

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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James Hinchcliffe

Alexander Rossi

Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



where we didn't have that. So we need to keep putting down good performances, start putting down good performances, keep that momentum going, and we'll see what happens for next year.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, I mean -- well, it's not something you think about on a daily basis. The focus is still very much driving full time. And for '22 and beyond. And obviously you've got to start that by finishing strong in '21. But we've been having some fun with the TD stuff both on the INDYCAR side and SRX. And the focus is still (indiscernible).

Q. Josef, tell us about your afternoon.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I thought it was a good start. I was really happy with my car, to be honest, right out of the box. It's still hard to warm up here, like always, but once we got going I was super pleased with the car. I felt like I was really locked down. We made some improvements without a doubt compared to last year. We've got to keep it up. Temperatures are going to change this weekend. Not so much tomorrow, but for Sunday, I think, will be quite a bit different. And just try to stay prepared and hold the speed we have right now. If we can do that, we'll be in good shape.

Q. Alex, you swept the podium last year at the doubleheader event, the second race. How good is it to get off to a good start here?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yes, it's okay. It's kind of irrelevant. We'll see what happens tomorrow. It's more important -- and it was an interesting perspective. Just talking, there's some areas were surprisingly good, others kind of weird. We'll see how it evolves as the weekend goes on. As always you've got to stay on top of the tracks and the conditions.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's normally the warmups that are just hard. Out last the race are difficult on the black compound. Getting into a rhythm here, even to start the weekend, it's so tough, it's so slick. You build quite a bit of

Q. (No Microphone.)

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, I mean, unfortunately, we've had a couple of places that were good tracks for the team last year that didn't necessarily roll off strong for us this year.

It's no secret it's been a bit of a struggle kind of across the board, but specifically on our car as well. So it's nice to have a clean session. I think certainly a lot of what the team did successfully last year transferred to that first practice.

We'll see how it evolves. The days are getting hotter and hotter as the weekend goes on, that's going to change things for us. But it's nice to have a capstone car in the top 10 to start and hopefully we can keep going from there.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I'm feeling all right. It's nice to have a smooth session. We feel like on top of some of the challenges that we've had, we've just had, honestly, a ton of bad luck, which sucks. And that's everything down to traffic and sessions and things like that. And being back in pit lane where you have one bad qualifying, and it sort of seems to snowball from there. It's only practice one but certainly a good start. And hopefully we can keep the momentum up and have a good place to start the race, have a good race and start to carry the momentum to the last part of the season.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Yeah, for sure. It's always good to go to the winter off a couple of strong results. It's great to start the season strong, too. We have still half a chance to make that come true. And mine was a one-year deal



temperature. It's funny how long it takes to build tire temp here. You would think it would come quite quickly on a track like this, a lot of loading. But it just takes, laps and laps and laps. I think that's the hard part from my vantage point.

But I looked at lap time progression from last year, it was pretty small. I don't know if that would be the case again this year. But what we ran in P1, it didn't really change much. We obviously had some rain during that weekend, too. But I think just the warmups is the tough part.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I think anybody that sits up here will tell you, you put a lot of pressure on yourself every time you sit in the car qualifying for a race weekend. And it's definitely -- it's nice to have a good year one year when you're in a contract situation. Tough to have a bad year when you're in a contract situation.

But we have to put all those distractions out of your head and just focus on the job. We've been racing IndyCars for 10 years now for a reason. Just have to get doing what we have been doing and hopefully it all comes together.

Q. (No Microphone.)

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's very hard to answer because on paper they look the same but they're very different. I think the team's done a good job of addressing a lot of our weak issues. There's still room for improvement as always up and down the paddock. You'll have your skeletons in the closet, if you will.

But, ultimately, I think we're on the correct trajectory. It's disappointing when the results don't really show that. But for the most part, I think the car's been okay. It seems to have done a good job, but it's just about having a couple things go your way. And it's little things, ultimately, at the end of the day, that make huge differences in this championship.

You look at years past where had kind of a rough weekend or whatever, you could be (indiscernible). And now you have (indiscernible) point cars and (indiscernible) cars and such, and they're all competitive, and that's (indiscernible). So demand perfection from all sides, from the galleries and the teams, and any misstep on either side is -- minimize those as much as we can and get through the weekend.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think in the moment it's always excruciating. It's a terrible feeling. But, honestly, right after

that, it's no different for me. Move on to the next weekend. Focus forward.

From that standpoint, not doing anything different, don't have to do anything to get ourselves to move forward. We pick up where we left off, just do it again. That's kind of our mantra. It's been my mantra, at least one race at a time. Would have loved to have had different results the last couple of weekends. Can't change. That just keep doing our program. We're doing a great job. I'm super proud of my team, proud of our efforts.

I'm not asking something different from my team because I don't think they need to do that. Just not falling into place perfectly. So we're here. We're ready to rock. I'm excited to run again. I feel like my car's really good. We'll see if we can put it together this time around.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think you can overthink it too quickly, sometimes you get in the rhythms where it doesn't work out. Obviously some of it can be in our control. You can look at some of the Detroit situations as maybe both of those were in our control to some degree.

But whenever we have a small misstep, whether it's me driving the car, it's another ingredient, and we address that. We don't linger on it, address it, fix it and move on. From that standpoint, yeah, it's pretty quick. Road America, I think it will be a mistake to overthink that one, just an unfortunate situation.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think to Alex's point, that's the nature of this championship now. It's very scattered, very difficult to get yourself to the top and then stay there. And that can change weekend to weekend. So consistently doing it, I think, is really tough right now. You just have everyone involved in the game. It's not a couple of people, it's not a couple of teams. It's everyone. So it's really difficult. I think it emphasizes consistency. That's probably why, even if you had an inconsistent year, you could still be within striking distance. We are where we are. Just a new challenge from this point. A tougher challenge, but it's just a challenge we try and meet.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Probably should have been yelling at people more. I don't know why they kept him out of the car. I would have been beside myself if someone tried to do that. But obviously you can't fight these things too much. It is what it is. I think I think he's in better shape

than I was because it's just a collarbone.

My biggest issue was my hand, to be honest, when I had that happen. Also they surgically -- their procedure is totally different. It's not on top like mine was, it's underneath. I think he's in a different situation than I am. Yeah, same. But where they cut you is different. I think he'll be in better shape.

Q. Do you feel like you're driving better in your career even without the win this season?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I feel like we're on similar pace than we were last year. I was really happy with where we were at last year and some things didn't pan out. We've been the same this year as far as our working relationship and sort of our speed and all that. Just kind of same story but a little different twist this year.

Q. Asking about the conditions out there.

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: Mid-Ohio is always interesting. The first time on track is usually pretty slick. This was certainly no different. For how many things have been running over the last two days, I think everybody was a bit surprised how low grip it felt that first run.

But it actually came together pretty quick because a lot of stuff has been running, the temperatures pretty good. As the track heats up over the next couple of days, we actually might see some progression. But, yeah, typical Mid-Ohio, kind of scary first run but it's come together.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I think as long as we don't follow the trucks, we're okay. Those things -- no, they had, I think, 2000, but trucks were up before that. Sometimes that can be sketchy. We run with the (indiscernible), a lot of races. For us it's helpful for them to run, a little more familiar with that. The truck stuff is tough.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Like on a ranch somewhere as like an activity. I mean, I don't know. It would be fun but I think we're (indiscernible) these cars.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think what James is alluding to is they pull a lot of stuff onto the surface. Even with the efforts to clean the track afterward and get it tidied up, there's still a lot that you can't fully get off until we actually go out and clean it with our own tires and cars. It feels

slick, like he said.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I don't know if the team leaves anything on it. But it was a part failure that was not mileage out. It wasn't even -- I don't think it was close to its mileage limit. Something we've never seen before in the history of our team at least with this specific car and component. So just one of those -- seemed like a fluke situation. Not really sure, don't have a full explanation for it. Just unfortunate thing to happen.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: I'm going to be working the first two weekends on SRX. They actually let me drive that car. I'll get a couple of laps in those things. And then I'm probably going to go back home to Canada for a little while. The wife's got a new movie that she's shooting. I'm going to go play support staff for a couple of weeks, something like that. Amazingly not a Christmas movie this time. But she will have another one, and I'm sure she's making out with some dude in this one, too.

Q. (No Microphone.)

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Hang out. My dad is national, we're neighbors, kind of. Remotely. I'll do that. I'm going to go to SRX. Yeah.

Q. (No Microphone.)

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Results. Points. Defined scoring points. Are we missing -- I don't know if you were here before. There was a lot of adjustments that were made this.

We're just missing results, I think the team's doing a good job in most areas. It's just one of those things, when it's meant to be it's meant to be. When it's not, it's not. You've got to keep doing what you're doing each day and hope that it's your turn and you can get that kind of momentum swinging back. I promise you I am.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JAMES HINCHCLIFFE: No, it's nothing like that. My contract's up. I know Colton and Alex are not. You have to read into that what you will. But there's been no discussion really about '22 onwards, yet.

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