

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Friday, September 9, 2022

Will Power

Josef Newgarden

Scott Dixon

Marcus Ericsson

Scott McLaughlin

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Wrapping up day one for the Firestone Grand Prix of Monterrey which comes up on Sunday. We'll begin with the driver of the Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet who leads the points standings by 20 over the other five, seventh quick in practice today. A lot of time out on the track once you guys were able to get out on the track. Give us your thoughts on the day.

WILL POWER: Yeah, so everyone had to wait because the tires degrade so much. So yeah, got good runs. Had some good stuff. The car is in the window. Yeah, not much more to say, man. Yeah, got to keep working hard. Got to be out front.

THE MODERATOR: When you look at the standings, obviously it's kind of spread throughout. Your teammate was first, Scott was 11th, Scott Dixon was further back. What do you make of that, if anything?

WILL POWER: What's that, the spread?

THE MODERATOR: Guys just trying to figure it out?

WILL POWER: It's very difficult to tell. I don't know.

Q. When the tires degrade, do the speeds drop off dramatically, or does the car get really slick?

WILL POWER: The speed?

Q. Do the speeds drop dramatically?

WILL POWER: Yeah, there's just a lot of grip, much slower in the corner.

Q. And then it becomes a real handful to hold on to the car?

WILL POWER: Yeah, not necessarily such a handful, it's just you've got to lower the speed to make the corner. It's not necessarily like terrible, but yeah, just the actual overall grip just drops significantly.

Q. Does that mean we may not see the leader dominate like we have the last couple of races here?

WILL POWER: I think it's similar. I think it's similar to how it's been. Nothing much has changed. Yeah, it's similar.

Q. Are you anticipating strategy will be similar? There was some talk, Townsend was suggesting maybe a four-stop race.

WILL POWER: Yeah, that's definitely possible. There's enough degradation for that. We'll have to see in warmup when you actually do a full run what it is, but yes.

Q. If you guys had more tires, would you go out --

WILL POWER: We would run, yes. We've asked. We keep asking. We would run if they gave us some more tires, but they don't.

Q. It just seems like for the championship race that you guys should have that opportunity --

WILL POWER: We tried. We tried a month ago. Yeah. They just don't do it.

Q. We saw a lot of people dropping wheels off and a lot of sand getting dragged on to the track from three, four, five. How long does it take the sticky reds to kind of clear that off? If someone does that in qualifying, it could ruin both of you guys' lap?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's a hard situation. It's not ideal. That could certainly ruin your lap, certainly.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by the driver of the Hitachi Team Penske Chevrolet, second in points, Josef Newgarden, first in practice. Your thoughts on your day?



JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, just a tricky session. As was just asked, there was a lot of people going off, there was a lot of dirt on the track, so it was quite difficult to put it together. So not a very straightforward session. But I think very productive in a lot of ways.

It's not a lot of running, and you're trying to make the most use of just a couple runs, and I felt like we did that, so I was happy about that.

But obviously early days in the weekend for us and the Hitachi car.

Q. Will, you definitely have seemed like a changed person. Some people have called you "Chill Will" this year. Does that have anything to do with changing your race strategist to Ron Ruzewski? Has that influenced you do you think, or is it just from maturity?

WILL POWER: No, it's just you get older, you've been around a long time and things often don't go right. No, Ron is pretty good on the radio, too. He's a calm guy, never gets -- he's always pretty monotone and just gives me the information I need. So yeah, he's pretty good.

Q. For both of you, is the tire deg about the same as it was last year or is it a lot worse this year compared to last year?

WILL POWER: I think the track isn't quite as good because you didn't have IMSA here the week before, but the deg is very similar.

Q. And you don't feel like it was a disadvantage to not test here?

WILL POWER: Well, it would have been an advantage to test here. Clearly if we had the day we would have, but we just didn't, so we took it at Portland because we struggled there last year.

Q. What has the hot temperature done in terms of -- has it affected you in terms of preparing for your time on track?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: The hot temperatures? Yeah, not necessarily. I mean, today didn't seem as bad as yesterday. It seemed a lot warmer here yesterday out at the track.

No, it's the same for everybody, so we'll read the conditions today and adjust for tomorrow with however it changes. But I don't think it's affected us too bad.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by the driver of the No. 3

XPEL Team Penske Chevrolet in Scott McLaughlin; Marcus Ericsson, the Indy 500 champion, also joining us in the Huski Chocolate Chip Ganassi Racing Honda.

Q. Scott, there's a lot of talk about this tire degradation and everything. I'd like to know if the track was resurfaced because there's been talk of resurfacing this track, how quick is the impact in terms of what that does to how the tires perform? Is it the next year it's fantastic again, or does it take time to rubber back up?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think the pace will be up, obviously, but it's going to be interesting like when this resurface is done and when we get here because a place like this degrades over time, and I think we might -- yeah, might be resurfaced, but there's a lot of cars that run on this track outside of our series, so I think it all depends on sort of when people run and how many people run here, but I think it's definitely going to be better in some ways.

I tend to like -- I'm actually really enjoying the way that you've got to drive the car. I think it's -- I'm kind of low key sad that they're going to resurface because it's kind of fun, and you've really got to think about the pitch of the car and what you're doing with the car and stuff like that. Yeah, it is what it is, and resurfacing will be good for the longevity of the track, but I'd like to just keep running on the old stuff.

Q. Will, I just wondered with the high tire deg that we're getting on the reds and the number of cars that went off in that practice session, do you feel that the race is going to be impacted by a lot of yellows that will then determine your strategy?

WILL POWER: Actually it hasn't historically been a very yellow race. It's a good question. It's hard to say. Nothing has really changed. You would think it would be a normal race, but you never know in this game. It can be a lot of yellows, so we'll just have to see.

Q. I wanted to ask Josef about the deficit in practice in terms of how far ahead you were. Do you feel that's sort of representative of what might happen in qualifying tomorrow? Has it given you any extra confidence in terms of what might happen?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's hard to say. I didn't even really put together my best lap, and I'm sure that was the case for the majority of the field. It's always hard to read off the first session. I think we'll tighten up tomorrow.

But just the early read is good. I felt like we made really good use of our short time that we had today and short set of tires that we had. We didn't have a lot to work off of. So



I feel good early, but I feel like it's early days.

Q. Marcus, I've seen you do a lot of racing on delicate tires on the Pirellis in Formula 1. Is that to your advantage when the tires are falling off very quickly here, and how do you sort of drive these tires? Do you push until you come to the cliff or do you manage them as you used to do in Formula 1?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I'm hoping it's going to be a high-deg race, and it seems to be that way. Usually our team and myself from my experience, we're usually pretty good at that. Yeah, the tires seemed to degrade quite quickly here. It was the same in the test and the same today in practice.

I think in the race as a driver, I think you have to think about it and sort of figure out a way to get the stint length that you are planning. It's going to be quite tricky, I think. Depending a bit on the weather, as well. It seems to be coming in some colder weather, and that might change things, make the tires last a bit better.

But at least from what I saw today, I think it's going to be quite a tricky race for all of us, and also people are going off left, right, center, and there's sand on the track, and it's quite tricky to run lap to lap, to stay on track, because it's so challenging out there.

Q. For the three Team Penske drivers, when you get to this point where all three of you are fighting for a championship, do the debriefs or the engineering meetings, I don't want to say get tense, but do you guys kind of get distant with each other or maybe less chummy?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Do you watch Bus Bros? Did you see the one today? We Rick-rolled everyone.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: (Singing) Never gonna give you up....

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think we're pretty good. We have fun. We might box on later, but it'll be fun.

Q. But as far as the sit-down --

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it's a nasty situation. Nasty debrief room. Don't like each other.

No, we get along well all of us, and so do the team. I think that's a strength of ours at Team Penske is we really are -- we're all competitive. We all want to win. But we're a unit, and everybody works together.

You get the benefit of that. You could pop any one of us in any of these cars and they'd all do the same thing. That's how good each group is. So we work really well together.

WILL POWER: Yeah, no, it's a good combination as you can see.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think having not tested here, we're going to have to really talk together and work together to try and make sure we're all up front because limited laps and availabilities.

Q. Do you feel surrounded right now?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, Dixon didn't -- he left me on my own here. He just bailed out.

Q. Marcus, you said that the race would be trickier probably strategy-wise because of the tire degradation. Will that have any impact on qualifying or is the starting position as important as it ever is or the fact that strategies can be really divergent, will you approach qualifying a little bit differently?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I think always depth of the field qualify as high as possible to help you on race day. With that said, I think the race, there are going to be opportunities, I think, with strategies to sort of mix things up, and also if and when the yellow falls can really flip the field.

Let's put it this way: I don't think it's as important with qualifying compared to last weekend in Portland because there it was really a track position race. I think here you're going to be able to make positions. If you have a car and a car that can take care of the tires and a driver that can do that, I think you can move up through the field.

But yeah, let's see when we get to race day. It's going to get more rubber on the track, and if the temperature drops, it might be a bit different then.

Q. Other than going into the Turn 1-2 combination, where else is a good place to pass on this track?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Anywhere the opportunity presents itself. With a high-deg race like this, it could be anywhere. I think that's how you have to approach it.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I think if someone is out of tires you can pass anywhere on the track, and it seemed to be corkscrew last year seemed to be a good spot where you can bounce people off there it seemed like. We'll see.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

