

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Sunday, March 20, 2022

**Scott McLaughlin**

**Josef Newgarden**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We welcome in Scott McLaughlin, who almost went back to back. What happened at the end?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Looking back at it, if I would have thought about it in my head, which I already have done a million times, my car was tightening up, especially in traffic. It probably wasn't handling exactly how it had at the start earlier in the race. I was sort of maxed out on my tools. I was trying to control the traffic, couldn't catch the traffic too much. At the end the traffic checked up into me.

I knew there were going to be dramas in three and four. I struggled with my turns at three and four. I guess I wasn't prepared to take the risk on the outside at 3-4, which looking back at it I should have. My teammate Josef, obviously Josef chose to. Once he was on the outside of me, I can't do anything.

Yeah, look, I'm gutted. I'll reevaluate everything over the next few days. But it's funny, like last year I was fist pumping and jumping out of the car finishing second. I'm like today, it sucks. That's how it is. That's how we're growing. I'll learn from this, get better.

Yeah, I probably just need to expand, maybe risk a little bit more when I need, to try different lines. I'll learn for the big one coming up in May.

One thing is great, 600 wins for the captain. Literally if anyone else beat me, I would be pissed. I'm kind of pissed now, but you know what I mean. 600 wins for the team. We led a lot of laps, extended the championship lead.

Yeah, I'm a race driver. I want to win. It definitely hurts.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. How do you feel the conditions were as the race went on?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Look, obviously the first stint went for a long time. I actually battled with the vibration on the run. We still had pretty good speed. I managed to pull away.

But definitely the wind, the conditions, changed towards the end of the race. Very gusty off turn two, which made it quite loose. A lot of push, quite tight through 3-4.

Maybe my car wasn't quite set up for the gustier conditions, but all in all I think we had a really solid race car today. We were right there, thereabouts, throughout the whole race. I passed Dixon into one, a few others into one, able to demand track position when we needed to, that's what we needed to do: get the right track positions at the right time.

**Q. A little more in detail. When you're coming around out of three, going into four, you know he is where he is, was there any possible thing you could have done to close the line without it being risky?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No. Like I said, I was battling already on the exit of three and four. It would have been risky for me, for both of us, if I had moved. I mean, when I got told that he's in the second lane, I was like, Oh, here we go (laughter).

Looking back at it, I was just too tentative. At the end of the day I'll learn from that. I just didn't want to go out the last corner, hit the fence, not have either of us win, because I quite easily could have taken Josef out.

It is what it is. At the end of the day it's one of those days when you look back at the end of the year, championship-wise it might work out very good.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, around when I was sort of like the leader, I had a good lead, I was sort of lapping him a little bit. He was fast. He was doing some really good moves. I saw him pass a guy on the outside in one, a few others.

J.J., we hang out a bit. He's certainly coming strong. I'm sure he feels a lot more confident on the ovals. He's going to be good at Indy. I'm really excited for him. He's in a



good car. I'm excited for what's ahead.

For INDYCAR itself it's exciting, a guy like that, with so much talent. There's not many people in America who don't know who Jimmie Johnson is. If he's going to compete at the front of the Indy 500, hopefully just behind me, we're good (smiling). I'll lead him across the bricks at the end of the race, no dramas. Tuck in, mate, it's good prize money.

THE MODERATOR: Probably that many people globally who don't know who Jimmie is.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Everywhere has NASCAR on television knows who J.J. is. I flipped out when I got his mobile number. It was pretty cool.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I don't know, maybe.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously Josef has his cowboy hat on.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Head it much bigger now.

THE MODERATOR: Three laps led, but the most important ones.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Was it three? I thought I only got one.

THE MODERATOR: Generally your thoughts coming up on Scott there on the last lap, what was going through your mind?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was a race of patience, for sure, for us at least. We tried to manage all the way throughout. We had a lot of adversities to work through. We had a right front that was coming apart on the first stint. We got through that. It actually worked out pretty well. We cycled up to second. Scott was way up the road, started closing the gap. Obviously had the big yellow in the middle.

Kind of the final restart, I just got my doors blown off by everybody. There was a ton of fuel to save at that point. Seemed like no one was worried about doing that right away. I must have went back to sixth or seventh. Kind of methodically got back forward.

At the end I was like Scott is going to be hard to beat with traffic. He's been strong this whole time. He was strong last year, strong at the test. I thought if we just had clear running, we would have a great fight. We probably would have been dicing back and forth the entire time.

It gets so difficult when you have cars that are about to go a lap down, fighting each other. Scott is trying to manage that. Hurts me to be able to close up on end.

At the end I literally conceded with two laps to go. It's just not going to happen. I literally almost lost it off four pushing hard to go ahead close. He did a good job. He was in position. He's in position, he's going to win this race, bring it home.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: You could have held on for one more corner.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I could have kept that mindset. But that mindset changed as soon as I got to corner three (laughter). The traffic just presented a great opportunity to really, I don't want to say the words, but get after it, try to do something to win this race.

I went high side. If I hit the fence, I hit the fence. Scott is still the winner, it will be a great day for the team. I was so pumped. I've never been so excited. I got on the radio like in the middle of 3-4, I was like, No way.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: One thing that was cool, almost like one of the old Penske races when they used de Ferran and Castroneves used to run across the line? At the end of the day it was kind of cool.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Much more old school. You might have had something like that even if there was no traffic to deal with, just Scott and me.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: The restarts, whoever led...

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think you would have had a finish like that where it was real close. With two cars battling, you could really do a lot.

The drag race down the frontstretch was big today. Because of headwind versus yesterday, you could get such a big run off of four. It would have been an exciting finish the other way around, but it worked out the way it did today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. What did you learn today that will help you out for the next time you run into a situation like this on an oval? Can you think of another race in your career where you had a lead position and then you lost at the end?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I lost the championship on the last

lap in 2017. That is very similar, but not as hectic.

What would I do different? Probably take the high line. Like I said, I didn't risk that today. I think, yeah, should I have? Yeah, probably. That's an experience thing that I'll learn and come back with, maybe think about that for next year.

Like I said to you guys before, I was pushing out of three. I didn't have the confidence to run that line, that groove behind those cars. Once he was up there, like I had nothing. I mean, it is what it is. I'll learn from it.

Yeah, that's INDYCAR racing, oval racing. It's why we love it. I think today's package, I had a lot of fun out there regardless. Passing. When we ended up having the fuel race, I slipped back to fourth, had to work my way back to second, almost the lead. That was fun. It's what I remember watching when I was a kid.

I certainly hope we continue to build with this package and get this better. Once you have a bit of two lanes through this track, it's going to be a lot of fun and we'll have races like we did today.

**Q. Do you think racing in daytime played a factor seeing more passing than you had been in the past?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It wasn't the daytime running, it's the changes to the aerodynamic package. We were running quite a bit more downforce than last year. The wind direction was different today than normal. Normally we're getting a tailwind down the frontstretch. Today we had a headwind. It aids the passing.

I think the session they ran yesterday cleaned up a little bit of the second lane. It really did. I wouldn't have been able to do what I did in three and four last year. There's just no way. I would have hit the fence for sure.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: They almost need to do that not only here but everywhere. No one's going to run the slower lane. People don't do that. We're focused. Like Gateway, I'm sure Iowa. I agree with Josef. I think extra downforce was helpful.

Personally I like a night race. I think prime time is always awesome. But we don't make those decisions. Our boss does, this bloke.

**Q. One year on now at Texas, how is racing on an oval now compared to coming in as a rookie?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's awesome. I enjoy oval racing. I wouldn't say I prefer it. I love just INDYCAR racing. Like

I said yesterday, INDYCAR racing is oval racing. I love it. I enjoy it. I learn off this car last year, Simon, some really good teachers that got me comfortable on the ovals, where I want the setup, where I want to go. I feel now I'm going a little bit my way with the step, which I think is helping the team overall.

Yeah, look, I love it. I love it. I can't wait for more of it, can't wait for May. As a team we're going to have a very strong race car. Very exciting.

**Q. Your thoughts on the captain picking up win 600?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: The captain is so true to his word. He gave me \$600 in pit lane, in cash. We're going to In-N-Out is what we're going to do.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: There you go, she said it.

It's funny. I was answering the question in pit lane. I wasn't suggesting that.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: That sounds like a fun time. You, too?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You guys should just go if we don't make it. Send us photos. We were literally talking about it before the race in the trailer. I think we were just getting to the 400 point, 2017. You had just joined the team like a year before or something.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yes.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I came in in '17, they ripped from 400 to 500 to 600. Amazing.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I said to Roger, let's celebrate at 500. A testament to the team globally. The super car we had down under, NASCAR series. The best thing about it, everyone is a part of it, whether you're on the NASCAR side, the INDYCAR side, the sports car side, back in the day the super car side. Whenever somebody wins, there's an award for the whole organization. That's what super cool about it. Happy for everyone at home. Hopefully I'm here for 700. We get 700, we're going all right. Have like five kids.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, we'll cut you loose on that.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Josef.



**Q. In 2012, 2013, your first and second year of INDYCAR on an oval, would you in his situation have done the same thing?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Oh, yeah. I mean, look, Scott didn't do anything wrong. I took a risk. I mean, I took a big risk there at the end. I just held it in 3-4 to see if it would work. If it didn't work, it was going to be on me that I took a risk and I didn't work out.

I made that in a very split-second decision. I'm serious when I say I was pretty much conceding with a lap and a half to go. It was going to be what it was going to be. I wasn't in position correctly for the final stint.

I just went for it. He didn't do anything wrong, up on traffic, getting loose. I was a little stronger than him at the end for sure. It would be unwise, it actually shows his wisdom. It would have been very unwise for him to take a flyer and go high side without knowing what's going to happen. He won the first race, leading the championship. That would have been silly for him to do that decision.

For me it was a risk but I think it was somewhat calculated. I saw people going up there toward the beginning and middle of the race. I took a calculated risk and it worked out.

**Q. How much (indiscernible) help you?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It helps tremendously. I have been here a lot more than he has. This is my 11th appearance at Texas. I have a lot more to draw from experience-wise. I've seen these situations a lot more than he has. From that standpoint, it's an unfair advantage for me experience-wise on what to do or not do.

**Q. New team for you. New engineer. You had an average finish at St. Pete. You're the two-time champion. You're kind of protective of all these new people, make sure you're the leader. What does this do to win in race two with a team for the most part that is pretty much brand-new?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: High turnover on the 2 car.

It's big. We've got a lot of people on that car that are just learning. I should temper that. We have people that have experience, too, that are bringing a lot to the table and trying to rally this new crew that we're working together with.

There's a chemistry that you just have to build. Unfortunately I think for some of the people on the team that are new, less experienced in their roles, you can't

accelerate experience, you just can't. You can try and talk about it. You can try and spend a lot of time, to develop it away from the track. You can't replace going to the track and doing the job. The experience is what matters. You have to go through these times together.

Getting a win so early is just going to help the overall morale. It's going to help the confidence of everyone on the team.

St. Pete was so incredibly disappointing to me. We had a great test going into it. I felt fantastic heading into the weekend. A lot of hurdles that weekend on the track. It wasn't a good weekend.

I tell everybody, These things happen. It's not what we wanted, but it's okay. We're going to see this at times, so let's just stay on our plan, keep moving forward, it will eventually get there.

Some of these times, even if you don't feel confident in the way things are going to come together, you have to stay positive because you're in the situation together. You're kind of with a brotherhood there almost. You have each other's backs. You have to lift each other up.

I've been trying to do that from my side. But it takes everybody. It's not just me that is going to make the difference. You have to make everyone believe that. When they all do it, that's what really accelerates the program.

**Q. You're in more of a leadership role. Would you describe it as a little bit different? Do you relish it?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't like saying that I am. It's inevitable, right? This is my 11th year in INDYCAR. Of course I'm in more of a senior position, I would say, from an experience, observative standpoint. I've seen a lot more than some of these people on the team.

Doesn't matter that I don't have an engineering degree, but I've been in the trenches working on this stuff with other people and knowing where we've been, how we got to where we have gotten to in 2021 or 2022.

That inherently gives you more of a senior leadership role, I would say. But I don't think we try and operate that way. Everyone is a leader in the team. You got to get buy-in from everybody. Can't be just one person holding the torch. We all have to believe that and pick each other up.

That's more of the discussions we've had in the off-season, is getting everyone to buy into the program. A team effort. When you have the whole group feeling that way, that's



when magic happens.

**Q. Every driver dreams of winning a race in the fashion that you won today. How big of an adrenaline rush was it?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'm telling you, I was yelling. I was on the radio way before the line, which I don't normally do that. You don't do that. You stay in the race. I was just so pumped up that, one, the car was sticking, I wasn't flying towards the fence. But I've never had a race end that way. I've never been in a position to capitalize on that type of victory.

I was really excited. Still really am. That's one of the coolest wins, probably the coolest win I've ever had in the 2 car. Hopefully we have more of those. Yeah, really, really neat to be a part of that.

**Q. You had a competitor who ran his first oval race today and finished sixth. Jimmie Johnson.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Did Jimmie finish sixth?

**Q. He was fifth with a few laps to go.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That's legit. Hard to finish sixth at Texas. It's hard. Like, that's really good.

**Q. You could say he's a legit contender for an Indy 500. To add another guy like that into the mix, along with Scott McLaughlin, that race seems to get more difficult competitive-wise every year.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, look, not to take away from Jimmie, but it has been a steep learning curve. He's had to unlearn an entire career of operating procedures. The INDYCAR is so removed from what a stockcar is. For him to be able to get on top of that so quickly, it makes sense it's going better here at Texas, it's closer to what he's used to procedurally. I don't want to act too surprised because he is a seven-time champ, incredible worker and teammate.

Man, that's really good, though. First INDYCAR oval race, sixth at Texas. These cars are hard to drive. The way that we draft, the way the groove works for us, you can't go up a lane or two like in a stockcar. They're scrubbing the car before he gets there. I need to watch this race back, see how he got there. I'm sure he'll be a huge threat at Indy then. Great news.

**Q. Winning in your engineer's second race as an engineer, tell us about that. Remarkable stuff.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, look, I don't think you can discount the tall order that Eric has in front of him. I mean, he's a very smart individual, really great person, good personality, total team player.

Eric has never engineered a car like this. Not even anything close to this. He hasn't been in an engineering position like this in, I don't know, eight years. That position was very, very different than the position he's in now.

He's had a lot to learn, a lot. He is just trying to soak up information from everybody. He's been leaning on Dave, Ben, all the other engineers. They have done a great job of trying to inject as much knowledge into Eric as quickly as possible.

The same point I was making before, you can't force this stuff. You can give Eric a binder with every piece of information he would ever need, he could read the thing three times over before the season starts. Until he does it, he's never really going to understand it, he's not going to get good at that instinctual ability he has to have.

He has a super tall order in front of him. He's staying positive. A day like today is very validating for a person like Eric. I'm really happy for him. I'm happy for our group. It's only one race, let's not get too excited, but this is a good boost for everybody. Eric is doing a tremendous job of being a team player for all of us.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We haven't divvied out the amounts yet. It's a gift. Clean and clear. Don't have to pay taxes on this. What am I talking about? I should gloat more about this \$600.

We haven't divvied it out. But we're going to get burgers. I should give him one.

THE MODERATOR: \$10,000 to your favorite charity. What is your favorite charity?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'm splitting it between (indiscernible) Network, who I have done a lot of work with, and Wags and Walks out of Nashville. Wags and Walks is a rescue organization, they started in L.A., actually where we got our dog. They do a really great job. Growing, but they're really small. I hope this is going to help. That's my plan, split it between those two.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports