

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, August 21, 2021

**Josef Newgarden**

**Pato O'Ward**

**Will Power**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have joined by the third-place finisher, Will Power. Power's fourth podium of the season, 85th now of his career. That seems like a lot. Pato O'Ward, fifth podium of the season as he now takes over the overall points championship. He's up 10 over Alex Palou with just three races remaining in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES season.

Will, tell us about your night.

WILL POWER: Yeah, actually I was really happy to finish third. Definitely didn't have the car to challenge for the win. Yeah, struggled a little bit to get the car in a window.

Just did a really clean race, clean pit stops, no mistakes. Yeah, stoked to be third.

THE MODERATOR: Clean certainly because there's a lot of attrition early on. Just staying clean was key. There was one point in the race, maybe the third stint, you lost some ground. Difficult to tell exactly what happened.

WILL POWER: That was when everyone was saving fuel. You literally have to lift at the start/finish line. If you wanted to burn more fuel to pass someone, which a couple guys did to me, you could. I lost track position doing that. I could have burnt more fuel. But I was playing the long game. I wanted to get that number and made sure we went a couple laps longer.

Ultimately I should have kept the track position. Nothing much would have changed to be honest. The guys that I was fighting, most of them just fell out, so it didn't matter. I don't think I was going to beat Newgarden or Pato.

THE MODERATOR: Pato, congratulations. Another podium. Perhaps more importantly you now take over the points championship. How big is this for you?

PATO O'WARD: It's a very big points day for us. To be honest, man, it's so tight. There's still three races to go, 150 points on the table. Yeah, I mean, this means we're going on the right path. We came off a solid run in Indy road course, now we have a podium with second. It would be great to rack up a couple more, a few more podiums.

Yeah, man, we're just going to push until the checkered flag waves in Long Beach and see where we stand.

THE MODERATOR: Speaking of pushing, were you content with the podium? Were you thinking championship maybe versus the win?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, man, I was happy. In a perfect world, it's not ideal that Josef beat us. But, man, the guy had everything to win it. He had so much pace. I honestly didn't have anything to challenge him.

The only way I could have maybe challenged him was if we got stuck behind lapped cars. But they were all very respectful, which is completely fine. Yeah, that's a change (smiling).

Yeah, I couldn't really get close enough. I didn't want to throw away a second.

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

**Q. What did you think of the racing tonight? Scott Dixon said it was erratic, race control needs to look at it. What did you two think?**

PATO O'WARD: In the beginning of the race, I mean, I was alongside -- I will remain not saying their name, but I was alongside...

**Q. Say it.**

PATO O'WARD: No. I think you guys know who. I was alongside him. But people know who they can race dirty or not. I had a lot to lose today, and they know that. Yeah, they're just taking advantage of what position they're in terms of the championship because it's almost finishing.

Other than that, after the first -- honestly, I wasn't even keeping track when it was, but after the first hundred laps,



my race calmed down a lot actually. But the start was pretty hectic.

I don't know what you think, Will.

WILL POWER: It was me, wasn't it (laughter)? That was the person. No, just kidding.

Actually, it was all behind me. I didn't have any issues with anyone. I didn't see anything. Everyone was saying after the race it was a very crazy race. For me, it was a pretty straightforward, no issues with anyone. Yeah, I didn't fight Herta very hard at the beginning because it's such a long race.

Yeah, it didn't matter in the end, so... I just wanted to finish this race. I wasn't that good, so just wanted to get through it, no mistakes. Yeah, I'll be interested to watch to see what went on.

**Q. Pato, the restart where VeeKay and Dixon and Palou were in their incident, TV said they thought you had backed out a little bit, you were racing safe. At any point were you racing safe?**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I was fully alongside Rossi. I guess he doesn't look in his left mirror here. He just turned in, so I had to slam on the brakes so I didn't crash. Marcus had to, as well, because we were going three-wide into there.

I'm assuming that is what caused the checkup behind for sure. For me it was even sudden and pretty aggressive, yes.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PATO O'WARD: I mean, I was trying to make positions when I could. I mean, it's so important. It's such a long race. Sometimes it's not really so good to be risking so much in the beginning just because, I mean, so many things can fall.

Yeah, I was trying to make positions when I could. I mean, I had a run. It wasn't like I was going to brake and let Hunter-Reay and Sato and everyone behind by, I had to pull out. I did but I got blocked.

WILL POWER: Sounded like it was Rossi (smiling). Just kidding.

**Q. There seemed to be questions, the first couple of restarts, even the start, that the starts were way too slow. They were coming up in first gear, stacking everybody up. How did you feel about that?**

WILL POWER: I actually did the start. I started in first gear. They told me first gear. Go at this point. I did exactly what they said. After that it was Colton. Let's see, you know more.

PATO O'WARD: I can't remember who it was. It wasn't Will because I think you were in the first and second restart. First restart, yeah. I think it was either the third or fourth restart.

The problem was, the guys were starting to accelerate. Everybody is like, Okay, we're going. They would stop and then go. That's what makes the checkup so much. I don't know why it's so hard to comprehend. Man, just stay in one throttle, then go. It's so simple.

But when guys just go, then stop, everybody behind us, I mean, at least with me, if you're fourth or fifth in the line, you see the first jump a little bit, let's go. If not, you just get eaten. They stop, you stop, you're relying on the guys behind to stop, it just creates chaos.

**Q. Early in the race we saw the high line getting used, especially in three. Did it marble up?**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, just all the marbles at the end of the race. Really, I didn't use the second groove. I had big wiggles when I tried so I stopped.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think it would be awesome if it got rubbered in. You would see one of the best races you've ever seen. It would be like Iowa. Yeah, I don't know how they do that.

I was speaking to the guys that run the track. Do you grind up there? Do you do something that adds a lot of grip? That's what needs to be done. It just makes the racing so much better, so much better when you got a second groove to go to, especially on the outside.

Yeah, you've literally got 10 laps maybe beginning of the race to do that, then it's gone.

**Q. Now that the last oval is out of the way, you have a couple weeks off before the three-week stretch to finish out the season. How do your respective teams prepare for three weeks out west?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, we tested out there for our team. I know those guys tested, as well. Yeah, there's not much you can do now. We'll do some sim work. Pretty quick weekends, too. I think they're shorter weekends. Not much practice.

It will be an interesting three races, as tight as the championship is. It always is this way. I've never seen someone wrap it up in all my 15 years in INDYCAR, no one's wrapped it up the race before the last race. It never happened. Looks like the same here.

PATO O'WARD: Which was the question again?

**Q. How does your team prepare?**

PATO O'WARD: We prepare like we have been preparing the whole year, I guess. Now championship is more into the mindset of just really be aware of who we're racing and when. But, yeah, I mean, to make your life easier, you score more points than the guys you're fighting. It's not really as easy as it sounds (smiling).

**Q. Last week you were pretty frustrated at your race at Indy. Is there any frustration at not getting the top step tonight? Are you happy given what's going on with the championship right now?**

PATO O'WARD: I was happy. We did a really good race. I think I did a really smart -- I think I maximized every little bit I could out of our car. But Josef was just really quick. The Penskes in general were just really, really quick.

So, yeah, I mean, I think for us it was a really good day.

**Q. Was it difficult to balance the level of aggression towards the end knowing you wanted to get Josef?**

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, I tried to catch him. I could get within I think 3 or 4/10ths. That's as close as I could. If not, I was risking too much of getting some takeoff understeering into the marbles. Like I said, I needed him to have his wings messed up with a car in front for me to be able to get more of a run.

When one car has clean air and the one behind doesn't, the pace is very similar, it's pretty much impossible to get by them.

**Q. Will, with four Penske cars in the top eight tonight, what has changed at Penske?**

WILL POWER: Well, nothing really. I mean, like I said at Indy, it wasn't due to lack of trying or hard work. Obviously there's a bit of bad luck in there. Yeah, nothing's changed. I think we're just kind of seeing our true potential right now, yeah.

When you look at Newgarden's pace all year, it really is not a lack of performance. It's just a lack of just circumstance. Yeah, I mean, I expect us to be competitive for the next

three races.

**Q. Pato, given the intense ups and downs of the championship fight, how have you balanced that mentally with the high stakes of this year's close competition?**

PATO O'WARD: I mean, you try not to think about it too much because there's so much racing. Whenever it's so competitive like this series in INDYCAR, just a lot can shift in one race, as we saw today.

You just always try to maximize every session you're in, whether it's practice, qualifying, race. Obviously the race counts way more than others. Yeah, I mean, you kind of just have to weigh it out and understand who you're racing against.

Too bad this guy beat us today so he's closer in the championship to me. He did a great job.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously joined now by Josef Newgarden, for the third time a winner here, second win of the season, 20th now of his career. We talked earlier about the championship. Josef now 22 points out of first place.

Congratulations. It's a whole new ballgame now for the last three races of the season, isn't it?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think so. It definitely helps a lot. I was surprised when I saw the early wreck. Will and me were talking about it. Yeah, everyone was good, which is great. But it's about time we got something to come our way a little bit. That's what it felt like.

Yeah, it does help a lot. It helped a lot today. A win helps a lot. The team did a great job. Will was super quick this weekend. I thought Scott McLaughlin did a great job for us. He came and tested here. He's a rookie that never has driven on ovals before this year. He helped develop a lot of the things I ran on the car here.

Everybody did a great job of pitching in this weekend. We had great cars. The circumstances have played favorably into helping us get back into this race, which is what we've been working towards. I feel really confident about where we're going.

THE MODERATOR: The big announcement at Iowa Speedway this week where you have won three times. These types of tracks seem to be right in your wheelhouse? How are you so comfortable at tracks like this?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I've always liked short ovals. I think it's some of the most fun racing out there. It's fun to drive these type of cars on these type of tracks. It's hard competing against Pato and Will at these type of tracks, too. I mean, I'm pretty sure whether it's Iowa or here, these are the guys I'm racing. It's not a given. They're going to be very strong next year, too.

I'm excited to see it back on the schedule. Past success doesn't necessarily mean future success. We got to stay vigilant. Yeah, I love the style of racing. I would put a lot more short ovals on the calendar if we could. I'd love to go back to Milwaukee, if we can figure that out. Iowa I think is a big favorite for everybody. To have a doubleheader is pretty cool.

I hate when we have these dinky little champagne bottles. This is awesome. Everywhere we should have big bottles like this. I know the boss, so I'll put in a good word.

THE MODERATOR: We will let Pato and Will go and continue with questions for Josef.

**Q. You had a bit of a collision with Simon. What happened on the backstretch?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I knew we touched, his right front wing to my left rear wheel. I knew that. I was just concerned after it, I didn't know if I had a tire going down or not immediately. I think it was just a bent rim. Fortunately that didn't turn into something more significant somehow. I just had a vibration after the contact.

Yeah, we obviously had some sort of miscommunication. For me I thought he was making a move, I swung back out wide, went in pretty deep. It didn't look like he got into the corner deep enough on me. I started to kind of come down so I wasn't in the marbles. Looked like we just touched from where he was still at getting into the corner.

I would say a bit of a miscommunication. We don't normally get together very often. It's been a long time since I've touched with a teammate. It happens. Fortunately it wasn't more significant. I hate to see that it broke his front wing. I came out better of that mix for sure. It only damaged my rim, was able to continue. It obviously ruined his race. I don't like seeing that. Unfortunately it happened.

**Q. From the manufacturer's standpoint, Chevy was first through fifth. How is that for Chevy as a manufacturer?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Stellar. I think Chevy has been doing a great job for us. Real proud to represent them as

always. Had everything I needed tonight as far as fuel, power, reliability. Couldn't ask for more.

**Q. With how your season really started with just a string of bad luck, now two race wins, how big of a morale boost is this for you and the team?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Any win is positive. Everyone is going to be really happy about that. Yeah, I'm pumped for the crew. I felt like we've been very competitive all the way through this summer, to be quite honest.

I don't know that we needed a big jolt of confidence. We needed definitely some more consistency. Last weekend hurt us. It was a small mistake that kind of derailed the weekend with not getting qualifying right. Mostly that was on me. Just not setting my gap correctly. A small little mistakes like that can affect you from winning the race or finishing eighth.

I think when I look at our overall performance, our capability, do we have the capability to come to most tracks or every track and win the race? Yeah, I do. As far as a confidence standpoint, it's been really strong. But a win, to seal that off, obviously it cements things. I think that's always positive. Whenever we can get 'em, we'll take 'em.

We're going to need some more. This is kind of the situation we've been in. Road America didn't help us, a couple other races that didn't help us this year. We're not where we want to be points-wise. But we're clawing back. We said we would and we are.

**Q. The end of the race, how important was it you did not catch Tony Kanaan?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know that it was critical. If I had a preference, I probably would like to not get there. So, yeah, it's a game. I just turned into a time game at the end, how you want to manage gaps, how fast you really want to go. It's a little bit boring. Probably didn't look very entertaining.

It's definitely a game that you're playing, trying to figure out what's the best way to run the car to finish the race, not use it up, not get passed, keep the thing clean.

It wasn't critical we catch him. My preference was to not catch him.

**Q. You could feel the air getting disturbed and it messing you up?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, honestly I don't think it



would have been very different if we caught him 20 laps sooner. I don't. It disturbs the car. It's been tough to drive here in the turbulence. I don't think we probably have the degradation of the tire perfect where we should have it for incredible racing.

But it's hard to create that perfect storm. It's a moving target every track, trying to get the conditions and the tire and the downforce, it's just really hard to nail it, exactly where it needs to be.

Yeah, I guess to answer your question, I don't know that it would have made a big difference.

**Q. Dixon said it was erratic and crazy driving out there tonight, race control needs to look at it. Did you see any of that, share that sentiment?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I saw it last week. When I started 20th last week, I was just trying to protect my race car. First stint of the race, I was about getting run into three or four times. Literally was just trying to not wreck while being aggressive and going forward myself.

Yeah, I mean, I think people are driving aggressively these days. They really are. You almost have to match it to some degree because if you don't you just get run over. You're sitting there going, Why are you running me over? Doesn't matter who is right or wrong at that point, you still got ran over, right?

I would agree with him. Everyone just drives real aggressive these days. They push the cars to the limits, they push how much they can touch or not touch. With these cars you can touch a lot, generally get away with it. I think people are pushing over the edge of that at times.

I definitely feel and understand and probably agree with him that people are driving pretty aggressively these days.

**Q. In the other series I cover, there's allegedly a hierarchy where veterans will talk to the younger guys, say, We don't do that. Is there a fix for the way guys are driving? Can something be said or done?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That's a tough question. Some of it's self-policing, right? You end up causing enough problems in a row, an individual, that's going to turn into a bad situation. Everyone's going to not be happy with that certain individual. I think that frustration will not last too long.

So I don't think it's going -- if you're running up front around the same guys every weekend, I don't think you're going to have multiple instances week after week. There's no way

you can sustain it. In some ways that's self-policing. You're not going to get a lot of multiple offenses.

The hard thing nowadays is you're up and down the grid. It's really hard to stay at the front nowadays. Last weekend I had to start 20th. I'd consider us a frontrunner. Every now and then we find ourselves all over the grid. I'm not always around consistently the same people. You end up having these run-ins with people you don't see very often during the year.

I think that's part of what's aggravating the situation, is the field is so competitive, it's jumbled up every weekend. Different people are around each other all the time now. Couple that with aggressive driving, you're just having a lot more moments I think where people are upset with each other.

It's kind of the nature of the beast right now. It's so competitive and so tight, the field as far as performance goes, you almost have to be aggressive to get in front of people and find an edge.

Like I said before, if you don't bring that aggression yourself, you end up getting run over now. It's a hard balancing act. But, yeah, I don't think there's like a pecking order as far as the veterans and who gets a talking to. I don't think the youth really cares anyways.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: If you were talking to Will, we'd get a cage out. We'd settle this UFC style. I'd put some money on Will. That guy's nuts. He just blacks out sometimes. You should see him drive. I don't think he even knows where he's going half the time. He's literally just driving off instinct.

You put him in a cage, you don't want to go against Will Power. I think it's called psychotic, is what it's called.

**Q. Without naming names, are there drivers that when you get up beside them, you're like, Yeah, no, this is not going to be fun?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: So difficult not to just blurt a name, but I'm not going to do that.

**Q. I would be okay with that.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You would. It's late at night, between us, not going anywhere. Absolutely not getting suckered into that.

Yeah, we all have our feelings on who we feel like is not

the right person to be around or who we think is aggressive more than others. It's just part of the learning process, trying to understand your competitors.

It's like that in any series, though. That's not unique to INDYCAR racing. It's like that in Formula 1 or sports cars or NASCAR. Everyone knows or has an opinion on who they think is probably not safe to be around on the track as far as protecting your car.

So, yeah, there are instances like that. I won't be specific, but I think we all feel that way.

**Q. Now that it's time to make the numbers in the fight for the championship, is your strategy to win all three of them?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I think the good news is, is if we win all three, it definitely adds up to winning the championship. That's the good news.

As far as our approach, I don't know that we've ever really changed our style or procedure. We typically show up every weekend and try to maximize whatever our potential is. We felt like we had a winning car today and we tried to win the race.

I think the name of the game for us is doing that in Portland, Laguna and Long Beach. Kelly asked me this question before the race. Of course, within the race, if there's situations that arise, bring about an obvious change of course or change of approach, then maybe we would. Say the leaders get taken out like today, leaders of the championship I should say, then maybe you're going to be a little bit more cautious towards the end of that race.

But when you go into the weekend, I think you're just trying to maximize whatever your result is. It's really the best way to approach it.

**Q. Given your past experiences fighting for the title, how much can you rely on that? Can you rely on your teammates with the tight competition?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Definitely can rely on my teammates. We have a lot over the years. They've always been good to me. I feel confident that we have a championship-winning team. I felt that, I mean, how many years have I been doing that? Is this my fifth-year at Penske? I think so. I felt that my first four years here. Every single year we've had the competitive capacity to challenge for the championship. I feel no different now.

I think, yeah, it definitely will serve us well in this homestretch.

**Q. How do you think the strong end of the season will help you in 2022?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, we got to keep it up, right? We're doing a good job now. Nashville was a little rocky for us. GP was slightly rocky, too. It can swing very quickly. We could be from being a hero this weekend to right back out of it in Portland. It swings that fast.

I don't think we can be relaxed about anything. We've just got to keep doing what we've been doing. We certainly have to be strong. We're not in some cushiony position when we can just sit back and anything can really happen to us. We can't. We have to be solid. Hopefully we have a good, solid end here. If we do, that could add up to a championship.

**Q. Not a very important question. The giant champagne bottle thing, the bigger the bottle, is that so you can get more people?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, in all seriousness, it just looks more professional. When you hand someone a foot bottle, half this size, it just looks funny. When you look at a professional championship, we got a big champagne bottle that doesn't run out in like three seconds, it just looks better in my opinion.

I think whoever has done a great job and gotten up on the podium should have a nice, big champagne bottle that sprays for a little while. You can hand it to the team and everyone can enjoy it. I just think it's better for the series. It's not that hard to do. It's just a small request. I think it goes a long way to the appearance of the show.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think they would agree. Talk to Roger or Bud about it. I think they would agree. Whatever the small details. I mean, they're all about the details. Adding a little detail like that is not difficult. Yeah, I think it should be mandatory we have big champagne bottles.

**Q. You have two weeks off until you go to Portland. How do you plan on spending the next two weeks off?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I'm going to sleep probably all day tomorrow, I can tell you that. I was really lucky. My dad drove me up here this weekend, about four and a half hours from Nashville. He's a sweetheart. He's going to drive me home tonight. I'll sleep in the car. How lucky am I? 30-year-old, still have my dad driving me around. Feel like the go-kart days.

I'm going to relax. I have some sponsor deals I'm going to do next week and the week after that. Once we go out to Portland, I'm pretty much staying out there, help my team try to maximize three events to go.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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