

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Tuesday, January 18, 2022

## Josef Newgarden

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: In the room now, right on schedule, in fact ahead of schedule, Josef Newgarden.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Hi, everybody. A little Zoom going there? I didn't know what type of kerfuffle I was walking into.

THE MODERATOR: Bamboozled and kerfuffled. Both from Team Penske.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, you know, we're very broad with our words.

THE MODERATOR: Conor just said you gave the stamp of approval on his haircut.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I did. I think it looks a lot better this year. I wasn't fully truthful with him last year. It didn't look fantastic. It was pretty high, right? Now he has it set down. It looks good. He can pull off the mullet, which is hard to do. Not many people can do that. It actually genuinely looks good on him, which is amazing. Right on. I wouldn't look good with a mullet, I don't think so. But he looks good with it. I'm happy for him.

THE MODERATOR: Last year we saw the great example that every lap matters. The season starts and you have the problem on lap one, you have the Road America thing. Either one of those things goes differently you're right there in the championship hunt. Talk about how important maximizing every moment is.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, it's a collection of every race. For me, I knew immediately last year that we'd already given a Mulligan away, which you will. That was one for the year that you're not going to get back. Now you have to be more on your game every weekend going forward.

Ideally when you start the year, you want to sort of build your bank account, build up some credit, build a little bit of a nest egg in there. If you can deplete that at certain times throughout the year, have something to fall back on. When

you start the year like we did in Barber, you're taking out credit and you have no money to pay for it.

Yeah, for me it was not a championship blow. It was just not the way you wanted to come out of the gates. It was disappointing. But I think we clawed back. Got in position in plenty good time. Unfortunately we just were short to end the season. The performance we needed at the end of the year wasn't enough.

Some other things could have gone our way, without a doubt. Anyone can say that any year. Everyone's going to have their story. Yeah, we were just short at the end of the day.

THE MODERATOR: I was on a call with you a couple weeks ago. You're 30 years old now, you might be at the real prime of your career. Do you feel you're maybe in as good a place as you've ever been?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think so. When I show up, I'm not there to lollygag. I'm happy to get going, give my best effort every day.

I am motivated. I'm very, very motivated to do a better job every year. I think we can elevate. Every year that we finish, I feel like we can elevate the next year and improve at our craft all around.

Yeah, I feel like I'm at my prime as a person, within my profession. I think I've got the best people around me. I've always got tremendous confidence when I show up.

THE MODERATOR: Engineering changes. How will that impact the year?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's going to be a new dynamic this year. We do have, yeah, quite a bit of shifting around from everybody. But I think the core nucleus of our team is solid. It doesn't matter who you put where, there's so much strength within the team that it can always pull through and be what you need.

I'm excited in one way because it's a new group in some respects, brings heightened, I think, energy and alertness. You can't get lazy. At times when you've been with a group a little while, you can start to get lazy. I'm talking

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

about myself. Everyone kind of knows the routine, we don't have to really check in as much, we don't have to be as critical.

When you have new people onboard, you've got to make sure you're really educating everyone, constantly affirming how you feel about things. I feel like you might not miss as much. In that way it could be invigorating for us to have a little change-up.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Between the inaugural event and now with the Detroit announcement going back downtown, you've been key factors in promotion of those. Seems like you've more than ever become the face of the sport, the main promoter. Are you okay with that role? Something you like?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I absolutely love INDYCAR. It is my mission to help INDYCAR grow as much as possible, especially with Roger's leadership. I think we're all pretty happy and fortunate to have Roger leading the charge and feel like we can take the series to new heights.

I've always struggled with the media aspect of the sport just because it doesn't come natural to me. The natural thing for me is to drive the race car, give feedback, try and put together a really solid race weekend. That's what I'm here to do.

The other components to it, trying to promote the sport, make it interesting, understand our strategies of how we're marketing our sport, how we're getting across to people, that's all really, really important, right? We're not going to go anywhere or have a sustainable future if we don't do that stuff.

I'm happy to do my part. Nashville was a great lift for us, great market. I'll continue to do as much as I can. From that standpoint, yeah, I'm totally fine with it.

**Q. This may be a bit of an unfair question. For this year, which would you prefer if you had the choice, a hometown win in Nashville, Indy 500 win, or a third championship?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, look, if I win a race in Nashville, you can butter my backside and call me a biscuit. That's going to be a good day.

I'm pumped to go back. We didn't have a good first year. We got to look at it. I think that's probably the track we can improve the most sadly enough. I really thought that was going to be a place we could shine and we just didn't.

Yeah, I'm excited to go back there. Hopefully we can get it better than we did this last season in 2021.

**Q. Can you share who your new engineer is?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't think we're allocating everybody at the moment last time I spoke with the team. I think we're still deciding some things. It's going to be a great group, I can tell you that. I'm real, real excited.

I've always been proud of the groups I've been able to work with. I would have been just as happy to keep the group as last year, but I'm equally excited what we're going to have for this season.

**Q. Series just announced a new prize, a new sponsor for a million dollar prize for winning on road course, street course, oval. You've been good at different tracks. Is that something as a driver that will motivate you even more?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Definitely. I think in INDYCAR you have the opportunity to be good at all disciplines, which is what makes INDYCAR what it is. We always preach that.

I think to be the best at the championship you have to be good at all disciplines. The series just adding an extra incentive, the great initiative of what the sponsor is doing also to give half of that to a charity I think is just wonderful.

Absolutely. Puts a little bit more motivation in you to not only do that, but you want to do it first, right? You have to do it first in order to win. There's a little bit of pressure there, too, to get on it quickly at the beginning of the season.

**Q. You've had teammates, teammates go. You have actually changed teams in your career. Is it going to be strange seeing Simon and Helio on a different team together?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Very. It was strange seeing Simon this morning. You're so used to seeing him in Team Penske gear, talking to him, communicating on text. We're getting a lot of the same information from the same people. It was odd seeing him on the other side this morning.

I think to your point, him and Helio together is going to be very strange not seeing them on Penske. They're going to be a really strong force. You can't deny they're going to be incredibly tough competition.

For us it really elevates the series as far as the difficulty in



trying to be the best. They're going to be people we have to watch out for. We know that. We know their strengths and they're going to be there.

**Q. How are you feeling about the total lineup of the team? You have Scott who obviously has a lot of promise, a very different point in his career. How do you feel you're going to work together? Is it going to affect your chances at a championship this year?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, there was a lot of ruckus last year about how we were performing at the beginning of the season. Are we not gelling together? What's happening with Team Penske?

I felt like we had great form right from the beginning of the year. Things just weren't working out. When you have a young whippersnapper like Scott McLaughlin, he fits into the team so easily. He started to develop and contribute at the end of the year.

Because we're going down to three cars to me is not a negative. I think we're just going to be more focused. With Scott now being in year two, it's really going to tighten up the way we work together, what he does to contribute.

With Will, myself and Scott, I see a really good unit there to push forward. I'm really excited about what we have to work with. I think it's a really good situation for all of us.

**Q. How are you feeling about the work you've done in the off-season on the 500? You had the best average finishing position of anyone in the championship last year. The 500 being double points is a big issue for that. Have you found anything to move forward?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I hope so. I would be lying if I told you I didn't feel confident after the off-season last year. I felt like we had put as much energy and effort into the 500. It just didn't bear fruit unfortunately.

It wasn't from a lack of effort. Everyone did a tremendous job of trying to find solutions that we needed at the Speedway. Unfortunately they just didn't pan out.

There's really only one thing to do, and that's just to keep going. I mean, us at Team Penske, there's no other choice than to just keep going, keep finding answers, keep working hard. That's what we've done again this off-season.

I think we've done everything in our power to try to put our best foot forward. There's no doubt when we show up to the Speedway, there's nothing acceptable except excellence. That's just how it is when you're at Team

Penske. That's what we expect of ourselves.

We're working towards that. I think we have found good things to put forward. We'll just have to wait and see if it's enough. We're going to keep working till we get to race day.

**Q. You called Scott a young whippersnapper. He turns 29 in June. What does that make you?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, a couple years, it makes you a lot older, right? You age a lot in a couple years.

He is so young to me. He has this childlike exuberance which is rare to see in a 28, 29-year-old. He's been so fun to have on the team because INDYCAR is so different to him from anything he's ever done in his young career.

It was really to me exciting to have him part of the team. It's starting to wear off a little bit, right? He's not as much of a puppy. He's almost getting to his twos and threes, to compare it to a dog. He's kind of mellowed out. He's still got a very big fire burning to do well.

He's here for one reason, too, and that's to succeed. I can tell you he's going to be pushing very hard which is good for all of us. If he's fast and pushing, it's going to be good for all of us at our team.

**Q. You're 30. You talked about getting older. You're expecting your first child. How are you feeling about that? How might that change your life?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'm so excited. I think it's funny to see the dynamic shift. I was the one that wasn't as excited to start the family. Not as much as Ashley. Now that we're doing it, now that we're close, I'm the one that's like more excited. Ashley is the one that gets a little bit more nervous.

It's so funny to see the dynamic shift. I'm elated. I can't wait. I'm really proud of her. She's going to be a great mom in my opinion. It's one of the reasons I love her, because I think she's going to be such a great mom. It's going to be cool, I'm excited for that.

As far as the year and how I manage that, I don't know how that's going to completely change. It seems like the years I've had in INDYCAR, the ones that have had more chaos in my life are the ones that tend to go better. I hope that leads to good things for us this season.

**Q. When is the baby due?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: April.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**Q. A race weekend or...**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's off right now. Hopefully we can hit the gap right (smiling).

**Q. You competed in Europe long time ago. You were close to Formula 1 when you went back to the U.S., sometime after your INDYCAR championship there were rumors of Formula 1. What are your F1 ambitions and do you still have them?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: For me the allure of F1 I think is the gravity of the cars. When I think about F1, I think about a manufacturers championship, trying to build the quickest cars that you can within -- I should say within an unreasonable budget. That's what was exciting about it.

The older I've gotten, the more I've been in racing and watched Formula 1, I don't know it's somewhere I really want to race. It doesn't look as much of a driver's championship to me. It's a very impressive championship, it always has been. It's something I would certainly like to do. I'd like to drive everything that I could to have the experience. Then I'd have more firsthand knowledge to really speak on it.

I think INDYCAR is really where you're going to get the most competitive product as a racing driver. When you're a driver at the top level, you want to have an opportunity to compete, to win the championship, to win big races regardless of your situation.

I think unfortunately that's not present in Formula 1. So from that standpoint, it's not as appealing. But I'd never say never on anything. You just never know how this stuff shifts.

For me INDYCAR is my life. It's a championship I care about more than any in the world. I want to see it flourish because it really deserves a lot of recognition I think for the incredible championship it is.

**Q. Have you nailed down what the issue was in the 500?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know if you can. For me it's going to be a dollop of this, a dollop of that. It's a million areas, right?

I don't think we can pin our hat on one thing. There was no smoking gun. There usually isn't. With Indianapolis, we just have to double down. We had to look at everything and hopefully it turns out to be 10 to 20 little things we found. We put all those together and it makes the

difference for us.

We certainly aren't looking at one thing from last year that we felt like was deficient and we think that's 80% or 90% of the problem. I don't know that we can do that.

That wasn't the case. We looked at every area. We certainly saw some deficiencies in certain parts of the car. There were things found, but I don't think it's one thing or another. It's going to be multiple things.

**Q. Oval performance in general, the fact that we're going to have a doubleheader at Iowa means that you can put a hundred points in the bank already.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think is hard to say that. Past performance doesn't necessarily transfer to future performance. I want to be very careful that we don't ever feel that way going to Iowa.

Obviously we had tremendous success there and we normally have good cars. It's a couple years up the road. We haven't been there. We weren't there last year. We need to go testing I think and potentially see where we're at, make sure we stay ahead there. It's an important weekend because it's a hundred points.

I'm hoping we can repeat our past performance, but I'm not resting on it.

**Q. Obviously Detroit is only going to be one race this year. Is that a disappointment to you because you generally perform pretty well there?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I guess I'm indifferent to it. I didn't even realize it was one race until very recent.

I'm just as excited to go there. I think we'll still have a great show. If anything, I think it helps the burden of the team a little bit more. I feel really positive for our crew members because they're going to be feeling it as they always do after May. I think that will be nice for everybody.

Yeah, one show, two shows, I don't know that I feel too different about it. We're still going to have a great race. Love that track and hope we can still perform there like you said we have.

**Q. You talked about media in the series, growing the sport. From your perspective as the series is trying to build off of the momentum of last year, from a driver's standpoint, how do you weigh the job or the task of building your brand, being as personable as possible to fans on and off the track while also juggling the sponsors, everyone that you have to promote**



## whenever you're in front of a camera?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I try to keep it simple. For me you have to be authentic. I try to be exactly who I am and let people see that.

You know what, that's not always going to be the most popular thing. There are always going to be drivers that are more interesting, naturally more popular. I think that's okay.

The growth of this series is going to take the collection of all of us. It's not going to be one person, one group. All of us have to be doing our job. There's enough interesting personalities for everybody in this series. There's going to be someone that you like to follow. That's what sports is all about. You want people to root for, you want people to root against.

I guess the burden of trying to grow the sport, it's simplified for me. I'm just myself. I'm a competitor first and foremost. I love to compete. I want to be the best of the field. That's kind of my shtick. You have everyone else that's filtered in there. They have their storylines, too.

I think there's a lot going on. There's a lot of opportunity here in our sport, which people recognize. There's an incredible amount of parity. There's a tremendous platform to show up, if you're a good competitor, put in the work, you can succeed. We've got to push that with everybody, keep trying to find new ways to reach people and tell our story. That's as simply as I can say it.

**Q. You were somewhat outspoken earlier this off-season about the weight of the car, the development of it moving forward. Is that something you feel like has been addressed in talks with Jay Frye, other folks, as far as the development of new car coming in 2023?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, definitely. I mean, Jay and his team are extremely receptive to the feedback. There's no animosity that I want to go or the other drivers want something from the series, we want something different. I think we're all pushing in a common direction. It's just a matter of how we get there, what the timeline is.

That's more the details of the new engine coming onboard, what are the components that come with that, when is there a new car that comes online with it, as well.

I was vocal about the weight. I think it's important that we keep the weight relatively low, low for an INDYCAR. In this series I think it's good for multiple reasons. It's good for performance. It's good for safety.

We don't have to make the cars (indiscernible), but I think we have to keep them relatively light, that they're not too heavy that it starts to impact safety or features like we have no power steering.

There's a balance like everything. I think INDYCAR is very receptive to that. They're working on it. I think they will continue to try to find solutions to keep us in a good window, which is what I've been really asking for, just keep us in a good window.

**Q. I know right now Team Penske is probably focusing on what they do more so than looking at the competition. In addition to the rookie class, you have two guys that have experience in other forms of racing that are going to be full-timers, Romain Grosjean with Andretti Autosport, that looks like it has potential to be a pretty good combination, and Jimmie Johnson running the full season. What do you expect to see out of those two running full-time deals?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think with Grosjean, for sure he's going to have a good step forward. He already started his journey on a pretty solid footing, right? He was already very good at Coyne. I think he'll be the same at Andretti, potentially even better. They're going to be strong competition for us.

Jimmie is going to have some continuity there, which is great. He's going to have the full schedule like you said. I'm really interested to see how he does on the ovals. That's going to be more akin to what he's used to. I would expect him to be a little elevated there. We'll continue to see how he does in year two. Great brand for our series, good to have those guys there.

I'll leave you with one thing. If you're not supposed to eat food at night, why do they have a light bulb in the fridge? I can't put my finger on that. I don't know about you guys, but it's strange to me.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports