

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Friday, July 1, 2022

Josef Newgarden

Colton Herta

David Malukas

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up day one here at looking ahead to Sunday's Indy 200 at Mid-Ohio presented by the all new 2023 Civic Type R, Josef Newgarden, P1, driving the PPG Team Penske Chevrolet today, two-time and reigning champion here at Mid-Ohio, fastest lap at a minute-seven and change. Coming off a big weekend a couple weeks ago at Road America. Maybe still trying to figure out how to spend his share of the million-dollar prize from the PeopleReady Force For Good Challenge. But first things first: After a couple weeks off, back at it, P1 in practice one. How was it today?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was hot. I'm really hot right now. I've rarely been this warm in the car. We've had some hot days; it's not like this is an abnormal weather day for us, but I just felt like I was roasting inside the car. I got out as quickly as I could as that session was done.

But the car feels really good. I think the temp definitely made the track grip low. It felt very difficult to drive the car today, to bring it up to temperature. Firestone has a new tire here from last year, and it's tougher to bring up to temp. Feels like a little less grip.

I think some of that is also just the ambient and the track temp that's causing that, but I'm relatively happy. I think our car was good off the truck, relatively. It is all relative, Colton.

But I'm excited. I think with PPG, this is a big weekend for us. This is very close to PPG's home. I have a lot of big support here always for them, and we obviously want to do well with Team Chevy right in Honda's beautiful backyard.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Colton Herta, the 2020 race two champion here at Mid-Ohio, fifth quick today, of course driving the 26 Gainbridge Andretti Autosport Honda. David Malukas also joins us, the rookie from the Chicago area, eighth quick, driving the HMD Machine for Dale

Coyne Racing. Just general thoughts from both of you, back at Mid-Ohio, which I know you have some fond memories of, and nice way to start the weekend.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I mean, it's always amazing coming back here. It's really fun, especially on 4th of July weekend, always get a good crowd and a lot of people here for Friday, which is awesome.

Yeah, car was relatively good. I was pretty happy with it. Same story for everybody, but traffic seems to be a big problem with getting clean laps and putting down a good lap time. Luckily my red run was relatively clean. I was happy with that. And then every other run was pretty messy.

Yeah, we're at a good starting point.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, from our end I think it was very good. From start to end of that session, it was good. Mid-Ohio, it's so special because every time you go out, the track feels completely different, and track conditions to start the session were very tough to say the least.

It's kind of the whole goal is to get the setup for the next run but also anticipate how the track is going to change, and I think from start to end we did really well. I think it's probably because a couple weeks ago we tested here, so we kind of have a little bit of a jump ON everybody, and I think it came and showed here at practice one.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Just red tires. We didn't run reds in the first practice last year, so that's the time difference is the red tires.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I think overall we're slower than last year. If you're looking at the black times, most were about an eight-zero, so that would have probably been eight-tenths slower than last year's time. I think some of that's down to the Firestone tire difference, and I think a lot of it is down to the ambient. The ambient and track was really elevated today, and I think tomorrow you'll see that ease, and you'll probably see people happier with their cars



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because the grip is just going to go up.

But yeah, I think we're probably maybe a little bit slower than last year, maybe mostly due to the tire change, but I think ambient, we'll see where we're at tomorrow.

Q. David, the strengthening relationship between Dale Coyne Racing and HPD, talk about how valuable that is.

DAVID MALUKAS: It's very good, and the connection just keeps getting better every race. We love everybody from the team, everybody gets along very well. From my end it makes everything very easy, and we're all just having a very good time, and we're also having a good connection with the Indy Lights guys and kind of going back and forth with engineers, mechanics and drivers.

Overall it's everything I could ask for but even more.

Q. You've been able to show the speed in practice also (indiscernible) how far away do you feel you are from being able to (indiscernible)?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, every race weekend we are getting better and better, and I think that's partly me being a rookie and getting used to the whole INDYCAR deal. But I think we'll get there. We're getting closer, and every time we can we practice the pit stops, making sure we don't lose any time there. I think it's not long from now where we're going to be competitive in the races.

Q. Is this the first time you've been in here after a practice?

DAVID MALUKAS: My memory is not great so I don't know about that. Yeah, I don't know. Maybe. I'm pretty sure it is, but month of May, that was -- yeah.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, I mean, everything has gone better than I was expecting to be honest. I've been in here, I wasn't expecting to be in here at all for this season, and the fact that we are and being more consistent, it's making me very happy, and honestly from start to finish it's gone better than I was expecting.

Q. (No microphone.)

COLTON HERTA: I mean, there's a lot to take from last year. We were very fast last year. Up until that pit stop we were able to stay with Josef. We just need to find a little bit more time. I think I know what I'm looking for in the race car, and it's going to be -- if we can find it or not.

But yeah, I think there's not too many lessons we want to take from last year maybe, but definitely lessons learned.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I feel that way. I'm looking at David and he looks perfect, like you've never been in a car.

DAVID MALUKAS: No, I am very hot, I'm just trying to look good. I'm holding it all in.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No. Are you guys wearing them? I was hoping I'd have an excuse here. I don't know what's going on. Maybe it's the Scandinavian blood in me that's just dying inside. Maybe it's the dad in me. I am more tired these days.

I feel good. I just probably don't look very good. So sorry about that. It is hot. I'm very warm right now, though. I've never worn one ever. I may reconsider that this Sunday.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Were they working? Did they say that they made a difference?

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Oh, wow, that's nice.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I'm here training this weekend for SRX, so I think I'm going to be ready. I'm probably going to go without the cool suit on Sunday so I'm ready to go for next Saturday night. Yeah, I did watch the first two rounds, and it looked pretty brutal. I don't think they have the availability of that on the cars.

You know, I've been in a lot of races where it was excessively hot, and you just grind through it. That's my plan at the moment. Just be there, grind through it with the rest of them.

Q. Josef, you've been around long enough to know when you're having a good streak (indiscernible) right now it seems like you're having a pretty good streak. How important is it this time of year to (indiscernible)?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I'm being genuine, I never really thought about our performances as streaks. I haven't. We have good days, we have bad days. I think

generally we're pretty even across the board, like on an even keel. I find that's been a strength of ours. We've had our bad days, but we've never let them fall into a -- a bad day fall into a full rut where we're sitting way behind for a long time. I never get too excited about, hey, we're in a good place, we just won a race or two, and we've got to capitalize on that momentum. It never feels like that to me. It feels like we're doing our jobs at the moment. I know what we've got on the car. I know why we have it on the car. It seems to be working.

But this is its own place, too. You can be stellar at Mid-Ohio and then go to Toronto in a couple weeks and be nowhere. That's just how this series works nowadays.

I don't think there's givens. I don't think there's any gimmes anymore. Yeah, I just feel like overall we're in a positive spot. We've been in a positive spot for multiple years. I don't remember a point to be honest with you where I've felt bad about what we're doing. I don't think I'm in those terms. I just feel like we're in a good place right now, and we just need to keep doing what we're always doing.

Q. As far as SRX, everybody knows (indiscernible)?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It seems like everybody you don't want to push their buttons. It's funny to watch the INDYCAR guys. They don't know the art or the nuance of hitting people is what it looks like to me. I saw Ryan like take off his whole right side fender the other night. I'm like, come on, Ryan, you can be a little more subtle than that.

But I don't know what I'm getting myself into, to be honest. I'm really excited for the opportunity. For me it's a fun addition to the calendar. I've never driven a car like that. We're not going to have much practice, so I'm going to go in with an open mind. I'm going to try and drive hard like I always do and not do anything that's over my head because inexperience is definitely going to be a thing for me at that type of race.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You know, I just asked very politely. I said, Roger, this would mean a lot to me to go do something different, and he was supportive of that. Maybe it's the first of a couple things up the road.

Q. (No microphone.)

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I mean, it was super cool. Obviously we all know kind of what he's been through the past few years, and so it is not only impressive to see that he has the courage to like step back in the race car and get

adjusted to the hand controls and be heads up about everything and really relearn how to drive a race car in that aspect, but it's impressive when you can just do that, but then also be very fast and be winning a race.

There's really fast race car drivers in that series. Michael Lewis and Mark Wilkins, his teammates, are really good race car drivers, and he's just as fast as them, so it shows the dedication and passion that he has for racing.

Yeah, I think everyone at INDYCAR is really happy to see that.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I think it's in general taking longer this year. In my observation it was taking people four to five laps at times on the black tires. Maybe if you were perfectly clear the whole time, maybe you could be a decent lap on the third, but I think four to five is maybe ideal on the primaries.

Everyone is going to be different on their reds. Some will get it in one, some will get it in two, and some will take three laps. I think it just kind of depends on your car.

DAVID MALUKAS: When did you get it in?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know, I had a messy run, so I think it could be the first or the third. One of those two. It happened to be the third.

DAVID MALUKAS: His was third?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Exactly, exactly.

Q. If I remember correctly the last race (indiscernible) I'm not sure why.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Why he made that decision? I don't, either. Honestly if it was up to me I would have chosen the first pit box, so I was surprised he did that. We took the first one and he didn't.

I think he wanted a clear in obviously. He prioritized -- I don't have a clear in, I've got to come across Marcus's box. I think he's just prioritizing that.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Clearly for them. Yeah, maybe he's -- he could be making the number one decision to win the weekend, I don't know. Maybe that's the difference.

Q. (No microphone.)



COLTON HERTA: How much tighter is it in the boxes itself or on the track? I think we didn't use a pit box last year. I think Jimmie has a very -- oh, you're one up. So they took out the box that usually holds the camera in it and put a car in it, so it should be the same.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVID MALUKAS: Well, I mean, Mid-Ohio, it's so special. Like I said earlier, I think with having the Indy Lights, even though it's a different car, the way the track evolves is the same, and I think having that knowledge going into today and also our test, I know that we have to anticipate for the track changing quite a bit, so it definitely helped for sure.

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