

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, August 20, 2022

Josef Newgarden

David Malukas

Scott McLaughlin

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good evening, everyone. We are joined by the second-place finisher, David Malukas. First podium of his very young NTT INDYCAR SERIES career. And Scott McLaughlin also joining us, sixth podium of the season, seventh podium of his career. Four of those seven coming on ovals.

Let's start with David. Welcome to your first NTT INDYCAR SERIES post-race celebration, podium. What are the feelings so far?

DAVID MALUKAS: Oh, man, so much. Mainly just nervous because I haven't done it in a while so I have no idea what to do. Driving past the start/finish line even, this is great, I was celebrating. Where do I go? What do I do?

Thankfully McLaughlin, I just watched him, staring him down. Okay, I'm just going to copy him. Yeah, I did it. I think it went smoothly.

They have the confetti, it's a lot. Wow, a lot going on. I got grape juice. Newgarden let me spray the real stuff which actually makes more sense because I'm spraying it away from me, not towards me. I thought, Why didn't they give me the real stuff? Maybe they give them the grape juice. But that's not fun. I don't know. Maybe I can just tell them I'll close my mouth, I don't know (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Obviously you were excited this race restarted to give you an opportunity. Tell us about what happened on the last lap setting up Scott there into turn one.

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, so Pancho came on the radio, my spotter. I was trying so hard. They know how to do this. Blocking my line and stuff. Man, this is so hard. But Pancho said, Try going wide in one and two, three and four.

One and two didn't work. They swepted it. It felt really good.

I just said, You know, two to go, let's try it.

It worked very well. I had that bit of clean air on the front right wing, I was able to get a run. Because the track was so much quicker with it being so much later, I hit the limiter in sixth gear. I couldn't get a tow or suck on him. We had to go two-wide in one and two. Scary going wide there. Definitely getting some loose ends.

Overall, so happy that we managed to go back out. We knew from practice yesterday the cooler the track got, the better our car ended up being compared to the others around us. We knew we had a good car going into it. Knew I had a chance.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Scott. Disappointed or what? What are the emotions?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think our car was very good in the afternoon, late evening when the sun was still out. After the sun went away, lost my balance in that last stint. Didn't have what Josef and David had. David was strong, coming at us really hard. Obviously me and Josef pulled away. I sort of knew I didn't have much.

Midway through the stint, started loose. Hard to get runs similar what I had in the daylight. Yeah, that second-to-last lap, I got a little bit loose off of three and four. Dave got a good run. I could see what he was doing. I couldn't get out wide because of the confidence I had in the rear of the car.

But he did a phenomenal job. He's been doing an amazing job all year. First podium in INDYCAR is pretty hard to come by, especially on a short oval.

THE MODERATOR: You expected him to come around the outside?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah. I mean, I did what I thought. I went the high line against Josef, that didn't work. I went low line against Dave thinking, He's a rookie, he might not, he might not. Then he did. Oh, well, I was wrong. Went around the outside.

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It was a solid move. Credit to you. It was awesome. That's what oval racing is all about. I left him enough room, he left me enough room, we got through there two-by-two. It was a stellar pass. What we're doing with building the lanes, making them really nice for oval racing is really cool.

I'm absolutely disappointed. I felt like we were really solid there today in the daylight. Yeah, sort of lost it there at the end.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. David, did you say on TV you didn't try the high line until two to go?

DAVID MALUKAS: I mean, through the race I was doing the high line. It was that last stint. I didn't do the last stint till two to go. I mean, like with McLaughlin, with the last stint, the tires were getting old, that's when I wasn't doing the high line because I didn't think it would be able to hold. That was my mistake because the Dale Coyne Racing car was very good and handled it with a breeze.

Q. Get up there, sailing, were you like, Dammit, why did I wait so long?

DAVID MALUKAS: Exactly. I did that. Pancho is like, Go get 'em, last lap.

There's two corners left.

Yeah, no, it was a bit unfortunate I did it so late. But I guess rookie season, rookie stuff. I'm going to put it in the back of my brain and remember it for next time.

Q. Do you think if you had one more lap you could have gotten Josef?

DAVID MALUKAS: Maybe, maybe not. I don't know. It's tough. He had lap traffic. That's the only reason why I could get to McLaughlin and Newgarden.

Yeah, maybe a bit of a chance. Definitely would have done some stupid thing to get really close to him. It's not like they were slow, they were really quick. It would have been interesting.

Q. You also said on TV, Those are Penskes. What was that moment really like?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, so Ross, my engineer, he said, You see the leaders, go get 'em.

I saw them go through one and two. Oh, my God, they're Penskes. I'm going behind Penskes right now. This is crazy.

To me, as a kid, I used to always watch. I just could only dream of it. Every time through practice, every time they passed me, I always let them by, Man...

It's definitely special to me. I was trying so hard to not get nervous. I mean, I was nervous, but I was trying so hard not to get overexcited and do something stupid. Yeah, it's definitely intimidating when there's two Penskes in front of you.

Q. David, talking to your team owner out there, he said you were a really tiger out there at the end. When did you really realize, what lap, how much time was left, when you realized you could catch those guys?

DAVID MALUKAS: Well, once I got around Pato, who did a very good job defending, very tough to get around him, I think it was Carpenter ended up letting me by, which was very nice of him. It was kind of at that moment, our car was very quick. We got around Pato. The car was, like, very good. I mean, as soon as we went out, I knew it was going to be very good and we'd have a chance to catch them.

Once I got within I'd say, like, a second or two, that's when it was tough to get the last bit. Thankfully the lap traffic came, that's when I was able to get really close and personal.

Q. Although Road America is closer to you than St. Louis, the fact this is a Midwestern oval, in the state of Illinois, you're from Chicago, that's got to be pretty cool?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, no, it is very cool. Yeah, I mean, in Illinois, I've always had a lot of success here with last year in Indy Lights. We won both races there. Also had a very good pass with Kyle Kirkwood. Took four laps to get around him on the outside. Have a good history here, it keeps building. I'm really liking this place.

Q. The great thing about Dale Coyne Racing is they don't have to have the most or the best, but they do very well with what they have. How satisfying is that from a driver point of view to be able to put up the numbers?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, it means so much. From the start of this season, started off rough, making a lot of rookie mistakes. But I kept on learning. I knew the car was getting so good, the team was doing such a good job

to get the connection and chemistry on what we needed, what I wanted. It was going so well. I knew the car deserved a podium.

It feels so good to finally get one with the three races left in the season. Yeah, I'm through the roof.

Q. What does it mean to you as a Chicago suburb based driver to race for a Chicago team?

DAVID MALUKAS: That's also another thing that's so nice, is I want Dale Coyne Racing to succeed so much because it's Chicago based, I was born and raised in Chicago. I'm only 20 minutes out from the shop.

There have been many moments in the season, too many for me, where I had to repay the mechanics and engineers and get them donuts. After Nashville, I also supplied some more donuts, nice ones from Stan's, Chicago based. Good place, by the way.

It means a lot. Like I said earlier, the reason why I push so hard trying to get the podium was for the team.

Q. David, do you think your inexperience might have been a benefit in that you didn't know exactly how crazy those moves might be on the outside? You went for it, especially on Scott at the end.

DAVID MALUKAS: That's a good question. I don't know if it's either way. Yeah, I mean, I definitely went for it with two to go mainly just because Pancho told me. He's like, Do it, go up there.

I don't know if it's either way with a veteran or rookie being more reserved. I think it really just depends on the person. Yeah, I mean, that's a tough question.

Q. Pancho has been around the sport so long. How good is it to have someone that has his experience?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, it's really good having Pancho. It started off a bit rough because he's very aggressive. I would do something stupid, he'd be like, That was really stupid, don't do it again.

Oh, that's not nice.

I realized that is who Pancho is and he really cares.

We were having a good time today. Mid race, ended up being a little bit like follow the leader with everybody fuel saving. I actually started singing in the car. Pancho was like, Your singing is great, but can we go do something, this is boring?

Once we put the new set on, we had a good strategy, me and Pancho were having a lot of fun. He was telling me, Go outside, go inside, cut across. It went really well. We were having a good time. Thank you, Pancho. It was a lot of fun.

THE MODERATOR: Looking at the Rookie of the Year standings, you're very much in play, just 11 behind Christian Lundgaard now with two races remaining.

Q. David, after you pit, it rains, what is your mindset in the rain delay knowing you have a shot at this thing?

DAVID MALUKAS: Yeah, I wanted to get going so badly. You just sit and you dwell on it, you overthink, do different simulations in your head of how the start is going to go, what's going to happen.

At the same time I knew the longer we waited, the better our car was going to be. The cooler the temperatures, going off the information we had at practice. I knew the engineers were getting excited because they knew the situation as well. They're giving me little tips. I could tell they were a little bit nervous.

Okay, I kind of just need to get away from them. I could feel their nervousness coming off me. I wanted to go out and focus.

Yeah, it was a lot longer than whatever the delay was. To me it just felt like it was a day. I just wanted to get back out.

Q. Scott, two more races left, how much are you thinking points right now?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Look, a win would have been really nice tonight. Ultimately top five would be fantastic right now. But we're still in the fight, which is the main thing. Two races to go, who knows what will happen.

Yeah, still feeling like we're just going to attack these next two races with nothing to lose, have a bit of fun.

Q. Scott, you had a nice jump on the restart. Were you surprised Josef got you so quickly?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No. I think the slipstream effect here, when you can get a run, it works pretty good. Not surprised. I did all I could to try and break away as much as I could. I went into one pretty hard. I think if we had got through the turn three, maybe I could have held him off. He was quick.

Like I said, I think my car, it just wasn't quick enough once the sun went down. That's part of it. Unfortunately I think if we just keep going green, it would have been different things if it hadn't have rained.

Q. How does that happen that all of a sudden his car looks like a rocket ship and you look like you're standing still?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I don't know. I don't know.

Q. They giving him something special?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No, no. I don't know. I mean, I don't know.

No, look, the main thing was that Penske won. For our team and Roger, it was a big deal. He just wanted us to get home. That was a big sort of talking point for us before the restart as well.

Look, like I said, I'm disappointed with third, which is a great thing. I'm feeling like we're really building for the end of the year but also start of next year.

THE MODERATOR: A year ago you would have taken third in a heartbeat.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah. Starting to learn who I am now (smiling).

Q. Scottie, I heard something you said recently, that you feel more at home now, at home in the U.S. and the INDYCAR SERIES itself. A place you feel you belong. 18 months ago the oval racing was very limited for you. Now looking at the performance this year, looks like you've been on ovals for years. You seem to be enjoying the ovals as much as the road courses.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think oval racing for me, it's just special to be able to race in INDYCAR on an oval. It's part of the DNA of INDYCAR racing. Certainly hope there's more ovals in the future. I think many others would agree with me.

I've just had good teammates, got a good team, good cars, for me to be able to extract the speed and be really comfortable with it and learn quickly. I'm very thankful for that.

Yeah, I think off-track life is a lot easier. I feel a lot more at home in the INDYCAR SERIES. Know a lot more faces. It doesn't feel as unknown, even in the media, sponsorship land, even the Penske organization. It was a lot to take on

last year. I'm very happy with where we're at right now.

Q. Because of the size of the delay, something you haven't come across, does that play into the mind?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's not that hard. Kind of like a practice in some ways. You have a couple of hours off, then you get ready to get back into it again. It's just a bit more high intensity once everything gets going.

Like I said before, I don't think my car was as good once the lights came on. We were really hooked up with the sun. It got a little loose, a lot more looser than it did in the daylight. That's what it's all about. Unfortunately we can't run in the rain. It's just how it is.

THE MODERATOR: Joined now by the four-time champion here at World Wide Technology Raceway, Josef Newgarden. First time in your career five wins in a season. 25th career win, which ties you with Gordon Johncock. More to come. Your thoughts on a big night tonight.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was a great night. Very big night. You got to win these races when you're in position to do it. I wanted to close that one out really badly, really badly.

I was elated. Elated that we were able to get back going and I had the opportunity on the restart. I'm thankful to my teammate. I thought Scott drove me with a tremendous amount of respect. He raced me hard, he wasn't giving me anything, but just gave me a lot of respect like you would expect from a teammate. I think he goes above and beyond sometimes.

Big night for us, PPG, Team Chevy. Can't talk enough about Team Chevy. Had the engine to beat tonight, no doubt. We had great fuel mileage, reliability, power, all the things we always want. A big night for everybody on Team Penske. Very good for us in the championship fight.

THE MODERATOR: Seemed like your car came alive after the red flag.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I was pleasantly surprised and very, very satisfied with my car tonight. I thought it was hooked up tremendously once we got about midway through the race. It was a bit processional in the first half. Literally every car just went to fuel save. Everyone wanted to try to make the three-stop work. I was surprised at how many people committed. Seemed like the whole field flipped to it. Wasn't a lot happening then.

As soon as that caution 150, 155, something like that, when it provided that opportunity to pit again, it changed

things up, put people on different strategies. That made it really exciting.

I thought that our car was able to maximize that strategy opportunity. So I'm real thankful to my team for picking that out. You can't win this race without nailing calls like that, being good in the pits. There was a moment I thought it was slipping away from us, too. Ultimately they made the right calls and did it right and we were able to close it out.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Josef Newgarden.

Q. What was the conversation with you and McLaughlin during the red flag? Before the red flag, kind of got spread out, wasn't a lot of passing. How do you stay patient throughout that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, first with Scott, it's a little bittersweet because we have a great friendship. He's a tremendous competitor. I rank Scott as one of the most elite drivers in the world, not just here but in the world. He's top class. Very difficult to beat.

We get along really great. He's a tremendous teammate, hard worker. It's not the easiest friendship to have because we're competing.

At the end of the day he wanted to win the race and I wanted to win the race. I was frustrated that we slipped behind him on the pit cycle. I felt like we had the position on him, and that frustrated me.

I think ultimately we have a tremendous working relationship. Nights like this are good. At the end of the day if we're battling together, things are going well. We want to see that pretty often. I think we will see that often. Scott is not going to go anywhere. He's only going to get better. I hope we have more battles. They will be tough because I respect him a lot, consider him a friend, but he's also a competitor.

We just talked about Bus Bros, how he was pissed, how we were going to race each other hard. Normal stuff.

And about being patient with traffic?

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I just wish we could get a second lane going. Man, this race would be awesome, like gnarly, if you could get a second lane. It would be really, really cool.

I think we made some progress this weekend. I really do. The extra session was positive. I they we worked that lane

in a bit more. We used it. I used it. I never thought I'd get up there. It definitely was usable. I think we made progress.

We need to continue to examine this track and how we can make it even better for racing. I don't think it was a dud by any means, got exciting in the middle. But what can we do in the future to make it better? I think we got some ideas.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: These decisions aren't up to me, but I would always race in the lights here. It looks cool, feels cool. I think the grip is better. We could look at our downforce package for this track specifically and see how we could improve it. I think if we changed it a bit we could make it a lot better. There's a lot to digest and a lot of good things to come out of here.

Q. I don't know how much of a student of racing you are, but 25 victories already, Gordon Johncock was a real stud as a race driver. To tie a guy as legendary as that, how cool is that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I forget about my job sometimes. I get so focused on the day-to-day, just the process of I want to be the best in any facet, whether it's the way I examine data, the way I work with the team, my fitness regimen. I get lost in that perfection. I forget how cool this has been.

I've been doing this for over 11 years now. I never as a kid thought I'd be doing this. I didn't. I really didn't. I loved racing carts. I met a lot of friends in motorsports. Now to reflect at times, to see the opportunity I've had, it's been a real privilege and pleasure.

I get to work with the best, I really do. I believe that. Team Penske is absolutely the pinnacle. We've got a lot of people there. I've worked with a lot of them different years, different people. They're all tremendous.

Yeah, to be here 11 years on still has been a real honor for me.

Q. You got your first victory seven years ago. Now you're at 25. Whip off a few more five-win seasons, do you think you could get to 50? That would be a huge number for a career mark.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Hey, I'm not stopping. Let's see what happens. We need to get more 10 wins a year, that's where my mind is at (smiling).

This year, honestly, just this year, I think we had the



potential for maybe seven. Then you got two more to go. So we're getting better for sure. I think if we can figure out how we can rip off a season with 10 or 12 wins, that would be impressive.

That's where my mind is at. I don't know if that's possible. It's getting more difficult to do that. People in here may think I'm joking by saying that, but I really am thinking that way.

It's more than just the wins, it is the consistency. How often can you be on the podium? That's become more and more important these days, top fives, podiums, being there every single weekend, not having any hiccups. Blending that with great races where you're winning is ultimately the package you have to have. If we can just keep accelerating the wins, I think that's good for all of us.

Q. I'll agree with you underneath the nights here is really cool. When you say you don't get to make that decision, how often do they take the drivers' input on situations like this or other things to make a track better?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't say that lightly, that it's not in my decision power. The series, the ownership, the promoters, they absolutely weight, everybody weights our decision plenty. I think we get to lot of say in what happens. Our opinion absolutely matters. I don't feel like we are unheard. There's a lot more going on that factors into when we run a race.

I love night races. To me they're just better. It's fun. It's fun to race these cars at night. They're exciting, they look good, they feel good. The atmosphere is there. My vote would be to be at night.

But there's a lot more that goes into it than just saying, Hey, we're going to run at night. Maybe we can work more in. I would be all for that if you had my vote.

Q. How do you go about explaining so much success at one place in such a short period of time? When you first got here, was there something about the track that you found to your liking or style?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it starts with having the best cars. You can't do this unless you have a dominant car. I've had that. Team Penske has more than delivered the best cars for me. It's more than just, Hey, do you like the track? Why do you have success here?

Look at the team I have. I have all the resources possible. I have the best of the best on pit lane, the best strategist, most of the time the fastest car in the field. It's a pretty

good recipe for putting wins together. We've been fortunate to do that at multiple tracks, we can say that about multiple areas.

I do love this style of racing. If we could get more short ovals, my hand goes up every time we ask.

Q. How much were you planning the move between the rain delay?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That wasn't really planned. I was just going. I don't know where I'm going, I'm just going. He's going to go as hard as he can to the corner, I'm going to go harder. It may work out, it may not. That's sometimes my mentality. It seemed to work tonight.

But it wasn't super premeditated, the actual maneuver. It can good so many ways. If I get a big run on Scott, go inside of him, that's one thing. If I go outside of him, that's another thing. I didn't have a big run on him.

I'm just reacting. I'm going to bullet this first lap quicker than him and I was ready to do that. Fortunately we were prepped and ready and it worked out.

Q. Your relationship with Tim, it feels like it couldn't get any better, then here comes another one. How much has that evolved over the years?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: He's absolutely no slouch. I would consider him one of the best if not the best strategists on pit lane. Sometimes he doesn't look like the best strategist because things that we can't predict happen. I don't put that on him. I don't put it on the team. It's INDYCAR racing. There's sometimes unknowns. The yellows are so difficult to predict these days.

I think he's a tremendous competitor, very good. He's obviously been a student of this sport for many years. If you know Tim, he's very passionate about INDYCAR. He wants to win more than anybody on the team. He doesn't always show that, but it's in there and it's very alive.

I feel confident that I got the boss on the stand with me and we've had a tremendous relationship. There's been no cracks in it up to this point. I don't know that we're getting better. I feel like we've been good for five-plus years. Definitely have no issues in that department.

Q. Cindric is a real kneeslapper.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Doesn't like to show a lot of emotion, that man.

Q. You and Will are now three points apart. I assume

Roger's rules are similar to his NASCAR rules: you can race each other, just not wreck each other. How does it work out the next two weeks?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Hard to say. I think we're just going to race like we always do. It's kind of as simple as that. We race all year, we race hard. It's not going to be the first time Will and I have raced together. We've had many, many races that have been in lockstep, 1-2, pit strategy, the whole thing. We'll just fight it out as normal.

Clearly we don't want to do something that jeopardizes the whole group because it is bigger than us. At the end of the day we've got three cars in the fight still. There's nothing that matters more than putting a Team Penske car in Victory Lane.

As much as I want that to be, believe me I do, I will work to be that person, we also have to just make sure we remember that it's about all of us and it's about all the effort we put in. We have to make sure one car secures the championship.

It's just a balance. We're just going to race like we always do. Hopefully it doesn't turn ugly at some point.

Q. What did you think when you saw Malukas coming?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I thought wow, that kid is hungry probably. Probably send it around the outside if he had an opportunity.

Q. And he did on McLaughlin.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I bet he did. I didn't quite see that, but I assumed it was what happened.

I was real happy it was the last lap (smiling).

Q. Do you think he would have had anything for you with one more lap?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Hard to say. I think he would have had a shot. There is no doubt. He was a little better on tires it sounds like. I think McLaughlin went loose. I was not. I was sort of managing the gap. I was actually trying to help Scott. I didn't want to stay too far away to bunch Scott up to David, so I was trying to push the pace a bit. But I still had some on hand.

I think if David mounted like a real effort on me, I would have had more to push on him. But I don't know. 10 more laps, maybe he gets me. It's impossible to say. I think time worked out for us.

Q. This is a hypothetical. If he does get to you, you're in this championship battle, are you at all nervous with a rookie, what's he going to do to get his first win?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yes, sometimes. Yeah, for sure, when you see rookies, I think you definitely are a bit more cautious or reserved or at least you're second-guessing what you think you should be doing.

I would give Malukas a lot of respect. He's probably been one of the cleanest rookies I've ever seen. He's been almost too respectful. They talk about that on the broadcast. It's funny to watch back. Malukas, he puts his elbows out, Townsend keeps saying that. Poor David. He's been doing a great job.

It is true that if you're too respectful you can get run over in this series. I said that in Nashville. I didn't say it in joking fashion. That's how people race these days. You have to put your elbows out, you got to fight people now. If you don't, they're going to fight you back and you're going to end up passed or in the wall.

He's just been like the most respectful driver I've seen out of a rookie in a long time. I think he's starting to, How much can I push on people? He probably would have done that tonight. But I would have felt comfortable racing with him. I think he's the best rookie I've seen in a long time to be racing respectfully.

Q. What changed from last year to this year with yellows? How much more does that impress you it was just the one yellow for the one bit of contact?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: For sure the track improved. Like I said earlier, I think the second lane session was helpful. There was not as much marbles. Normally what you would see from the wrecks in the previous years if you touched the second lane, touched it with your outside tire, let alone getting a whole car out there, you're skating off and getting sent into the wall. That didn't happen tonight.

You could get up there and you could make a mistake, end up in the second lane, recover the car. A lot of what you saw I think was better track conditions. For whatever reason, I think some of it is that second session that we ran, the second lane was more forgiving tonight. People didn't get bit as often.

Q. The rain earlier today, wash off all the rubber from yesterday's sessions?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Not much. Maybe a little bit. It's funny, when the whole track is clean, the second lane is

actually better in some respects because it's not as polished. You haven't had people run up there a lot so the aggregate is a bit more rough. When you have a rough surface, it can sometimes be conducive to grip. When you polish a surface, it can be less conducive to grip.

Yeah, the rain wasn't a big deal I guess is what I would say.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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