

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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### Josef Newgarden

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the 2022 champion of the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach, Josef Newgarden. You probably didn't get the money, did you, this time in Victory Lane?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I didn't get any money, but I haven't seen -- well, I did see Roger. I didn't ask him, though. He doesn't owe me anything. He's been more than fair to me.

THE MODERATOR: For you personally to finally check off Long Beach, how big was this for you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's a huge pleasure to finally be able to win around this place. I've been coming here for 11 years. I remember my first race here in 2011 I was running in Indy Lights and I stuck the car in the fence with about two to go in Turn 8, and I just -- I was leading and literally two to go, so I've never had a victory here, so it's pretty special to finally get one. Yeah, just really, really pleased for the team, the 2 car.

You know, the funniest bit about this whole weekend was when I left this press conference yesterday after qualifying, there was some dude from the LA Times and he came up to me like right before I hit the stairs and he goes, Hey, Josef, Josef - it's this dude - he goes, Josef, one question: At what point does Colton Herta check out tomorrow? Like when is that. And I thought it was just such a bizarre question and I went to bed last night, and I go, you know what? I said, that kid is not checking out tomorrow. There's no way. He's just not going to do it after I heard this from this person. And he didn't.

We came here, we came here to fight. Alex Palou was super fast today. I thought he was a very deserving winner if it would have played out that way, and I thought we were quick today and we put up a good race. So I'm just really proud of our team.

I thought they fought hard this weekend. Sometimes you might not be quite the quickest but if you fight really hard and you come with a good game plan you can get the job

done, and I feel like that's how we performed this weekend.

**Q. He asked you the first part of my question, but the second part was to get your first victory here during a time when you and your wife are about to have a child, how much cooler does that make this victory?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, you know, I think the cool factor of having a child and us being so fortunate to -- everything is going so well up to this point, there's nothing that really changes that. A victory is a victory, but I kind of compartmentalize things.

I'm really pleased to get this win for the team. Of course on the other side I'm super excited for my family and my wife and for us to welcome our first child hopefully pretty soon.

But the victory, I think about the team a lot more to be honest. I really do. All the people that are putting in the work and the effort and the hours and sacrifice, and we've got a lot of new people on the 2 car this year. It's high turnover from last year, and we're trying to get everybody acclimated and up to speed and comfortable. I just feel like we're building slowly and I can see the confidence growing in these new individuals.

This victory gives me more satisfaction from that standpoint than the other.

**Q. Sorry so ask another family question, but I've got two young kids, I remember being where you are where the phone is probably on loud --**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, man.

**Q. You're waiting for that. It does seem to be a running trend in sports that people in that position perform really well. We see those stories all the time with team sports, individual sports. Do you feel like you're just in the moment more? Do you think that it's having any kind of an effect on you that would lead to back-to-back wins?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know. You know, I don't try and overthink things too much or read into situations too often. I really don't. I believe you're focused in on your



business. There's outside factors and influences that can contribute to results, but ultimately if you're just staying focused on your job, then you get blips here and there that affect a result, but if you just carry on doing your own thing then nothing should really be affecting it.

But I will say for whatever reason when there's a lot of chaos going on in my life, we seem to do well. Things seem to go well for whatever reason. I don't know if that is necessarily correlated to that, but it seems to be something there.

Yeah, so far, so good. I don't know that there's a lot of chaos going on, but we're just busy. There's a lot on my mind. There's a lot we're doing, and I'm obviously trying to personally keep my head in the game, too, with what we're doing here at the track and racing in INDYCAR. I don't know. I don't know that I have a good answer for you, but I have seen in the past when a lot goes on in my life that we do pretty well.

**Q. After the last lap win in Texas, crazy you led three laps, and then today you win on a yellow, and just kind of off his comment earlier, how special it is, it's been said that it's something different to win at Long Beach, it's a special feeling. What is that like?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Incredibly special. This place is a hard nut to crack. It's a lot of pressure like the Indy 500. Everyone looks at this place as the crown jewel of our sport, and it would be honor to win here and you feel it within the team. The team was so pumped up to be able to win around this place. It does mean more than some other tracks.

So I think that's what adds to the difficulty, but I was glad it didn't go yellow with three laps to go. It was a half lap. It seemed pretty much over at that point, bearing me not making an outrageous mistake with a couple corners left.

At least it wasn't some token victory where the yellow was out really early. But we had to work for it today. As soon as I got comfortable I felt like a yellow came out and we had to pretty much go from zero again, and in some situations fighting against I would say us as a deficit with tires.

It was not easy today by any means.

**Q. You've got your oval win, street course win, you're a natural terrain road course win away from splitting a million dollars with a charity.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That would be cool.

**Q. When do you start thinking about that?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know. I haven't really thought about it. A couple people said it to me in Victory Lane, and I was like, if it happens, it happens.

**Q. What charity are you --**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I would split mine with Wags and Walks out of Nashville. It's where we adopted our dog Axel from. They originally started out here in LA actually, Wags and Walks, and then they have a Nashville branch now that's been growing pretty extensively, and also SeriousFun Children's Network, who I do a lot of work with, as well, and we host a charity ping-pong event every year. Split it between those two, if we can get that done.

**Q. What does it mean to be known to win on all types of circuits, short ovals, superspeedways? Does that make you feel like a more complete driver or does it really matter?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It makes me feel like a real INDYCAR driver, to be honest with you. I think that's what makes our sport great. We talk about it a lot, but it's the truth. The thing that sets INDYCAR apart is the diversity of the racing. We love having the best of the best from around the world and having to compete on all types of tracks and having to master all disciplines. If you can't master all disciplines, then it's so difficult to be successful in this sport.

I just love that INDYCAR drivers have to be good at all those skill sets, so when we're able to do that, it gives me a lot of satisfaction.

**Q. On the last actual restart, second lap it seemed like you really pulled away from Romain. Was it Push-to-Pass? He was still on red tires, you were on black. What was it that enabled you to pull out so far?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think he chewed his tires up a little bit too much leading into the last yellow. The first yellow he had a definite tire advantage with the reds, but then he was out of Push-to-Pass and I was, too, to be quite honest. I think I had two seconds left leading into that last restart, so I didn't really have any, either. But his tires were just not quite as good as the first restart, so I think I had a better opportunity to hold ground, whereas that first restart I was really vulnerable and fortunately we just hung on.

**Q. Last year at Detroit you had to fend off Pato O'Ward. He got around you at the end. This year you had to fend off Colton there in the earlier part of the race after the first stop. How different was it trying to**

**hold back Pato last year and trying to hold back Colton this year at Long Beach? How different were their driving styles?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I would say this was a little easier. The disparity between myself and the people behind me was less. At Detroit it was a nightmare situation. I was hanging on for dear life, and the field all bunches back up and now all of a sudden I'm sitting with very, very weak old red tires and everyone behind me had pretty much good primary tires. So the spread was a lot bigger at Detroit.

I think the task at hand was much more difficult on that race than it was today. It was still really hard today but not quite as precarious of a situation as what I had myself in at Detroit.

**Q. Late race restart here, late race restart then, as well, no nerves at all?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Oh, lots of nerves, but I didn't want to give it up. I was in position today. My team had put me in the place they needed to. We executed on our strategy. We'd gone a little bit longer. We maximized our final laps before pitting and we got ourselves in position to win. We were leading the race. I didn't want to give that up.

Yeah, it's no doubt nerve-racking. I get nervous in every race. It's a normal thing to cope with. I think that's the key is just -- you cope with it. You end up utilizing it in a good manner, not letting it consume you.

**Q. How much are you looking forward to getting back to Barber even though last year wasn't so well but kind of putting last year in the rear-view mirror and all that stuff going ahead?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, no doubt. It's behind us and I'd love to go back and redeem myself. It was certainly a bruise that I've not had before around that place, and typically it's been a strong venue for us, so I'm encouraged going back. I think we can have a good run there this year.

**Q. That leads to this PeopleReady Force For Good Challenge. The first entrant this year to win on road course, street course and oval, that's a million dollars you split between the team and your favorite charity which you already mentioned. Going back to Barber, you've got the oval, now a street course. Barber you've won three times there already, so it's saying --**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's possible, Dave. It's possible. I don't want to get ahead of ourselves. We don't know how

we're going to be when we show up. We didn't test there like the other teams did last week. So maybe we're at a slight disadvantage. But we'll put our heads together. We're a pretty smart group. We'll see what we've got when we show up there.

**Q. Some drivers look at the big game trophies as being the ones -- obviously Helio, two Rolexes, four Indy 500s, so how much do the marquee events matter to you?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: They matter. They definitely matter. I think people put a lot more -- they put a lot more respect behind them, right. I think when you see someone like Helio is a great example, four Indy 500s and two Rolexes now, that's a big deal. If he only won 20 races total in his career or something, maybe say 15 but he had all that, that kind of weights him in a different category. So I think it's weighted differently, no doubt, than just outright wins.

I go for those too; I would love to get some more big game. But I'm definitely a guy of averages, I just try and let's get as much as we can across the board, and that's typically what leads into championships.

Two different conversations I'd say. The championships are on the average side, and then if you're not going for championships you can just go for the big prestigious events. Some people have careers where those are the ones they knock down.

**Q. In that vein, when you were asked about winning two in a row, you immediately steered it to, I want the Borg-Warner trophy. I really want that.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I do. I'm focused on it. I can't do more than what I've done in the past, I can tell you that. So I'm not putting extra pressure on myself that I have to do some superhuman feat. It's for whatever reason just not clicked yet, so I'm just staying the course. I'm going to put effort forward like every year, and I'm going to put myself in position to maybe win the race and I just -- one of these years it's got to work out.

I would love to do that for our team. It's a tough one to win. I think that's what makes it so special. You can go your whole career and not win the Indy 500, and I accept that if that's the case, but I'm not going to go down without a fight.

**Q. Does a win like this make you feel more confident, or that's its own separate entity?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No, I don't think it's changed my confidence level up or down. It is what it is in my eyes. I



fight the same fight every year, and that's all I can do. I just can do what's in my control, and I hope this year is the year for us. You never know when that's going to be.

**Q. When I talked to you in January I remember you had just talked to Cindric and you had this conversation where you said, hey, we're going to level up, I want to win six times this year, we're really going to go after it. Do you remember the context of that? Was that that you have this new team around you and you were talking about how to approach 2022, and has it worked out even better than you would have expected the first three races with a new team?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Was that in an interview? Was it media day --

**Q. It was media day, yeah.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I do remember saying that. I can't remember the context I was saying it in. I think where I was probably going with that is when I look at the last two years and just falling short on the championships, we do just need to find another gear. It's not like we've been in a bad place. We've been in conversation every year and pretty much most races we're in the conversation, but we just didn't go to that next level to where it doesn't have to be close. Like let's get to a place where we're not just -- we're there and we're trying to seal the deal at the end. It's can we get this done early. Let's get ourselves in a more advantageous position.

So I think that's what I meant by leveling up. So far, I feel like that's happening. I feel the build in the 2 car. I really do. But you've got to be cautious. It's early. It's three races in. It's so hard to paint a complete picture. It's easy to paint these small pictures and say, look, this is everything, but then the picture changes really quickly in a another couple races.

I don't want to get ahead of ourselves, but I feel really good about where it's going.

**Q. I was out on the course watching the race, and can you talk to me about Turn 8? It seemed like a lot of debris was picking up there and it seemed like it was hard for some of the drivers to navigate. What was it like for you?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was. The course was getting difficult because there was so much rubber on the track that it was almost -- it was compiling on top and on top of each other that it was starting to peel up and then spread out across the track, so you would slide slightly off line and pick up big chunks of rubber. So it was like the surface got

really grainy. It wasn't smooth where you just have a nice consistent profile. It was just filled with these chunks of rubber everywhere, so I think that's probably what you were seeing because if you had gone off line there it was really easy to catch one of those sections where it was all chunked up, so not easy.

There was so much grip this weekend, so much rubber being laid down between the IMSA series and ourselves that that's what made it so difficult at the end. It was just starting to compile too much almost.

**Q. You had said earlier about how you really like to take things one race at a time, really try to just focus on yourself internally and not let a lot of outside noise get to you. I just think of last year when I know several of us including me had mentioned to you about how Team Penske hadn't capitalized on a win the first half of the year, and when you had one, I know that that had annoyed you a little bit, that comment that it seemed like drove you from yesterday to today. Are you someone that really feeds off of being slighted or outside motivation that you feel like you can kind of charge yourself with?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You know, I really don't. There's obviously athletes we can look at over the years that sort of use it as fuel. Michael Jordan is probably the -- I love these documentaries, too, on these super successful athletes to see the mental side of them. I don't know that I'm wired that way. I don't take fuel in where if someone said I'm not good at something or they attack our team or maybe I could twist a comment and use it as a negative towards us, I don't use that stuff as fuel to better myself.

I'm a very pragmatic person. It is what it is. Things are the way they are. I just focus, to your comment, I focus on what we can control, and so I try and look at things very clearly and just stay level.

I know where we're at. If we didn't win races in the first eight races last year and everyone is wondering what's going on, well, I know what's going on inside the camp and I knew we were good. We just hadn't clicked off a win yet. So it didn't bug me. I thought it was funny. I thought it was really funny how down everyone was on Team Penske. I'm like, I don't know, I think we're pretty good; wait until we click one off here because we'll probably get two or three if we get on a roll.

That's pretty much what happened.

Then the yesterday comment was just really funny to me. I was like, man, that was ballsy to say that. You've got to be really confident to think that in the INDYCAR Series that

you know exactly what's going to happen, I would not bank on that these days, not in INDYCAR.

**Q. Before the race weekend I'd done a little number crunching and I know we hear about how strong Andretti Autosport is on street course venues. You guys in a couple different ways had the better of them since I think the start of 2019. Do you feel like you guys get enough respect for how strong you guys have been on street courses lately, and do you feel like you potentially have the strongest street course package in the paddock right now?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I don't think we need any more respect. Everyone has been very kind to Team Penske. It's obviously a storied team, has a lot of history, and Roger -- I don't think you can look at anyone better to have a career than Roger Penske and the way that he carries himself and represents the team. I don't ever feel like we're lacking the respect or that people are discounting us. I don't think anyone ever really does.

But you know, I think everyone holds us to a very high standard, and if we're not excellent every single moment then there's something wrong. I understand that.

With this type of history at a place like Team Penske, you totally get it. That's how highly successful franchises are viewed.

But I do feel like Andretti is an incredibly formidable and -- not enemy. I was going to say enemy. Competitor. For us, we do not discount them. I think they were slightly ahead of us this weekend. I really do. They just had a tick on us, but I would say at St. Pete we had a tick on them. So this is going to ebb and flow across the year when we go to Detroit and Toronto. I think that can go up and down, and our different packages probably suit different conditions and track styles slightly, but we're going to have a very good battle. They're super difficult to beat right now across the board, and we've just got to continue to elevate our program so that we can match them. If we're not matching them, we need to be close, and feel like that's what happened this weekend. We didn't quite match them but we were super close and we executed and still ended the weekend pretty solidly.

**Q. As strong as you have been sometimes to start seasons, 2018 I think sticks out in terms of when you've been with Team Penske. Years in which you've won a championship, '17 and '19, really kind of kicked it up another notch at the end of the season, won three races I think in the latter half both of those years. In years when you have started strong versus years when you have really finished incredibly strong, how**

**do those seasons feel differently when you're going through them?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, some of them are so circumstantial. I thought 2020 was one of our strongest seasons we've ever had, and we lost the championship by just a little bit. I thought we started the year incredibly well.

We had one thing after the other happen, and we just couldn't get a win for like four or five races before it finally clicked. It had nothing to do with our form. Our form was incredible. I was really shocked at how 2020 transpired because of how good I thought we were performing.

So I guess I say that to you because they're all so different. I don't read too much into trends because they all kind of take their own shape, and I focus on where we are truly from a performance standpoint. So we could have a terrible start to the year, but if the performance is there and the results aren't coming for outside circumstances that weren't in our control, well, then I'm not going to freak out. Eventually that's going to come to us and it'll play out towards the end of the year.

I'm also very cautious that if we start a year super well, like say this year, things can turn like super quick, and we'll all of a sudden have to get on top of it and try and rectify it.

Yeah, the trends for me are hard to follow because they can change so quickly and I feel like every season just takes its own shape. I don't know that I'm going to compare right now what's going on in 2022 to any other year at the moment.

**Q. Can you speak to the downsizing of Team Penske to three cars? Are we seeing the effect of that? When I spoke with RP a couple days ago, he said, what we're seeing now with three wins, Will with three top 5s in the first three races, hasn't done that since his championship year, this looks like the effects of downsizing and tightening your product to get back to this competitive state you're used to. Is that what we're seeing here?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think there's something to that. I do. We felt like that could be the case. We've compacted everything. We've sort of narrowed in on kind of our focus and what we need to be really looking at and how we can control the whole group. It's a little easier to get your arms around it when it's three versus four, so I do think there's a positive impact, short-term, that we're seeing going from four to three.

I caution that because I think if you stayed at four, we still could have had the beneficial results we're seeing now, but

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

I think from a short-term standpoint we've definitely made a gain by just being able to be more concise and put more effort and the whole thing and get our arms around it.

So that's definitely happening. The big thing at Team Penske right now is I felt like we were super strong last year, but it was more so on the 2 car, and we needed to elevate the whole program and we've done that. We've taken a big step across the board. I feel like everybody is firing on all cylinders, and that's only good for the entire organization. When the whole organization is up, then we're all lifted. I'm really feeling that effect at the moment.

**Q. Have you had a chance at all since Victory Lane to look at your phone and see all the dad jokes about Pagnaud making the Newgarden at the --**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Was that Simon?

**Q. Yeah.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I feel like there's three or four cars that are the same, the pink cars. There's a bunch of them. It's Helio, Simon and --

**Q. Dave, we need a limit on -- we need to get some of these liveries figured out, buddy.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Ross. So I didn't know who it was. I was like someone is in the garden finally. No one has ever been in there.

**Q. I was wondering if you might be able to go into more detail about considering the amount of marbles out there today, how difficult was it to defend and was there anything you had to do differently at this circuit compared to others, considering you have corners that are off camber, a lot of bumps all over, even underbraking?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it was tricky. I had to be -- I had to make sure that if I got off line I didn't get off much just because it was -- particularly on the outside, I felt like if I was defending I wanted to make someone go to the outside. The outside seemed to be the worst place on track. You could deal with the inside marbling and off-line dirt a lot better than the outside. Yeah, it was tricky.

There was just so much rubber on the track and it was accumulating tremendously and it was just starting to peel up and push off line that it was really difficult to do anything in those areas but we all navigated it as best we could, and fortunately didn't get the bad end of it today.

**Q. Quick question on the tire deg. Was it heavy today,**

**and did the new pavement that was laid down here help or hinder the tire in the race?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I thought the red dropoff was more substantial than I predicted it would be. I thought with the elevated track grip, we were so much quicker this weekend. There was so much rubber on the track. I really thought the tire life on the reds would be pretty impressive, and it was the opposite. Romain actually did a really aggressive strategy there at the end to go to used.

There's more opportunity to let the tires survive at the end because there's more rubber down, but that first stint was really difficult. I think anybody that had used reds on the first stint probably died and went backwards, and even the new reds were really difficult to make last.

That was a surprise to me. I thought they would hang in there a little better, but it definitely dissuaded us from going to those at the end. We thought primaries were going to be the way to be.

**Q. We spoke in the buildup to the race this weekend about the changes that have been made on the No. 2 car. How much confidence and kind of momentum does this give you for yourself kind of with the changes that have come in, how well you've gelled kind of going into the month of May?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it's been good. We've got a long way to go, but the build has been really pleasing on the 2 car. There's a lot of new people there, a lot going on, and I've talked on that a lot.

But I think everyone is finding their footing pretty quickly, and they're growing in confidence. Texas was a big boost. This is going to be another boost. It's my job to motivate the team and to keep them directed where we need to be going.

I feel like we've started that journey on the right foot, and let's try and keep it on the right track is where my mind is at. But so far, so good. I feel really, really positive about it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll wrap things up. Congratulations.

The last time Team Penske won three in a row to start the season was 10 years ago, 2012, Helio Castroneves did it, won the opening race, Will Power went on to win the next two and then went on to win the fourth one, as well, so we'll see what happens in a couple weeks' time at Barber. Congratulations Josef Newgarden, the champion of the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach.

