

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Josef Newgarden

Tony Kanaan

Jimmie Johnson

Felix Rosenqvist

Simon Pagenaud

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started here today, wrapping up day two of this two-day Indy 500 open test.

Josef Newgarden, Tony Kanaan, Felix Rosenqvist, Simon Pagenaud and Jimmie Johnson will all be up here.

Two-time NTT INDYCAR SERIES champion, the 2013 winner of the Indianapolis 500, Josef Newgarden, Tony Kanaan.

Josef, P1 today, 119 laps turned. What did you learn?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it was very productive actually. Once we got into the swing of it, we were really making a lot of progress on our race car specifically, which I was happy about. I really wanted to get into some race work this afternoon. We spent a lot of the time doing that, probably the majority of it.

Positive test for us. We try to divide and conquer on Team Penske, get through as much as we could with all three cars.

Happy about it. The weather conditions turned pretty beautiful there at the end. It was just about perfect. So pleased. Happy to be here with Team Penske as always. I like the new Shell car this year with the extra gold, I think it looks pretty racy. I think Team Chevy has done their homework, too.

We've been feeling positive to start this year. Big thing for us is to carry that into the month of May.

THE MODERATOR: Tony, welcome back, great to have

you back here. Your thoughts on the day? P1 for a while, finished up third with a tow.

TONY KANAAN: No tow on that one. Just qualifying (laughter).

For us, we took it really slowly. We're a new team as far as my car. We had to just get everybody together in the groove.

Obviously the guys are working with me, I mean, half of them worked on my 10 car when I was at Ganassi. We just took it easy. We did a lot of race work, like everybody else.

Obviously my teammates did a pretty good job giving me something to start. That was pretty decent. It was an easy day really. I think we had a lot of information gather. The guys went through it. We were just trying -- a lot of my guys are working on the IMSA side this year. Just to get really in the groove, get everybody working together.

I'm comfortable in the car. It had been, what, nine months I hadn't run. Yesterday was a little -- took me a little bit, especially with the conditions. I was like, Whoa. Today just felt like home.

So good day for us. Obviously lap times, nice to be here, but it doesn't really matter.

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with questions.

Q. Tony, I guess there's no such thing as cobwebs with you, having to shake off the cobwebs?

TONY KANAAN: The what?

Q. I guess there's no such thing as cobwebs with you.

TONY KANAAN: What does that mean?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: He's saying you don't get old.

TONY KANAAN: I get old (laughter).

Q. When you don't do something for a while.



JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You're not dusty.

TONY KANAAN: It's not that I haven't done anything in nine months. I've done twice more races than these guys already this year with the stuff I was doing. It's not like I was sitting at home watching TV. That helps a lot, regardless of the car. If it's go-karting or whatever you're racing, it helps.

I wasn't, like, rusty. Just like obviously this is the fastest thing I'm ever going to drive in my life. In comparison to my stockcar, it's twice the speed. But, yeah, it took me a little bit yesterday, the first hour, then today just felt like home.

Q. Last year driving the No. 48, you were fast for most of the month, fast in qualifying, a contender in the race. This year different car, same team, different crew. You're showing in a test you're still pretty fast.

TONY KANAAN: Bruce, nothing has changed. The cars are prepped the same. Chip wouldn't field me a car just because he wanted to do me a favor. The car is the same prep as the other ones.

The team, it's a bunch of good guys. I think as a team we're competitive. As a team we've been working really hard. There is no doubt that we'll do everything we can to win this race.

Q. You come into a test, usually have a long checklist. How quick did you get through that?

TONY KANAAN: Today we did quite a bit actually. We have the advantage, we have five cars in the team. We're sharing a bunch of things. Everybody had a list. Everybody went through it.

If you look at the results, draft, no draft, still we had five cars in the top 10. That's a pretty good day for us.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Jimmie Johnson, 138 laps turned. Give us your overall thoughts. Eighth quick today for you.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Real good day. Yesterday, I was a little disappointed not to get more laps. I think we all kind of were. Weather conditions didn't really help either.

So to have the afternoon be as warm as it was, the track be kind of worked in, be as friendly as it was that early, was great. I got a lot of quality reps, certainly learned a ton today.

THE MODERATOR: Again, we'll continue with questions.

Q. Tony and Jimmie, we had five Ganassi cars up near the top. Even if the times and the place of where you finish today doesn't matter, I imagine having all cars performing pretty well has to do something as you go back to the shop, fine-tune things for May?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: I think we're all paying attention to that pylon. We're all trying. As long as the session is green, we're all trying to be the fastest car out there. When any car was on new tires, people were trying to create a gap, trying to put up a fast lap time.

I think our cars do have a lot of speed. For myself, it was really just trying to understand how to get that gap and pull up to the group in front of you, pop off a lap.

Looks nice on the scoreboard, but there were a few cars that could really pass. I think that's what we're all deep down inside focused on, and going to debrief and work on, is to figure out how to get off of turns two and four and make better passes.

Q. Jimmie, coming away from the last two days, one thing that stands out in particular that you feel you were able to gain off of being able to run so many laps in varied conditions?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I feel like flat out sixth gear on the rev limiter turning into turn one or three was really what I needed to do, get a good sense of that type of speed, that type of G force, trust the car, no driver lifts, really flat in those really fast situations.

But I feel like race craft, when we're in the pack, you have to worry about turbulent air, setting up a pass, the pace comes down so much that I feel much more comfortable in that environment.

I think where I still have a lot of questions is when you trim out and you need to average 230 something for three laps around here. That's the part that I'm still working towards.

Q. Josef, sitting at two wins already. Strong session today. Do you start to feel any sense of momentum or just maybe a positive feeling that you've been able to win at different tracks, produce great results?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, I can't deny things feel really good on the 2 car. They're just progressing. We're not taking steps forward and steps back. It's not like two steps forward, two steps back, or vice versa. I feel like it's going forward every single time and we're just getting better.

I like to monitor that. We're all monitoring it pretty closely. We all want to keep that cadence throughout the year. Ideally we'll just keep getting better all the way to the finish. We had a pretty good starting point. It would be great if we could do that.

These things ebb and flow at times. We've been on a good trajectory at the moment. I don't want to see it flatten too much, I want to see it go the other way. I feel confident with what we've got, feel good at showing up anywhere.

Being at Team Penske makes that easier. I always feel confident in our group, feel like we've got the best of the best working on these cars.

Yeah, confidence is high, but that only takes you so far. There's always a lot that can knock you off.

THE MODERATOR: Joined by a couple more drivers. Simon Pagenaud, 11th quick today. And Felix Rosenqvist.

Simon, go ahead and give us your thoughts on a busy day today, an exciting day for you guys.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, was glad to get some running in today. Beautiful weather in the afternoon. I was glad to go the AutoNation Sirius XM Honda to run.

It's all new, right? It's all new stuff. Obviously there was a lot that went into yesterday, a lot that went into today to try to get the car to respond to what I need around the racetrack. I think we got a lot closer. There's still work to do, but overall running in traffic was pretty good. We still have some work to do.

THE MODERATOR: Felix, bringing it home again, ninth quick today. How was your practice session?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I thought it was a pretty good day for us overall. I thought the car responded pretty well to setup changes, which is a good thing this early.

Yeah, whenever we tried something, it was easy to say if it was better or worse. Seemed to be the same all across the Arrow McLaren SP cars.

It's still early. We're not really like pushing the very limits out there. Yeah, happy car. I think all of us were, like, smiling. There was no big scares from big drama. So, yeah, pretty good day.

THE MODERATOR: We can let Josef go. Josef, congratulations on a P1 today.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue on with questions.

Q. Were y'all running your 500 cars or backup cars today?

TONY KANAAN: I only have one car. That's all I have (smiling). That's my car.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: 500 car.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yes.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yes.

Q. Simon, Helio had his incident yesterday, wasn't able to run today. Anything different you did today without second data to look at or did you run as though nothing went wrong?

SIMON PAGENAUD: We definitely missed Helio today. For sure. He's the king around this racetrack. Always good to have him around. We love to learn from each other on data, running in traffic together. It would have been great.

Very unfortunate what happened to him yesterday. Kind of a bystander of whatever was going on -- is still going on in the warmup lane. It's a real shame. It is a real shame when we're bringing the Speedway cars.

But the guys are already back in the shop. They already built the whole car. Quite impressive to see the effort that goes into it, how responsive these guys are, so congratulations to them.

Q. Jimmie, you ran here in the Brickyard 400 many years. Did it take a long time to get not used to lifting in turn one, but doing things the open-wheel way?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: I'm still flinching in turn one and turn three. It's just a long-ass straightaway to talk to yourself and convince yourself to hold it wide open through one and three (smiling).

Ironically, two and four behave very much the same, regardless of the NASCAR vehicle or the INDYCAR vehicle.

Q. To get this on the record. More grip in the pit exit today?

TONY KANAAN: Better in one lane. They have a lot of work to do. They know that. If there's a track that's going to make it happen, it's going to be this one, so...



Q. Tony, you're here with Andy Brown as your engineer. Two more experienced guys around this place? What is it like to work with someone that has won here with a number of teams, designed a car that's won here?

TONY KANAAN: It's awesome. It's one of those things that as you go out through your career, you think, What else can happen for you to have more fun or to be more pumped? When they told me it was going to be Andy, obviously I've known Andy for three decades, never had worked with him, got beat by him plenty of times.

I remember obviously I got closer to Andy when Dan worked with him and they won this race. It's been a lot of fun. We tried not to be too nostalgic. Actually tried to fit in with the technology said of, When we were here in 1990...

It's been a pleasure. He is an awesome dude. I am enjoying it a lot. Jimmie stole my engineer anyway, so I have no option.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: And your car.

TONY KANAAN: It was our car (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: We laughed in Texas about how Jimmie knows what Eric Cowdin can bring to the table.

TONY KANAAN: He knew all long.

Q. Jimmie, you've had all those great accomplishments, 83 victories, seven championships, 24 hour races. Today you've run the fastest lap you've ever run in your life, 227.5. When you sit and think about that as a race driver, do you think, Wow, that's pretty fast?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: You notice it. It's a very cool sensation. Now I understand why when I've asked any of these guys, any of my friends that are drivers here, what it's like to go fast around here, they have a smile that I've always wondered what it's like.

I haven't really been on the full boost, full power, quallie trim setting yet. I'm starting to get that grin. I look forward to having that big smile that all these guys have experienced.

Q. The ROP test, how much did you prove to yourself through that test what this is going to be like for you in May?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Yeah, it was helpful. I really feel like

the process, looking at it, it seems time consuming to go through the three phases, but I found it useful, helpful. Of course, the rain came, we didn't get as many laps as we hoped.

I felt much more comfortable with the controls of the car, the grip level as we showed up yesterday, got into that first session. Straightaway was up there in the top five, whatever it was, in speed. That was due to the ROP session, the laps that I got there.

Q. Jimmie, for yourself how beneficial is it to have Tony with you as part of your team going into your first 500?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Can we wait for him to leave the room so I can give you an honest answer (laughter)?

No, it means so much to me to have Tony as a friend, as a teammate. I think it's really cool to be competitors this year in the Indy 500.

Our pit stalls, located on pit lane, he's right behind us. Every time I pulled out and went around, I just smiled and thought how cool it is to share the track with one of my great friends, many of my friends that I've been able to share racing with over the last year, year and a half.

Tony has been a huge part of this deal happening for me, the split season, then his willingness to allow me to race the ovals this year. He's been a friend in so many ways.

I know the general public hasn't been able to see a lot of that, but I'm very thankful for our friendship, his understanding, and certainly look forward to racing hard with him.

Q. In terms of running in traffic with an INDYCAR at the Speedway, how different is that compared to running a Cup car in traffic at the Speedway?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: There are differences. Turns two and four are still the key to passing regardless of series. So I'm surprised how similar and how challenging two and four can be to set up a pass. I don't think I made a pass today, like a true heads-up pass. I have some work to do to figure that out. Guys made mistakes in front of me, I was able to get them. I have some more to do to figure out passing.

Q. Tony, obviously being back at the Speedway, you're back with Ganassi. In terms of your preparation for the month of May, were you working at home with them in the buildup to the month of May?

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, 100%. I've been to a couple races

this year. I sat in Jimmie's stand. I get to participate with all the emails. I know everything that's going on. Obviously living in Indy, I've been going to the shop quite a bit, making sure that I was around.

I mean, on that matter it wasn't like awkward to come back. It wasn't that I was away from the team for eight months. I hadn't driven the INDYCAR for eight, nine months, but I've been in the team twice a week pretty much every week.

Yeah, no big dramas. I was in St. Pete with Jimmie. Never actually had watched an entire race from a timing stint. Probably I don't think I will ever do that again. I got more nervous watching him than actually when I'm in the car.

It felt really like we just picked up from where we left.

Q. Jimmie, when approaching something like racing around IMS, do you ever put the car in any uncomfortable positions on the track to see what will happen? If so, how did the car react?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: That's the name of the game. We've been as smart as we can with the balance of the car, kind of backing me into the sweet spot of the window of the car. We had some reps at Texas to kind of work through that. I learned a lot in traffic.

Different racetrack here, so there are different things to take into consideration. Today was really full of that. I think yesterday afternoon, the afternoon session, we went too far in some areas. I'm glad we went through that and I was able to understand what that felt like. Made a lot of changes on the car today and understood the balance of clean air versus in traffic.

That's really the name of the game in racing, but we are trying to be a bit smarter in it, not put me in a dangerous positions and end up with a torn-up race car.

Q. Do you ever regret not doing this last year?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: I don't know if you could see Kanaan respond to that (smiling).

I've been on my journey. I had to come to grips with things in my own fashion, gain the comfort and desire to do it. I can say sitting here and watching the Indy 500 last year, working in television really kicked things into overdrive for me.

Watching and being a fan of the sport for so many years, TV does a great job of showing what it's like. To actually be here in person took it to the next level for me. That's

when I started pursuing to find a way to at least be here, then it turned into the full season.

Q. Felix, Juan said his car was uncomfortable in the refresher, made some adjustments, said it feels great now. How did your car roll off the truck? Did you have to make any major changes at all?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think that's pretty common, that the refreshers feel that it's, like, free. The car is not really, like, settled. I think it's a really common thing. It's actually hard to go flat there than when you're in full tilt.

No, man, I think we rolled off really good. I think historically when I come here, this is probably the best I've felt this early. Obviously we're far away from going in full anger here.

I think overall our oval car is always very easy to drive and it's nice rolling off the truck. There's no big -- you kind of just dial in the balance and then you'll be competitive. That's what you want.

But I think this place, it's more about fine-tuning the last bits. There's so many competitive drivers and teams, it's going to take time before you really find a sweet spot. I don't think we went there today. I think we're in a good course, all the three cars.

Q. T.K., you've been here for 20 years. What do you focus on in a test like today to learn about the most?

TONY KANAAN: We just really went through the list that the team had for us really. For me, the biggest thing yesterday was just to get back in the groove of just driving the car and being comfortable. That was pretty much my whole day yesterday, which was shortened anyway.

Today we just went through the list of stuff that we had to do for the team and things that we spread among the five cars. That was it. I mean, there was no time for Tony. It was time for us to figure out what the team needs and move forward.

Q. Simon, even though you have an engineering alliance with another team, without Helio today, did you feel like there was a lot on your shoulders to go out there and try to teach the team?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I mean, yes, in a way for sure. When he's around, it helps within the team just mostly because of his experience and because of what he thinks he needs for this track. You always have such a great sense of confidence listening to his feedback. Definitely missed him on the race team today.

But we did a lot of work that he can pick up from. I'm sure that will help for his quest for the drive for five.

Q. Since you've joined Meyer Shank Racing, you've gotten off to a pretty decent start with the team. How are things going for you?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's going well. Yesterday and today was definitely a learning curve, a lot of new stuff that was thrown at me, a lot of things to adapt to.

Overall I think we have a decent baseline. It takes time here, then you got to be really patient, keep the emotion in checks. Overall it's going really well. I really enjoy working with everybody, the atmosphere is amazing. You can feel the potential. The potential is amazing. We just have to be patient about when we're going to start unlocking results.

But if you look at the single performance, it's really strong so far.

Q. T.K., this test was such a big deal. Now you're out of the car for the best part of quite a few weeks. How did you cope with the emotions of being back at the Speedway then have it pulled away from you? Jimmie, you're back at Barber next week. You have to put IMS out of your mind. Mentally how do you cope with that as well?

TONY KANAAN: For me, I mean, I knew this was going to happen. It's really not a big deal. I actually have two races in Brazil between now and by the time we get back here. I'm pretty busy.

It's not really a big deal. I think I feel a lot more confident now going into Tuesday, opening day, because I know what I've done for two days here, there will be no learning curve or getting used to it the first day.

Really to me, it's not a big deal. I was prepared anyway.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: For me, the street and road course stuff is a separate world. It's no secret I've got a ways to go to catch up to everybody. I'm thankful that we're able to test at Barber. I feel like I'm much quicker than I was there last year. Just trying to take smart steps forward and find pace.

Barber is a very demanding racetrack with a lot of penalties out there for you if you are too aggressive. I'm going to be smart with that.

Thinking about Barber, I haven't been able to train too much with my hand situation, so this next 10 days will be

important for me to make sure I get my grip strength and my muscle strength kind of in my right arm up to par so I can be physically ready for the race.

Sit and wait. I think there's actually two road course races before we get on the oval. So my expectations for street and road is keep improving, try to work my way in the mid pack, and when we get back here I think my expectations go up quite a bit.

THE MODERATOR: Felix and Simon, your thoughts about going back to Barber motorsports park, the excitement you both have for that great facility in Alabama?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: We have fun, man. It's a great track. I think probably one of our strongest road courses as a team. We're pretty pumped going back there.

As Jimmie says, it's one of those like proper physical, demanding tracks. I think all of us definitely take a deep breath before you jump in the car for that one. Especially with the new surface, it's hard work.

Yeah, it's a rewarding track for sure.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, beautiful track. Certainly one of the highest commitments of the year. We had great tests when we went there about two weeks ago. Yeah, just look forward to having a great event there. It's obviously a big race for Honda. Look forward to make sure we put on a good show. I'm excited.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much.

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