

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, September 3, 2022

Josef Newgarden

Scott McLaughlin

Will Power

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to Portland International Raceway, wrapping up qualifying. It's 1-2-3 in qualifying for Team Penske with Scott McLaughlin leading the way.

We're now joined by five-time winner this season, just a couple points out of the championship, Josef Newgarden qualifying second. He'll start seventh.

How close were you at the end of the day?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Super close. I just didn't execute my last lap very well. Had two big mistakes. So definitely caught us out. Didn't give ourselves a good opportunity to get the pole there.

It was a good, strong run for everyone at Team Penske. I think we're all pretty satisfied with that. Three cars in the top three. We've been that way all weekend for the most part.

It's a testament to our team. They've done a great job. We were here last week. They work hard, all the engineers and mechanics. Very gratifying for everybody to have this speed on our cars.

THE MODERATOR: The testing you did here a week ago, it seems to be paying off big-time for this team.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I would say so. It's paid dividends up to this point. Tomorrow is what matters, so we'll see how beneficial it really was at the end of the weekend. So far we're pleased with what we got out of it.

THE MODERATOR: General thoughts about starting further back than what you expected to, maybe what you can expect going into turn one tomorrow.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know what to tell you honestly. It's different every year. Hopefully it's nothing

too bad. It can be chaotic here and we'll just have to wait and see.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How important is it for you to be starting where you are, given the likes of Scott Dixon and Marcus Ericsson are out of position for the race?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it's so hard to say. I don't know. I mean, more times than not this year is been good to start in the back. I think it's impossible to say if it's good or not, being where we're at, until we get to the end of tomorrow.

I feel like our cars are fast which is a key ingredient to putting together a good race. That brings a lot of confidence.

Q. How different was the track with it being cloudy and cool? Do you think you still have a good car for tomorrow with it being warmer?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think we actually had more of an advantage yesterday when it was hot, oddly enough. We felt like we were going to be good when it cooled off. Seems like it brought everyone more close together.

Definitely very different balances. Judging off yesterday and today, that's promising for us.

Q. Starting back in eighth instead of where you qualified today, is there anything you can do, do you prepare for this race differently starting where you are instead of the second row?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't think so. Not yet. Not off the top of my head. We're going to run a similar race to what we'd do if we were up front in the first row.

Yeah, not off the top of my head. These races change very quickly dependent upon what happens. Until we see what happens, it's going to be hard to really strategize around the unknown.

You just got to be flexible.



Q. Starting on the outside versus the inside, I've heard guys saying the inside is a better place to be. Do you feel there's anything to that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, again, it's hard to know. I would think it would be better to be on the inside, but depending on where you are where the crash is happening, it could be good or bad, inside or out.

I'm not sure. I'm just hoping we get a clean run through turn one, regardless, though.

Q. I think Will said that he feels like turn one is the toughest in the series. Do you feel like that's correct?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's definitely the most unpredictable, I can tell you that. When it goes according to plan, it's fine. More times than not, that doesn't happen.

Yeah, it's for sure the most unpredictable.

Q. Your thoughts on the fact even though it would be a long struggle for him to fight for the championship, how possible is it for a guy 54 points out to get in the mix of it over two races?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it's wide open, if you're asking me. That's my opinion. I've seen this thing change completely one race to the next. I wouldn't rule anything out at this point.

I think Scott's well within the championship fight, looking at his points situation. I think he's a championship contender through and through. He has been all year.

I wouldn't rule anything out. I think we all have to be on our game. At the end of the day we feel really good about being together and having fast cars. I think the team has done an amazing job to give us these great cars to fight with. Should give us an opportunity as a team to push forward tomorrow.

Q. Can all three of you sweep the top three positions in the championship?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Anything is possible. Absolutely. I mean, of course it's possible. Of course. There's no doubt.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Anything is possible, Bruce.

WILL POWER: It can happen.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We're good, man.

Q. Would you say one of the keys to your resurgence as a team this year has been qualifying?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No, not just qualifying. I think it's been a team effort through and through.

When you look at the individuals within the team, I'm talking everybody, whether it's the 3, the 12, the 2, across the board, the engineers, the mechanics, there's just a deep amount of talent. I think it's only been strengthened. When you look at the talent across the board, the way we're interacting, it's only been strengthened this year. It's raised the whole program.

I think that's why you see Team Penske as a whole being very lifted this year because it's good across the board. That's due to all the hard work from everybody.

Q. Josef and Will, how scary is turn one going to be considering where you are in the points?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know. It could be (indiscernible) or scary. We'll see.

Q. Will, you watch the USF2000 races. Add any extra fear?

WILL POWER: Those guys are starting real late. I don't think that's a key. (Indiscernible) was taken out twice, two races in a row, lost the championship. If they don't want to crash, out of 12.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL POWER: Yeah, yeah, I mean, just means that people got green through 12, lift, spread things out, most of the field.

Yeah, such a bad corner. Such an inviting, wide corner. Not ideal for the second-to-last race of the season.

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Scott McLaughlin, a three-time pole winner this year. As well, we are joined by Will Power, who bumps up to the front row with a sixth front row start here in 2022.

Scott, your thoughts about pole number three this season.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, really happy day. I knew coming in we had pretty strong race cars for Team Penske. It was just really going to be if we all do a good job getting to the Fast Six, then we're battling each other. That's sort of what happened.

I set our session up because we did one lap less on our



red tire in Q1 which really helped. I did a pretty solid lap on my first flyer. Having that little fresher tire helped.

I think my car got a little bit worse as the quallie went on. We managed to cue it up for turn three and managed to do a good enough lap for pole.

Freightliner's home race here in Portland. I went and saw them during the week. That was cool. Everyone is pumped. A lot of people here.

THE MODERATOR: There's a race within the race with you and Will Power. You now have the lead.

WILL POWER: I didn't even know that.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I didn't tell you (laughter).

WILL POWER: I didn't even know that was a thing.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: That's cool. Anytime you beat Will in qualifying, it's a good thing.

THE MODERATOR: More questions.

Q. Will, when Scott came over here, there was such expectations for him after what he did in Australia. This year he's living up to those. To add a driver the caliber of him to the lineup you've had to face throughout your career, how much does that make your job even more difficult?

WILL POWER: Yeah, always at Penske, you have tough teammates. I have to say, this is probably the best group of drivers that have been there, the toughest, which we really push each other along.

Yeah, it's a strong combination. As you can see in the championship, really the whole season, yeah, it shows what having drivers push each other does.

Q. Scott, when you were racking up wins and titles in Australia Supercars, what was your recollection and thought of Will Power, what a legend he is here in INDYCAR? What it's like now to have him as your teammate in a championship battle?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Will is the only one on the team which actually understands me, which is a fantastic thing. Our relationship is quite good because of that (smiling).

When I was growing up watching Will, in the Team Australia Champ Car, street surface, he was a second quicker than anyone around Surfers Paradise. Some of the laps, what he's done across the sport of INDYCAR, it's

crazy. That's why he's the all-time polesitter, leading the championship.

Yeah, like Will said, I think we've got a really good group at Penske in terms of pushing each other. Not only that, we get along. There's a trust level. We trust each other's feedback. We ask each other, What do you think of this, did you get a good lap. We're continually pushing each other. I think that's what a team needs.

I think we've got a really good balance, competitive, but respectful balance there. Yeah, I think that's what's really helping. Plus all three cars, the crew and everyone is working together really nice. Just a good vibe right now.

It does help when you're fast, yes. But I think as a group, we are just really bonding. I can't see it slowing down. We're going to just keep working. There's a lot of motivation there to continue to do that.

Q. Will, Scott Dixon starts 16th and Marcus Ericsson is 18th. Does that ease your mind at all or is it still...

WILL POWER: It's a very tight championship. If you watched INDYCAR, which you have a lot, you can never feel just safe that you've qualified well because it can just switch. As you saw last year, Palou and Dixon were pretty much at the back, and they came to finish first-second or first-third.

It all depends if there's a yellow at the start. If there is no yellow at the start, which would be a miracle, if they start where they're talking about, if there's not a yellow, it doesn't push it towards that two-stop strategy. You don't get guys at the back topping off, making it a difficult race.

If it goes green, it becomes more of a straightforward race, a track position race. Makes it harder for those guys back there.

We're hoping it stays green. That's best for us.

Q. Have y'all given input about what should happen with the start?

WILL POWER: We gave them input at the Christmas meetings. We suggested that they start on the back straight. I'm not sure where the starting extremely late came from.

I could understand you don't get the tow effects, getting up to speed to get a tow effect. If you had half the field in turn 12 when you went green, that's half the cars that are spreading out. Might be better to go really early.

THE MODERATOR: I think we might hear something by the end of the day. Stand by on that.

Q. Off topic slightly. Last night I noticed there's an Aussie Rules Football game on.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Which one? Was it the final?

Q. Maybe.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: My team lost this morning so I'm not too happy about that. We were leading points but we lost it.

This has pumped me back up a little bit.

WILL POWER: I never met someone who watches so much sport. He watches soccer. You watch rugby?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: American football.

Q. Did either one of you play that growing up?

WILL POWER: I played Rugby League. I never played AFL. I don't even know the rules of AFL. It's a much better game, rugby.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I played Rugby Union when I was younger. I was getting bashed up. I needed to focus on my racing career, so I gave that up.

Q. How beneficial was the test that you had at Portland?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think just being able to rock up here with a philosophy that you believe in, then just massaging it throughout the weekend has been vital.

We weren't stellar here last year as a team. We called this test early in the year that we were going to come here. So, yeah, hopefully we get to Laguna and our cars aren't too bad, we made the right choice coming here, focusing on that.

Yeah, it's been vital in terms of being able to get a nice base, then like I said massaging it and getting better as a driver, pushing the limits.

I think going 1-2-3 in qualifying was a good test of that.

Q. Will, when things were a bit tougher for Penske, the captain's moral of hard work equals rewards. The hard work is now starting to pay off for Team Penske, isn't it?

WILL POWER: Yeah. Honestly, like, nothing much has changed on the road and street course side of things. The thing that we worked on hardest was the Indy 500.

Honestly, last year we just had a lot of kind of weird, unfortunate circumstances that resulted in the team not getting many wins. This year just seems like we're executing on all fronts, in the pits, on strategy, obviously car setups.

Really we haven't found something magical. It's just doing solid work. Probably having Scott in his second year helps as well, another guy giving feedback, good data with his driving. As a group, as a whole, we're stronger on all aspects, but nothing magical was found. We didn't really go into last season saying we were off the pace. We just had kind of a bad year.

Q. Will, you said you felt like turn one here was either the toughest or most unpredictable that you run in the series. What is it about this turn that's made it so tough to get through green without major incidents?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's a super wide straight that leads into a first-gear corner. It's similar to Indianapolis. Honestly, at Indianapolis road course the same thing happens. But, yeah, this one in particular.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think it's just grass at Indy.

WILL POWER: Yeah, there's a bit of grass to go off.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: There's no grass here.

WILL POWER: You have cement.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Invite the people to just bomb their way through. Now that the chicane is harder to get through. I saw VeeKay in front of me going in, came out behind me. There's no advantage now.

WILL POWER: Yeah. Someone is going to get a good run, I've got a good run. There's always room on the inside. They're used to braking on the very outside of the track. It's super wide. Obviously your 90 degrees is going to be much sharper. You're going to have to brake much earlier than you have been. I think that's most of the issue.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We banged on about it for two weeks. Oh, I found grip. Go down to the inside. You might do something. I might do something like that.

WILL POWER: You don't know, yeah. You can't tell other people, Just be careful. It could be yourself (laughter).

Q. Scott, I know it seems like from seeing a couple tweets from you, interviews, you've taken some motivation people feeling like you're counted out of this, even though you're still alive. Is that kind of an actual thing that you feel like is driving you right now or something you've been acknowledging but not taking it to heart?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's exactly that. Basically for me and my Twitter, I just take the piss out of everything.

Mathematically I'm still in it. When you say there's only five contenders, it's wrong. The best part about it right now that we've got for INDYCAR, what we should be celebrating, is how close it is between Josef, Will.

I don't count myself out of it, no. I think anything can happen. If I win tomorrow, who knows what happens. We'll find out. It's going to be fun.

Q. What kind of gap do you have to chisel down for mom and dad to make it out to Laguna next weekend?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I don't know. They said they might make it out. I don't think they will. I think dad is hanging out at home. I think he's just going to watch at home on TV. He sees more there anywhere.

Q. Scott, you have your own dynamic with Josef as one of the Bus Bros. You're dynamic with Will is different. He's the senior driver, elder statesman. What is your relationship like? He's won a championship before, so has Josef. His longevity, it's very impressive. Do you kind of look up to him a little bit as the team leader?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think, absolutely. He's definitely the oldest one.

But, no, he's a very nice fella. We have plenty of laughs. Like I said before, we all get along. In the bus, hang out. We always park next to each other. Me and Josef do this Bus Bros thing. It wasn't like we were trying to separate ourselves.

Yeah, look, it's one of those deals where I think I've got great teammates to lean off. I couldn't have asked for two better blokes to help me get better through the off-season.

There were times I rang Will after a race, I said, I don't know what I'm doing.

He's like, No, come in, every rookie season is hard, things change, things will go up and down but it will click.

That's a testament to the bloke he is, the bloke Josef is. There's no hiding. We're competitive. We probably do hide a couple things from each other, but at the same time it's just that competitiveness. There's respect. I think we all have that for each other.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: No. I think my dog is his favorite.

WILL POWER: Yeah, the dog (smiling).

Q. I noticed the two of you do speak a different language. Do you get caught on that?

WILL POWER: What is that?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: He says we speak a different language when we're together.

WILL POWER: I guess we talk a bit Aussie when we're together.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: He laughs.

WILL POWER: I've been over here so long, it's refreshing to hear Australian things.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Heaps.

WILL POWER: I've got heaps of grip, man (laughter).

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We're having fun. Having a laugh. Sweet.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks.

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