

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Friday, August 5, 2022

Josef Newgarden

Scott McLaughlin

Will Power

Christian Lundgaard

Felix Rosenqvist

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up practice today for Sunday's event. Glad to be joined by the driver of the No. 2 PPG Penske Chevrolet, Nashville's own Josef Newgarden, who was fifth overall in practice today.

I'm sure you're looking forward to Sunday and everything that comes with that. Kind of talk about your practice today, what you found out here in P1.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's humid, very humid. I can tell you that.

It was a pretty good session for us. I thought we started off really strong. I felt like we brought something pretty different here this weekend, very different than what we would typically run. I felt like our starting pace was really good. Then it seemed like we got the most out of our greenside wall tires, Guayule -- the Guayule, they felt fine. They felt like a normal red would in a lot of ways, so I think that's a very productive thing to find out. We just didn't go as quick on those.

I felt like as the track rubbered up, the advantage, the benefit of the way the car was driving in the beginning, didn't showcase towards the end of the session. We're going to have to keep up better with the track progression for tomorrow.

I think it seemed a lot calmer even in the first session. I feel like some of the changes have helped that. I feel really good about the start.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. Josef, you brought something completely different

that you normally wouldn't bring. What does that mean? Why would you do that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I felt like this was one of our weakest tracks last year. We came here, after the year, if we were going to do something totally different anywhere, I thought it was Nashville. I kind of felt like we needed to.

I find it doesn't fully relate to any other street course, I really do. I think it's a very unique street course relative to the others. Probably from the outside it seems similar, but it's a very tight track, very low speed, particularly the downtown section, you're just not going very fast for a long period of time. I think what's required on the car is different than a Long Beach or a St. Pete.

When we were on the sim, I was like let's come up with something different. We were struggling for speed last year. You could tell from the whole weekend we were behind, behind, behind. We tried a very different approach.

Typically street courses will keep a similar car, change things for the characteristics of each track, but the global setup is different. Here it's a 180.

With that is probably going to come some development. Like I was talking about, the way we started the weekend when it was super low grip, it was excellent, the car was great. It started to grip up, we started losing some pace.

I think we have to develop it a little bit but I think it's got promise relative to where we were last year.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I would say we were the extreme. All of us were very different last year, to varying degrees.

Q. Other track changes made. Did you notice any of them, sight lines any better?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Not really, no. I think some of the changes were noticeable. What is it, T11, leading onto the effective start straight, that seemed wider. It still narrows at the end, though. I didn't find them to be drastically different. I think it's globally the same track. But just some

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of the procedural stuff. Just restarting on the back straight is probably going to be a big difference to what we saw last year.

Yeah, other than that, I can't say it was that much different. It felt more similar than it did different.

Q. Did you notice the transitions on and off the bridge to be any cleaner? The asphalt transition was a lot longer this year than last year. Do you feel that's any better?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think the problem is the expansion joints are identical. That's always going to be the crux of the problem. You can't do anything with that.

I think that transition, regardless, is always going to be tough. It feels similar to last year, maybe slightly improved in some ways, but very similar.

For sure the pavement after the expansion joint is more. There's more new pavement there. That feels very smooth. It just hasn't probably affected the transition to the expansion joint very much more. I don't think it's made much of a difference, so...

Q. (Question about restarts.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I was initially. Then we narrowed, what is it, turn nine? We narrowed that. I was like, I don't know if that's going to be just a similar situation that we had in turn 11.

I think the issues into 11 will be eliminated because you had such a short straightaway after turn 11. When the green waved, everyone was racing into the super tight corner. You're not going to get that. I think for sure there will be an improvement over last year. I just worry about everyone getting bunched up in a tight corner again.

I wish we could have kept that. If turn nine was the same, I think it would have been a slam-dunk better start and restart. I think we should go pretty late on that straight. Obviously you have everyone bunched up pretty tight. If we go early, you're going to be hauling pretty fast down there into turn nine.

The mandate has been to go middle of the bridge at the earliest, but I think we should probably go towards the end of the bridge. It will keep it a little bit cleaner. We're going to have to find out.

I think the 11 issues will be eliminated. I just don't want to create a mess again in turn nine. It's hard to say. I hope it's better.

Q. (Question about the second year of this race.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, it looks as popular to me as last year. Genuinely I heard nothing but rave reviews from locals here. Anyone that came to this event says they had an amazing time. They noticed there were some issues with the race. There were a lot of yellows. But as far as the event, they were like, We loved it. We had a blast. We thought they put on a great event and had a really good time.

I got nothing but good feedback. I think that's positive coming into this year. It seems as lively to me just for a Friday. I feel positive about where it's going. I really don't see any negativity about it.

The race for sure needed to be better. But I think there were some factors outside of our control. You even look at the water issue middle of the race, I think that was some fire hydrant or something that got run into or something like that.

THE MODERATOR: Air-conditioning.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Whatever it was. Things like that can add a big wrinkle into the race that are avoidable but not really anyone's fault, at least from the promoter's side.

As far as the event, I think they did an excellent job last year and I think they will get better this year and for years to come.

Q. With the elevation changes, does it feel more of a road course versus a street course?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No. It's just street, so... Yeah, I mean, there is elevation for sure coming off the bridge, coming onto it. It doesn't feel like a road course to me whatsoever. It's just a really tricky, tight street circuit.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Treat it like a street course. So yes. Definitely not running a road course package, I can promise you that. Far from it. Far from it.

Q. You said this was one of your weakest tracks. In terms of the championship, did you have this circled knowing Penske has been good at Gateway?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, definitely. It didn't worry me because I always believe we can solve our problems. I definitely felt like it was one of our weaker tracks holistically as a team. Like I was saying earlier, I circled it and said,

Guys, if we're going to do something, I want to go something way different.

I wasn't worried about it. I thought we could figure it out. We came with something that's productive, we need to work on it. I have a lot of faith that with this group here we can figure it out, have a good weekend, not let this be a negative in the last four events. I think we can have a great weekend here as a whole team.

THE MODERATOR: Joined by Scott McLaughlin and the points leader currently in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, driving the Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet, Will Power.

Q. Josef, were there any major nerves going into this weekend given this is your hometown race?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, not really. My personal philosophy is to treat every event the same. It's easier said than done. Obviously you feel magnitude differences between events. Whether it's the Indy 500 or race one or the finale or a hometown race, I try and approach it the exact same way every single weekend.

Yeah, for me it's just business as usual. We're going to do what we always do. I think when we keep that mindset, we have the most potential to have a clean weekend to maximize ourselves.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's never big with me. Scottie will make it big, for sure. I can tell you if Scottie wins, it will be a rager.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: If either of us wins, it will be big? If Will wins, absolutely.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We'll rage.

WILL POWER: We'll have a party.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: If he wants to come on Bus Bros, we'll rage.

Q. (Question regarding changes on the track.)

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: The way the track is built in terms of the concrete walls, the fencing, the way there's a couple street circuits this year like Toronto with the fencing and stuff just didn't feel like to our standard in some ways. The way the fence has been built here, the concrete walls, they're curved, same as last year, built first class, put a lot into it, which is a credit to the promoters, everyone else.

I think they've extended some of the pavement on the edges of the bridges, which is a big thing. I mean, they did a little bit last year in a pretty rushed process. They did a heap this year. I think they did a really good job with it all. They'll just keep learning, get bigger and better.

Q. Anything to add?

WILL POWER: No, he covered it.

Q. What do you think of doing the restarts going back across the bridge instead of on the normal start/finish line?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think it's a good idea. I think it will be better than last year. More flowy, plenty of time to get there. Yeah, I mean, still pretty wide entry. Still got plenty of room to pass, have two-wide there, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Fresh off podium Saturday, Christian Lundgaard. We'll continue with questions.

Q. Christian, to be able to back up this week so quickly after your podium finish in Indianapolis, how much does that boost you?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Quite dramatically, honestly. I must say I wasn't really expecting to be up here this far up today, never having been here before, show up and the pace was there. You see Malukas was in P3 as well.

I think just the rookie field this year is quite strong. For me, Toronto, the car was good, which was the last street circuit. Coming here we were expecting to have a better package. It seems like the package is there.

Q. Will, four races to go, you've got the experience, you and Scott Dixon, how do you use the experience against a bunch of young kids who may not know quite what they're in for when it comes to the points race?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, I've used that experience all year. You know how these races go: anything can happen. You just have to be smart. I know the situation I'm in. Race accordingly.

Q. How has that helped you prepare?

WILL POWER: Yeah, from a mental standpoint, I've been there many times. I know how it is. Yep, apply all my experience.

Q. The new tires...

WILL POWER: The guacamoles (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Guayule.

WILL POWER: No way.

They're exactly the same. The track is so different, how can you tell? The car is different, track is different. I think Rosenqvist knows.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: My first experience on a second run on reds was in Indy when I got through, so we tried it today and it seemed pretty similar, to be honest.

WILL POWER: Similar.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Josef Newgarden from Bus Bros. Question for Scott. Who do you think you are?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: What did I do?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Who do you think you are? What is your problem (laughter)?

WILL POWER: Bathurst winner. You're wasting our time. We have to get back to the engineering office. Any more questions? The reason we're here is Jenna Fryer. It is. She told Roger, Your drivers are not accessible. Roger is immediately, You guys are going to every press conference.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We apologize. I had no idea about it. I'm so sorry.

Q. It's not a Jenna Fryer issue.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We're very sorry.

Q. 23 drivers skipped the media bullpen. That wastes everyone's in heres time and money.

WILL POWER: Where was it?

Q. Right across from you. We yelled to you to get you to stop.

WILL POWER: I didn't see the bullpen. Who are the three or four drivers that did?

Q. Jimmie, Ericsson and Helio.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: He's got time, though (laughter).

WILL POWER: I feel bad for blaming you for that.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Why aren't you sitting up here?

WILL POWER: He was.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: (No microphone.).

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: That's right.

WILL POWER: Did the guys just leave, doing no debrief at all (laughter).

Q. Josef mentioned going in with just a little bit of a different setup, different mindset. Did you take that process in setting up your car for this weekend? How did that feel?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think, yeah, fresh mindset, a year on this track, thinking about it for the team. We have to use that to our advantage in some ways, like everyone else would.

Yeah, we've come here with a philosophy that we think's going to work for each of us. From my perspective, I had a really solid car today so it makes me excited for what's ahead for the weekend.

WILL POWER: Yeah, same. We rolled off pretty close. It's quite different from last year, so... Feel like we're in the right direction.

THE MODERATOR: Joined by Felix Rosenqvist, P2 in practice.

Q. Christian, Graham said at Indianapolis he didn't have the straight line speed, he was lacking that. Do you feel what you're using as a setup is faster here than what he was struggling with?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: No. He was struggling a bit with the up-shifts, which lost him some time at Indy. He had it in practice one, he had it in quallie and in the race.

I know they worked hard to try to solve it. If they ever found a solution, I'm not sure.

Q. What about how the team setup has improved over the test at Sebring?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: It seems to work pretty well, I must say. Toronto I think Graham and I were quite strong. Graham finished fourth. I was P8, I think.

Coming into this event, we knew we were going to have a better package than we had in Detroit where we struggled quite a bit. It works apparently, so we got to keep digging.



Q. Josef said he felt like this is one of the weakest tracks for him this year. Is that across the board?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We were involved in incidents.

WILL POWER: I had a guy turn in on me at one point, yeah (laughter).

I wasn't that worried. Actually I thought we did some good work last year. Kind of by the race we were good. But the race was such a disaster.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: My race was going all right (laughter).

WILL POWER: Clearly not. You were back there with me.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It wasn't ideal. I didn't feel too bad last year. I enjoyed the track. But we probably did miss the boat compared to, say, Herta, he was just light-years ahead.

We'll see tomorrow who comes out quick or whatever. Christian was very quick today on the green tire. Yeah, we'll see what we got. But I think it's a track we really want to (indiscernible) down on it as a team.

Q. On the restart zone, Marcus said he thinks this will put the leader at a disadvantage.

WILL POWER: You'll be more of a sitting duck, yeah. I mean, if it keeps the race greener, I hope I'm not the leader, hope I'm second (smiling).

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: You're the first guy that's ever said that: I would rather be second (laughter).

WILL POWER: Based on the restart zones, yes. Like Indianapolis, you wouldn't want to be first on the restarts with one to go.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Marcus managed.

WILL POWER: He did. So maybe you do.

Q. I know this has been an entertaining press conference. Is it fun getting used to doing this more often?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I get to see you guys and answer.

I mean, if it brings the points in, for sure. No, it's one thing you have to do, and you got to take the good with the bad.

I'm not saying this bad at all. I meant driving.

But, no, obviously it's something that I did back in Europe, as well. Had it a few times. Now getting to do this again.

Q. Christian, you seem to have so much confidence over the last couple races. Do you feel you're getting close to a victory?

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Well, yes and no. I think looking at it now, looking at the performance, it seems to be there.

Going into Indy last weekend we knew we were going to have a car that was good enough to be in the good end of top 10. But we had to execute, and we did.

If Colton didn't have his I would say failure issue, I don't think it would have been much more than a P3 anyway. We've now gotten onto the podium. Looking at the pace we've got this weekend, it sure seems an opportunity to get it.

Q. Felix, the continuation of what this team has done lately, the surge you guys have had...

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, it's been a good run since quite long now. I think we've been lacking a little bit the ability to execute. There's been a couple of hiccups in the races, some mechanical issues the last three events actually.

Otherwise, yeah, we're up there in qualifying. We have good race cars almost everywhere we go now. Yeah, I think it's kind of like Christian, we know wherever we show up, we're going to be in the top 10. I think that's not an easy thing to be in INDYCAR. It's taken a lot of hard work to get to that point.

But, yeah, I think today felt good. It was kind of weird. I did my green run very early. I thought everyone was going to beat the time. Only Christian did. Not sure if it was a bunch of, like, traffic issues for the others.

I think there will be a couple of seconds quicker in qualifying tomorrow, so just have to keep digging on the setup and see what more we can find.

Q. There's been some stories about your contract situation. Can you clarify where you stand for next year?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: That's between me and Zak to be honest. I prefer not to talk about contracts. That's why they're contracts, because they're made for you and the

other signing party. It's not for the public to know.

Q. Your position has changed over the last several weeks. It was announced in June you would run in Formula E or INDYCAR for McLaren. You've come to express to us that you really would like to be in INDYCAR next year. Is there still a chance you would end up in Formula E next year or are you focused on INDYCAR?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think I'm mainly focused on staying with my current team, AMSP. As I say, we had a good run last couple of races. I feel happy working with my engineer, my mechanics. Obviously it's another car coming to the team next year. I think it's all depending on the Palou case what's going to happen with me.

But, yeah, that's all I'm focused on right now. I'm just trying to win the race. I think we've been close a couple times here. Just focus on doing well, winning races. That's pretty much all I can do.

For the Formula E stuff, I mean, I think that's kind of secondary at this point. Mainly just focusing on what I'm doing here now, try not to get distracted by what's going on in the background.

Q. If things work out to where you don't have an INDYCAR seat with Arrow McLaren SP next year, will you pursue other INDYCAR opportunities outside of McLaren?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: That we will see.

Q. Is it frustrating knowing there's so much in the situation that's out of your control?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I think it's mainly distracting for the team, for the engineers, mechanics. They're all asking questions. They're part of this team as much as I am. Obviously without the driver, it's a big part of what makes their day. They want to know, are they going to continue with me next year? What's going to happen?

It's not the optimal case. I think we've done a good job focusing. But as I say, we had a run of mechanical failures, a bit of slipups here and there. I'm sure these things doesn't help.

For now we got together a couple days ago at the shop, said, Let's focus on the details here and try to use the performance we have right now to do some good finishes for the rest of the season, then everything else will pan out in time.

Q. (No microphone.)

FELIX ROSENQVIST: My group of guys.

Q. The way this whole saga has gone, doesn't it kind of seem a little absurd at times?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I mean, obviously it's always complicated, right? Half of these things doesn't concern me at all. You read stuff. You also don't know what's true or not. There's obviously a lot of rumors, people that think they know what's going on. What's actually the truth, that's only the people involved that knows.

Is it very different? Yes. Like we never seen a case like this that's going on right now. Yeah, at least you guys get something to write about (smiling). That's a good thing in the end.

As I say, as long as it's not distracting us too much, I think we're good. I'm just going to focus on what concerns me, and the rest is kind of pointless, to be honest, for me.

Q. It also seems your team principal is doing this over in Formula 1, too. A lot of potential upheaval going on there also.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I mean, that was obviously a shock to see what happened there. Same thing there. We don't know what actually happened. Maybe that's just a clear-cut deal that was made and it was all done in the correct way. Like we don't know that. That's why I don't really weigh an opinion.

The shock factor for sure is big. It's big news. But if it's right or wrong, whatever it is, I'm not the one to judge.

Q. You sit in a position where you have a court case between an entirely different team and a driver that might affect your seat, deals in Formula 1 that may or may not happen. Whether they happen may affect the INDYCAR situation. What is it like being in this position where your future could potentially be affected and you don't have the control?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, it's not optimal. I think I'm always for negotiating or doing deals here and there. The thing I think is that's for the off-season, not the season. Obviously this whole thing has opened very early in the year. I think it's not optimal for our team. I think it affects people in the organization. It's not good.

But it is the way it is, right? Like it happens. We're professionals. We have to deliver, not only me, like I said, this affects other guys on the team. I think they've done a

great job to just kind of...

During the week there's a lot of talks. It's not optimal. I'm sitting here instead of being in my engineering room. I'm talking about Formula 1 stuff. I think that's where it's not optimal.

But, yeah, I mean, you just have to jump in the car and put on your helmet and forget about it. End of the day, it's simple as that. I just drive the car. That's what I have to do better than ever before right now.

Q. Your results on track and races seem like they've been getting better as the situation has been getting weirder. Is that notable? When you're in the car, are you able to focus more the crazier things get or have you been doing anything differently to get these results?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Well, I mean, I would lie if I said the pressure is not higher. Definitely the pressure gets higher naturally over the season. When you don't know what you're going to do, it's always important more to perform. That's just a fact.

I think I respond well to that. I always have pressure, but I feel like I probably stepped up a little bit since things have become unclear. That's a good thing, right? Maybe I need to be in this situation all the time (smiling).

Q. How good is it for you to kick-start the weekend on a positive note going into the race?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It's great. It's good to be back in Nashville. I kind of forgot how bumpy it is out there. Definitely takes a few laps to get into it.

It's fun. I love this track. It feels a bit different compared to last year. Took a little while to kind of get up to speed. But, yeah, it was great to start the weekend strong.

I think it's very early, though. The track is still going to rubber in a lot. A lot of people are going to find speed. Seems to be kind of like a messy session in general.

Coming out P2 in first practice, again, it shows that we haven't gotten into this whole thing too much, and we're focused on the job. We're ready to go kick some ass.

Q. How did you find the new Guayule tire compound?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Good. I did quite a lot of laps on them. It seemed like they -- I definitely had red tires that have degged more than this one. There didn't seem to be a lot of deg at all, to be honest. It was likes 6/10ths or

7/10ths after five or six laps. I think they did a good job with that. If that's a more sustainable option, I think we're in good hands.

Q. The meeting that you had, was there something specific that prompted it, like in the last race?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yes, yes. There's always stuff going on in the background. I think we didn't do a great job in the race that weekend. We had an issue with the brakes, they were dragging pretty much. Not the whole race, but from time to time they were dragging. I mean, I think it cost us the race pretty much. At least a podium would have been expected from that race the way it went. We were just like a sitting duck on the straights.

That's a bad thing. I don't know the exact explanation, but there was something going on inside of the caliper or something that wasn't right.

We had a meeting. I think everyone obviously is a bit tired after these long stretches of races. A doubleheader in Iowa, then straight into Indy GP, straight here. People are obviously tired. We get that.

We just had a meeting to go through like is there anything we can do, something we need to address. We have a good car. We want to keep getting those results this year. I think it was a good meeting. It wasn't finger pointing or anything. It was getting the group together, talking about it. Like we haven't done good enough in certain areas, we need to address them so we can get some podiums.

Q. You mentioned you tried the new Guayule tire, thought it had good grip. Last year being the first race, seemed like the top eight cars they split on blacks and reds. Do you have any sense of what would be the preference?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I felt like it was a pretty good tire. It's probably better than the red was last year. I might be wrong. It's still very early. The track is changing every lap. I thought my blacks actually degged quite a lot. When I put on the reds, they were surprisingly consistent.

Yeah, that's always a question, right? We don't know going into the race. Maybe it's one of those you have to not qualify in the top 12 and get the extra set of greens (laughter).

Q. Near the end of the session you had a dust-up with Romain Grosjean. Can you talk about what happened there?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, I mean, it's practice. It's not

really a big deal. I was behind Colton. He was kind of prepping for his run. I was lifting because he was lifting. Romain came and was, like, he was so late when he appeared, I couldn't really move. I could have done a crazy maneuver and moved out of the way. I saw he was angry and wanted to run into me a little bit. That's fine. It's just practice, no big deal.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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