

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, June 4, 2022

Josef Newgarden

Takuma Sato

David Malukas

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up qualifying for tomorrow's race, the pole winner, Josef Newgarden, will join us in a matter of moments. We'll begin with the man that will start alongside Josef in the front row, Takuma Sato, and his teammate David Malukas, as well.

A general question for both of you guys, a softball. A great day for the team to be up front and involved in the Firestone Fast Six.

TAKUMA SATO: Absolutely. We both feel really proud of the team, Dale Coyne Racing, the 51 car, did fantastic job. Obviously David, he did phenomenal job in the Q1, Q2. He pushed me so hard.

Worked extremely well in the new tire condition. It was just studying the process of the segment. Finally I hook up, you know, quite good lap on the Q3. That was quite satisfying.

We always knew that we had a speed, but just wasn't be able to put everything together. This is weekend we feel like quite positive, so we are really happy. It is absolutely team effort.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, adding onto it, I feel like this whole start of the season we've always been really close to finding the car before qualifying, but always would miss it last second.

The first time now we finally put it all together. I remember just doing the first two laps and saying, Wow, the car is spot on.

Came in, Do we want to make any changes?

I said, Do not touch it. This is good. I'm so happy.

Me and Takuma, friendly competition, kept hearing

Takuma made it, Takuma made it. Made me push even harder. Good for the team. Me and Takuma, we were pushing each other. I was like this close to the wall, so it was very good.

THE MODERATOR: You guys were always a part of the top 10 in standings at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. This is a continuation of that, momentum with this team, building off of what happened at IMS?

TAKUMA SATO: I think so. Obviously from David's side, he has to learn every single weekend, everything is so new for him.

Yeah for me, too, try to learning how the process DCR does, the new engineer, the boys. Just a little data here. I think it's just building up physically, mentally, build up the momentum.

Like David said, we always knew the potential. This weekend, it's all come together.

DAVID MALUKAS: For me, like I said previously, I've gotten used to the way the team works and how Takuma is, how we can intermesh our data together, at the end come out the other side with going the right direction and picking up the best pieces.

I think, especially after how well the month of May went, from start to finish at least for me I thought it went -- overachieved for me, everything I wanted, but like way better, times 10. For me, my confidence is increased. I just feel a lot more comfortable with the car and also with the team.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. How important is it the fact that you were both doing this together? It's not like one driver is getting speed and the other is struggling.

TAKUMA SATO: I guess just name of the teamwork. Not just him and I, it's just entire team. We methodically thought through what the car we need to bring. This car was pretty competitive in qualification. Having kind of had challenging 2022 program because we all not suffer, but we finding a new balance for this season. So we have to

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apply couple things and come back here.

David and I kind of similar driving style in a way so we can share a lot of stuff. When he found something good, I try it. I find something good, he try it. Just entire team, you know, limited resource, but we make most of it.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, adding on, I think the fact that we're both up here, I think it shows that the team has done a really good job. It's not got lucky or something like that. The team has actually put the work in and we've come out with a very good car.

On top of it, me and Takuma, he's given me many tips going into the racing, qualifying and practices. It's been so helpful.

Those three qualifying sessions there, I definitely wouldn't have pushed as hard as I did if I didn't hear that Takuma was also making it in. I knew the car was there. We pushed each other. As a team, as drivers, we've meshed very well this weekend.

Q. After Monday night do you come here with a little extra motivation?

DAVID MALUKAS: No comment (laughter).

Definitely. It was in the back of my mind. It's building the confidence, making me push just that little bit harder.

THE MODERATOR: So now you have no comment about that, great (laughter). That's fine.

DAVID MALUKAS: (Laughter).

Q. How much confidence does that give you both going into Sunday's race?

TAKUMA SATO: Honestly we don't know yet. We haven't done the long runs. We don't know how is these option tires survive. Last year half of the group will be able to make it in an entire stint on red tire, half not. We will see.

I don't know. I mean, it's a tough to say here. The condition is very changing, but I would say we are very confident for package. Like David say, we consistently competitive. Okay, it's only today and yesterday, but seems like different conditions we can adapting the conditions.

We shall see tomorrow morning warmup and we will try to dividing some of the program and the sharing stuff and hopefully we'll be competitive still in the race.

DAVID MALUKAS: For me, I mean, to be fair, these two practice sessions we've focused on getting the car ready for qualifying and just getting the minimum out of one lap. I think that will be a really good question after warmup once we actually spend time on making sure the car is ready for doing long stints and being behind traffic and heavy fuel.

THE MODERATOR: Driving the Hitachi Team Penske Chevrolet, his 16th career NTT INDYCAR SERIES pole position, Josef Newgarden. This is the seventh different pole winner we've had this season in 2022.

Congratulations, Josef Newgarden. Saving the best for last there at the end, a little drama.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: And it was not easy. This championship is incredible. These guys are on it this weekend, as you can see. They were very difficult to beat. I thought both of them did a great job, especially David there in the early parts of qualifying. It was very impressive.

I didn't think we were going to have enough, to be honest. It's taking us a little too long to build temperature so I really needed two laps. We went for a one to one strategy.

On the second set of tires, I was actually up in 1-2 by a 10th. I thought I'm going to go as hard as possible, I'm either wrecking or I'm putting it on pole.

Fortunately the car was very, very good. It was a little too loose. A couple corners I thought I was actually going to hit the fence. We hung on. Now we get to work toward tomorrow and hopefully have a clean day with Team Chevy and Hitachi.

THE MODERATOR: Tim was fine with that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I said we need to conjure something today because these guys were so fast. I thought it was going to be a tall order to beat these two. We saved the best tire for last, we just had enough.

I mean, our car was very, very good. I thought the team did an incredible job. It's just a little bit too loose. I think everybody is dealing with that this weekend. It seems the grip level is not coming up quite as quickly as you would anticipate around here. Normally this place builds, builds, gets easier to drive. I find you're pretty on the edge this weekend. Track grip is lower than I would anticipate.

You just had to hold on. We were all doing it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Takuma, as a veteran you observe things. There's been a lot of personnel changes at Dale Coyne. You still looking for that first win, but have you seen a machine click so quickly?

TAKUMA SATO: Yeah, I mean, I would say - how do we say - the team stuff in Dale Coyne, some is new faces, but there's boys that have been here for 30 years, too, for Dale. It's a nice mixture of great international team.

Obviously it is quite new to the team. Team is such family oriented, small team, but it's really tied together. That takes time to build up the confidence, actually the performance.

I think the team did such a fantastic job and really happy place to be. Yeah, like David say, we're pushing each other in healthy way. Here we are. I think we are pretty happy with that.

Q. David, you ran two Indy Lights races last year. How much did that help how the track goes for this year?

DAVID MALUKAS: I think it helped quite a bit going into it. You only have two practice sessions, which in its own, you always want more.

This track is so special with the way it is, the characteristics with the bumps, the way the car reacts going into each corner. Having the two races in Indy Lights definitely helped me going through one and two. I know going over that hump in two it's going to understeer. It's little things like that throughout the whole track. Going into practice one I had the jump of everything I expected.

Q. Josef, it's important to get pole anywhere, but especially here in Detroit. Chevy's backyard. Does that add any more significance to this pole?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Certainly special for us. We want to perform well here with all our partners, being Team Chevy's backyard, to your point. Hitachi, their U.S. headquarters is out of Detroit here. Team Penske, as well, this is our home base.

Our competitor in Honda is always fantastic, very difficult to beat. So it's never a gimme, it really isn't. We have to work for every inch on the track.

Yeah, I'm hoping tomorrow we can repeat the performance. Pole is one thing, and it's great, but the race is a whole different ballgame. Last year we fell just a little bit short. I think that's where our sights are on, is that race win.

THE MODERATOR: We'll cut David and Takuma loose.

We'll continue with questions for Josef.

Q. Josef, the last lap you looked like you were sawing away at the wheel. Really looked like you were evading the police actually. How hairy of a lap was that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, that's a good description, Bruce.

That was one of the most satisfying pole laps I've ever had because of the difficulty of it. It was on the edge. It was not easy at all.

Some laps you put together, the car is so hooked up and so good you're kind of just steering it. Makes it sound a little bit too basic and simple. It feels that way at times.

Today was not that case. It felt like you really had to go and attack and work for it. Like I said earlier, the way I started the lap was so promising. I was up already from the Q2 lap. I said if I can just really push this thing in the middle section of the track, I'm going to try to go for it. If I hit the fence, that's what it's going to be today. Fortunately we had just enough to not do that, had plenty of speed to put it on pole.

It was on the edge. Four, five and six, I thought those three corners I was going to hit the wall, and we stayed off.

Q. If I remember correctly, this is your third pole here at Detroit. Obviously the last year we're at Belle Isle. Is there something about this track that makes you so quick? Is there a reason you love it? What is one thing you're always going to remember about this track?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I like everywhere we go. There's not really a track... Whether I've had more poles or not at a certain place, I don't prefer one place necessarily over the other.

I do like this track on the calendar. I'm going to miss it. I think it was a fantastic track to drive. It's very challenging. It's predominantly concrete.

With that it takes a lot of rubber to build grip. Before that point happens, it's very slippery. It's hard to keep it off the fence here. You've seen a lot of wrecks here this weekend because of that.

That challenge is something I think all of us enjoy. You're



able as a driver to get more out of it maybe than your competitor. It gives you an area to separate yourself. So I'm going to miss that aspect of going to downtown.

I'm also just equally as excited to see what the downtown track is going to bring. I think from an event standpoint it will be a big plus and I think the track itself will race really well. That's looking forward.

Yeah, here, we've always had good cars here. But I wouldn't put it above anywhere else. I feel like we can do this performance anywhere we go. It's not like it's one place or another that seems to shine for us, at least in my opinion.

Q. Are the bumps in the same place they've always been here or is there always a new bump that pops up?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, over the years more bumps have developed from the wintertime here, the cycles of the weather, the heating and thawing. You definitely get movement within the concrete, which is more stable than, say, an asphalt track.

It's not dramatically different than last year. I would say the track is pretty similar. You get little movement here or there, but it's always been bumpy. It's still bumpy today.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Wow, I mean, if you can't distinguish them, then you probably need to find a new line of work. You typically know what's going on. There's times where a bump offsets a loose moment, and there's times where it's the balance of the car, there's times where it's a combined effort, where the bump is interacting with a loose balance, just tipping it over.

It's all encompassing, in my opinion. You're constantly analyzing is it heave stiffness that we need to change to improve the bump quality, just a balance problem. We were talking about that yesterday and today. It's not necessarily, The bumps are upsetting the car. Why are the bumps upsetting the car?

Physical aspect of the car, physically bottoming, the mechanical stiffness. There's a lot of reasons it can be. Sometimes the car is just loose. Sometimes you hit a bump and it gets loose. But it's both of them.

Q. Is this one of the toughest places that you guys deal with in terms of tire deg, really having to work to get into windows to get to the number of stops you need?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think last year this was the outlier as far as the disparity between reds and blacks. I mean, it was a cliff that you'd hit at times on red tires. I think you saw everybody trying to get off of them as quickly as possible.

We obviously took the opposite route. We tried to take our medicine last. It almost worked, you know. I want to point that out. It did almost work. It didn't, but it almost did.

I was obviously disappointed that we weren't able to close the deal, but it was a heck of a challenge to try to hold onto that thing at the end of the race. We were going 24, 25 laps on a set of red tires, and they were used reds.

In hindsight maybe we would have done that differently. Also if the race was green all the way throughout, we didn't have the potential yellow where we stopped early on the first stint, all those things could have maybe changed the outcome. The race happened the way it did, we took maybe a riskier approach.

I think you'll see a similar race this weekend. It's hard to say, no one has run the reds for a long stint yet. It certainly seems like the characteristics last year are pretty similar this year.

Q. I think we've got 110 days left in the season. It seems like we have a new points leader after every race. How wide open do you see these last 110 days, the fact that you have the experience to be able to close in a points championship?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: INDYCAR is an interesting championship at the moment because it seems like every weekend there's a new superstar in the. It's comical at this point to me.

The reason I think that's happening is because it's so competitive. You don't have one team clearly dominating all sessions. You're always getting new winners.

So what I mean by that is you get new winners, all of a sudden they are going to be the championship winner, they're the greatest new thing to come to INDYCAR. It's just unpredictable. It's all over the place.

So, yeah, to answer your question, I think it's pretty wide open. Probably more so this year than last year just the way the points have been jumbled. Indy really tightened everything not just for the top five, but the top 10 is very tight, probably more tight than we've seen it in the last couple years.

You're always going to see that six or seven drivers that tend to bunch up towards the end, that's your real group for the championship. Right now I think it's within 10 or 12 drivers, so it's very open at the moment.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Gosh, I hope so. We would love to do it again. You got to think we've got a little bit of an edge having done this for a while. You can't predict these things. Every year takes its own shape. It's hard to draw too many parallels between other seasons just because every championship seems to be a little different.

But I have full confidence that we can be there at the end and seal the deal. It's just a matter if that's going to come to fruition or not.

Q. How did the car go today? You've been in this position before. Talk about wanting a different result tomorrow.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, today was hard. It was harder than last year I would say to get the pole. Sunday last year when we put the car on pole, it was a lot simpler. The car was hooked up, was not loose, just fast. It was easier to guide it to that position.

Today was a real fight. I mean, we really had to work. We almost got knocked out of the Fast Six. In actuality we probably got saved in Q2. I think Dixon probably would have bumped us out if that red didn't come into play. We just snuck into the Fast Six, then had to really work to get the pole today. I was very, very proud of that.

What that means for tomorrow, I don't know yet. I think we've got a fast car, quick enough to win. It's just a matter of getting the strategy right, not having any missteps. This field, it's too difficult to keep everybody behind you nowadays even when you have a fast car. You just can't make any mistakes. I feel confident we can do the job.

But feeling confident is not enough these days. You got to really go and really make it happen.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Not really. It doesn't feel that different, to be honest. Obviously we've typically run a race today as well, like you just alluded to. This feels more like a standard INDYCAR weekend. It doesn't feel like a big departure to us. Just feels like any other race, for the most part.

THE MODERATOR: Chevrolet has been a long time

partner with the team. They've been sitting on win 99 since their return in 2012. Any thoughts on giving them 100 in their backyard tomorrow?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: They've been sitting on 99?

THE MODERATOR: Since 2012, wins, victories.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Chevrolet?

THE MODERATOR: You can give them 100.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'm confused. We're on 99 right now?

THE MODERATOR: Yes.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We've been sitting on it for a month.

THE MODERATOR: Yes.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I thought you said we were sitting on it since 2012.

THE MODERATOR: No.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That would be great. I'm not a big numbers guy with that stuff. I mean, 99, 100, they're both fantastic numbers. I don't know that we're moving the needle. We're talking 1% here. Obviously it is a special race for Chevrolet and we'd like to do a great job for them.

I think they've done tremendous for us already. If you look at the performance we've had across the board, it's hard to ask for much more. We need to keep that up not just for this weekend but for the rest of the year.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

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