early. I can see people starting on reds, get them out of the way. Could be like Detroit where you want to get off of them, run blacks the rest of the race. It's very possible.

I don't know. I think it's a different ballgame than last year. I haven't really gone over the list with the team yet. I don't think long stints is necessarily the guaranteed winner of the race. Could be a faster, shorter stint race that wins things.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, you're going 14, 15 typically, from what I remember. You could dice that up, do an extra stop, maybe have better average speed. Depends how much dropoff there is. A lot of dropoff so far. Now we're going to do a warmup and see how bad it is.

Q. (Question about newcomers.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, yeah, I mean, I guess there's been one person that generally causes a yellow most races, so it's possible. But this is INDYCAR, right? You can't predict this stuff.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, look, as soon as you go predicting a race, it just does the complete opposite. I can't tell you how many times we've been like, Man, today is going to be filled with yellows. We just go green flag to green flag. Then vice versa. I think we're going to have a green race, it's just filled with yellows. It's

impossible to predict.

I think you try and play averages. If you're up front, you're going to play probably the most conservative race as far as running it, trying to protect yourself from yellows. One of these races, if you get caught out by one, someone wins in an off sequence, that's just INDYCAR racing. It sucks, but you can't do anything about it. It's just part of the game here.

Yeah, I don't know that you can play the prediction game. It's too hard. You can't go, Hey, we're definitely going to have a yellow, it's going to be at this point, so this is the strategy we're going to run.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, not necessarily. You get a yellow in one of these stints, that's chopping off the amount of laps you got to do on a tire, so that could help you in some ways if you get a yellow. It could help you do a longer stint race.

Again, we have to look at it. But I think the yellows -- you're not trying to play to the yellows as much as you are the correct tire strategy and what you really need. You're certainly protecting from late yellows in stints, but you're not protecting from those early, middle stint yellows. If one of those bites you out, it's just an unlucky day. That's all it is.

Q. (Question about fuel stints.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, anything is possible. Honestly, anything is possible. I don't know. I need to go back and look at everything now, see what we're going to do. But, yeah, there's nothing off the table this weekend I would say.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's three or four stops is what it is, choosing between that, choosing what tires you want to start on. Yeah, it's just assessing the tires, how bad are they, what do you not want to be on, what do you not want to be on, three or four stops. Those are probably going to be the decisions.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, I knew that as soon as we ran the reds. I was like, You are going to need blacks here for Fast Six, no doubt. Even in the qualifying, I'm like, it's going to take a 6.0 on blacks, maybe a 5.9, maybe something like that. The deg has been so hot. Like

on average it's like 7/10ths, 8/10ths from first to second run on the reds and blacks. It's a huge dropoff.

Yeah, I mean, I saw it coming. We made an early decision on that. That's not always worked out. There's been other cases, even this year, where you thought maybe the blacks would be better in a Fast Six scenario, and they haven't been. This is the first time you've seen it truly be better.

Maybe some other people were hesitant of that. We had moments where that was going to be the case and it wasn't. I felt really confident today. Just looking at everything, everybody across the board, I felt very confident that new blacks were going to be an advantage in the Fast Six.

Q. How bad did you want to get back into the car, onto the racetrack, after Detroit last week?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I would have liked to have had another go at it, just redo it. Partly just even the final part of the race. For us, we had to run perfect at the end there. I made a slight slipup. It was easy to do. It was really, really easy to do.

I looked at the race back. I said, I wish I could have taken those three laps back, just try it again, had another shot. Probably would have been the same result, but it would have been nice to have another opportunity to do it one more time.

That's that. That was that race, we're done. Still pretty good points. We're already onto this weekend. That's where my head was.

Q. Tire deg, if you can go back to '18, your win here, how different does the car feel now?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Just a lot more difficult. Much higher degradation. At least twice as much, I would say. So it's going to be a different challenge than what it was in '18.

Q. With the chance of rain tomorrow, maybe using rain tires, how confident are you going into that scenario if you had to?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, as confident as I can be. I've not run here in the rain, I don't think ever, at least not what I can remember. Maybe I have and I forgot.

I don't know. It will be the same for everybody. It will be blind, trying to adapt as best you can. Hope your car is suited decently enough to the conditions. That's what it will be. It will just be a straight-up test for everybody in the

blind, see how we do.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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