

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, June 11, 2022

**Alexander Rossi**

**Josef Newgarden**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up qualifying, we'll be joined by the front row.

The pole winner for tomorrow's race here at beautiful Road America, Alexander Rossi. The seventh pole of his career, first of the season, first in three years. Now, as mentioned on the broadcast, eight different pole winners this season to start the NTT INDYCAR SERIES season.

Congratulations, Alex. On the blacks as well. How pleased, how satisfied are you here this afternoon?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, it's pretty crazy to just think it's been so long. Yeah, it just shows the belief of the whole organization. The 27 NAPA Auto Parts AutoNation Honda guys have been good for a month, and it's continuing on. We rolled off strong. It's a pretty cool thing to be a part of right now.

Just really proud of the guys and the team. Yeah, not much else to say. I think the Firestone blacks, the primaries, were a pretty easy decision based on what Josef did last year. I think you saw quite a few guys besides myself on them as well.

It's just with the nature of the track, it being so long, a new black is usually a little bit better than a used red. That being said it was still a lot of work to get it done. Happy we were able to achieve it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Many changes you had to make overnight or were you happy?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I was obviously happy with it yesterday. I think fortunately qualifying, you know, the primary tire was the preferred tire because I think our balance is a bit better on that tire. So we were trying to bring it a little bit more into the window on the alternates. I don't think we quite got there so we definitely have some

work to do from that standpoint to make sure we still have pace in the race tomorrow on the alternate.

Yeah, it's been very small fine-tuning adjustments.

**Q. How cool was it to see the sticker go on the car again?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, man, very cool. You all know it's been a hard journey, for sure. But, yeah, it was a good time to be back there.

**Q. Fastest practice time, pole, what is the confidence level?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, I think we're doing all we can. It's hard. There's no guarantees. I think we had a pretty decent margin yesterday and everyone closed the gap overnight. That's going to happen again tonight. Going into tomorrow, we got to still improve.

This final practice and warmup session that we have here in a little bit is critical for us. It's not going to be an easy road, but obviously we're starting from the best spot and hopefully can control our destiny.

**Q. (Question about the problems this morning.)**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: We're all very used to that sort of thing honestly. There wasn't any motivation necessarily. They were plenty motivated.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yes, I think we definitely took pieces from the '19 car. There are some pieces from the past two years as well. Yes, we certainly went back to more of a philosophy that we had back then.

But this all stems from the end of the year last year. Our road course performance had a big uptick at the last quarter of last year, and we're just carrying that forward into '22.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously joined by the driver of the No. 2 PPG Team Penske Chevrolet, Josef Newgarden. His third front row start of the season.



Josef, you sat down and said 'unbelievable'.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was unbelievable. I didn't even realize it was on blacks. I looked like an idiot talking to Greg from Team Chevy. I was like, Clearly, clearly it was better to go use reds, we knew that. He didn't say anything to me (smiling). Someone else told me. He was like, I didn't want to correct you. Wow, I feel, like, stupid.

Yeah, I think what Palou did was about what I would figure. Blacks was a low five on new blacks, low five, five-two, five-three. The new reds, I figured we could eke out an eight, nine, maybe a seven in a perfect world, if you absolutely, absolutely nailed it.

We were just a little short. I think Rossi's lap is definitely an outlier. Must have been a mega lap. It looks like it. Kudos to these guys.

I was pretty happy with my lap. It wasn't like it was a bad lap. It just wasn't enough. Wish we were one spot better, but we all day to work on that now with PPG and Team Chevy.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Did the rain affect anything?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Maybe a little warmup, but I didn't notice a big difference from it.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Everyone more messy than usual. But, no, it was fine.

**Q. I don't know if there is such a thing as a perfect lap, but how close was that?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: We all can look back and find a time. I gave up a bit in a couple places. But I just think for us, our balance on the primary tires is just a lot better than on the alternates, which ultimately is why we're able to kind of do that.

It was faster than my best lap that I did on the red tire. There's a little bit of that that's going on. We certainly need to focus on that in this warmup to try to figure out. You got to be good on both tires obviously. I think that's kind of what's going on with us.

**Q. I'm sure you've been reminded a zillion times about winless streaks and pole-less streaks. What has that been like? Is it frustrating, maddening, shaking your head at this point?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't really care. I think people know that with my personality, I'm not concerned by a whole lot, with outside opinion.

Internally it's motivating. Obviously you don't ever want to go through an experience like this. We haven't finished the job yet. We need to go win tomorrow.

We've accomplished half the goal, I guess you could say. But certainly the whole team has been kind of in a good space since kind of the month of May started. We're just carrying that on now. Hopefully this is the trend for the rest of the year.

**Q. Alex, what is it about the (indiscernible) at Indy that seemed to jump-start the streak you're on?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I don't know that it was Indy. We were good in a lot of places. We were good at the GP. I don't know. We're not having weird things happen at the moment. So knock on wood.

I don't think there's any revelation. We're not doing anything different. It's just things are -- mistakes are minimized, chaotic events, minus a clutch blowing up this morning, have been relatively under control, so...

**Q. This race has been won from different positions on the grid. Historically seems to favor the guys up front because you can control the agenda of the race. How important is it to be where you're at?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I think it's helpful here for sure. You want to be up front. Ideally it's a long track, it's a lot of ground to make up. You get pretty spread out. When you start at the back, it puts you on even more of a back foot here versus a smaller track.

Yeah, hopefully it's good. The race is very different than qualifying. We'll have to see how that works out. Tires, in my opinion, are quite different this year. So it will be interesting to see some guys that didn't transfer, like a Will Power, for instance, it will be interesting to see how they utilize their reds and things like that.

There's no gimmes this day. I thought Detroit was going to be pretty straightforward last weekend and it was anything but that. Don't hold your breath.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: These days it's very hard to just drive through people, especially here. You're not going to see different strategies in terms of pit stops, right? It's very difficult. Everyone is at a level, we always talk about it, you're not going to start ninth and carve your way through unless something weird happens.

It's a benefit, but there's 50 laps of work out there. We got to go out and do it.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I think outside Rossi, it clearly was a better choice for us. I mean, if I was to do it again, I think I could have found a little bit of time in it. I didn't do a bad lap. It was a good lap I did.

But I think the evidence suggested to me that it wasn't the same case as last year. Last year was a lot closer between I thought the reds and the blacks. The dropoff was maybe a little different on the reds. To me, I thought it was pretty clear that reds seemed better this year. Yeah, from yesterday, purely off the data yesterday, it seemed clear to me that they would be better. Obviously that wasn't the case.

But I think Rossi is a bit of an outlier being able to make that work. It's a very impressive lap, for sure. If you look at the others, five-four, five-three, that's kind of what it stacked up to be in my mind.

Ultimately if we were to go back and do it again, maybe we could have pipped him. It was that close with how good of a lap it was. That's INDYCAR, though. Sometimes you really think you have it sorted out, and someone can always put something together.

I think Alex mustered a really good lap together today. Sometimes that's all it takes, is just really digging deep, putting it all together. That's obviously enough for today. It's not always straightforward.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I forget about that stuff half the time, to be honest. I just hope it doesn't happen again. That would be great to not have that happen.

But we've got a lot of racing to do before we get to that point, to the end. I feel just as good as we did last year going into the race. Obviously not in the same position starting, but I think we've got a good car to go the distance. Hopefully two laps more the distance (smiling).

Yeah, we should be in good shape. I haven't really thought of it much, honestly.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

THE MODERATOR: 1961 was the last time we had eight different pole winners to start the season.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Isn't that crazy?

THE MODERATOR: There were nine that year. We'll see what happens at Mid-Ohio. Bruce covered that year, too (laughter).

**Q. Talk about how much more a pole means when it's difficult to earn a pole?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I haven't done it in a while, so it's pretty cool for me obviously (smiling).

I mean, it's hard. It's really hard work. I don't know how else to explain it. Especially now that we've kind of had this package for a while, it's not only the driver level that's good, like a lot of teams are good, too. Then it just comes down to the day.

Like Josef mentioned, we were dialed in for blacks, and blacks happened to be possibly the better tire today and it worked out.

As he also said, there's no guarantee tomorrow. We got to get it done.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, look, I think anything in this series nowadays is incredibly gratifying whenever you're successful, whether it's poles, winning the race. They're both extremely difficult for different reasons.

It's just hard these days to stay up front, to find a consistent edge. I think we can find an edge every now and then on people, but consistently having it is incredibly difficult.

INDYCAR is what it is, the product is diverse. You're constantly swinging between all these different types of tracks. You might find a little edge on a road course and all of a sudden (indiscernible) between a street course, superspeedway. It's not all just one type. It's really satisfying when you get stuff right nowadays.

**Q. Talk a little bit about the change in schedule, the longer practice yesterday, and you've now had a chance to go through practice and qualifying. Any thoughts on whether it was what you expected, better than what you expected?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think it's all the same. Obviously it ended up being the same. We have the same amount of tires, you're just doing them a day earlier.

I think we were fortunate in the sense that the track didn't start out in a bad spot. I think Mid-Ohio, for example, can very easily be three or four seconds off in the beginning. If

you're running your red tires on day one when the track is four seconds off, you're going to be in a very difficult position on Saturday afternoon for qualifying.

I think we didn't see any negative here because the track started out in a really good spot, so the evolution wasn't very much. That's not a guarantee everywhere.

I don't really think it's up to us. I don't really know that I understand why we changed it, but it is what it is. It was the same for everyone.

**Q. Crowd bigger than you've seen here in the past. It seems like the crowd is up. I believe they were saying 20% over last couple years. What did you notice about the crowd?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Just less COVID, you know (smiling).

I mean, truthfully that's probably accurate. I don't know. There's always a huge crowd here. I don't even know that I noticed a difference because the crowd always feels incredibly big here. So I don't know. I don't know there's a difference. It's always looked packed here.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: If it's up, that's amazing. Keep going in that direction.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Just to speak to Road America, I think they do a tremendous job here. I've never stayed here at the track until this weekend. Having a blast. Love the atmosphere, love the fans. It's beautiful country. It's a great place to go racing, absolutely one of the best on the calendar. They do a great job up here of putting on a good show.

THE MODERATOR: Back to the most different poles, the record for most different pole winners in a season was in 1999 in the old CART days.

**Q. What sort of strategy are you expecting tomorrow in the race?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It will be two stops. Maybe it's three. It will be three stops (smiling).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You should do two then (laughter).

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I honestly have no idea.

**Q. In terms of the momentum, how happy are you that the team have turned things around since Detroit?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, no, I mean, this sport - I've

talked to it in the past - it's a momentum business, for sure. When things go well, it just seems to kind of happen.

Obviously you want to be able to quantify that, you want to be able to understand exactly why that is so that you can always have it. I don't think it's always as easy as that.

Yes, I think the whole organization is doing a good job. Getting a good result and having a strong 500, all that sort of thing, it just helping everyone's morale. That always leads to subconsciously everyone trying a little bit harder I think. I think we're seeing the results of that. But again we haven't won anything yet.

**Q. Since the Indy 500 things are starting to click. What can you tell us on what things are you trying, new things, changes?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I mean, I've kind of already as best I can.

We haven't changed anything. I think the beginning of the year, each race we kind of had a different crew over the wall to try and figure out the best solution from that standpoint.

We arrived on that solution at the Indy GP. That has carried forward through now and the rest of the season. So that was trying and challenge in the beginning of the year to sort that out. We had some issues there.

We had some mechanical things happen. I mean, we're not that many races into the season ultimately, so that's the moral of the story. I think the car speed has been fine since really the past year or so. We just haven't really been able to get results, so it's nice to reward the team for the effort.

**Q. How confident are you on keeping the pace along the season?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: One day at a time, man. We got to go and try to win tomorrow first, then we'll look to Mid-Ohio. Figure out some magic to beat Josef in Iowa.

**Q. How the performance of the blacks and reds in the qualifying is changing the preparation for the race?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Is that for me?

**Q. For both.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Go ahead. I talked a lot (smiling).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know. Clearly I think some



people will prefer different things with their cars. I feel more confident on red tires this weekend, which is different than I think probably Rossi feels. I think you'll see some split feelings amongst the pack.

If we get rained out here in P3, I don't know. I'm not really sure we're going to have a great analysis or estimate on how the tires are going to perform across the life, both the blacks and the reds. Hard to say at the moment. I'm not sure what we're going to get. Could be a mixed bag.

But you're going to need to be smart. Like I said, I thought we were smart in Detroit with what we were doing. It clearly wasn't the right thing. It's hard to always predict these races nowadays. I don't have a good answer for you.

THE MODERATOR: We'll let you guys go. Thank you.

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