

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, September 10, 2022

Josef Newgarden

Scott Dixon

Marcus Ericsson

Scott McLaughlin

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up qualifying for tomorrow's Firestone Grand Prix of Monterrey. Again, Will Power will start from pole. He'll be in here momentarily.

Josef Newgarden, driving the Hitachi Team Penske Chevrolet, second in points, will start 25th tomorrow; Scott Dixon, just 20 points back, will start 13th in the PNC Bank Chip Ganassi Racing Honda; Marcus Ericsson, fourth in points, will start 10th in the Huski Chocolate Chip Ganassi Racing Honda; and Scott McLaughlin, fifth in points, will start eighth tomorrow in the XPEL Team Penske Chevrolet.

Josef, we all saw what happened there in the corkscrew. How devastating starting back, or do you start already thinking about going off strategy and maybe the opportunities that might present themselves tomorrow?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, obviously it's not over yet, but it was an unfortunate session for us. Tough to make a mistake like that. I don't know that we've -- it's been a long time since we've had one of those in qualifying, but it's happened now, and obviously didn't put us in a good position for tomorrow, but we're going to make the most of it, like we always do, on the No. 2 car.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, third in a row, tied with Newgarden in points, 13th place starting position. Unfortunately you started back a little bit this year, but you've also made up a lot of positions à la what happened at Portland. What do you guys have in store tomorrow do you think?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it'll definitely be interesting. I think with my red run, kind of just the 14 never really went. I didn't manage the gap that well, and when I started the lap, the fronts were just not ready to go, so that was definitely frustrating.

I think had we had another lap or timed it a bit better, I think we would have been totally fine. It is what it is. We're starting kind of in the middle there.

Strategy I think will be key tomorrow. I think we've seen a lot of people go off track. Cautions could be coming maybe. Starts are always interesting here, and then also I think with tire deg, especially with the red tire, I think it's definitely going to be a different race than what we saw last year.

As Josef said, it's never over until it's over. We've seen that many a times this year, and we'll do what we can, and if we can have a bit of luck go our way, it'll be pretty helpful.

Congrats to Will. That was impressive and a cool milestone that he's just nailed there, so congratulations.

THE MODERATOR: Marcus, your thoughts on 10th place starting position tomorrow.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, it's okay. I think we had a bit of a messy session obviously Q1 there with the red flag and one lap. We just got through.

The car did feel pretty good, though, so was feeling quite confident I think Q2.

I think on used reds we were right up there P3, and on new reds I think it was on a different strategy to most other people. We were going on the first lap pushing, and I was catching a few cars that was doing sort of a preparation lap.

Just hard when you're out of sync. You're so focused and under the limit of the car, and then you catch traffic and you don't know what they're doing, if they're giving you the track or if they're staying in the racing line or not.

Caught quite a few cars there towards the end of the lap and then got a bit close to another car into the corkscrew and had a spin, and then these tires are pretty sensitive; you have a spin and you lose a bit of edge of them. Yeah, P10 was okay, but I think there was definitely more speed in the car.



THE MODERATOR: You made up a spot, I believe, after the penalty, losing the fastest lap, going back out. You were still able to move up a spot or two there.

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I think we had good speed in the car, but yeah, bit of a mess at the end of Q2 there, unfortunately.

Yeah, we can still -- P10 is still a decent spot to start from. I think the race is going to be super interesting tomorrow with the tires and different strategies in place, so I think it's going to be, yeah, very interesting to both watch and drive tomorrow, so I'm looking forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, your thoughts on starting eighth?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I think from where I was, especially this morning, my car just really wasn't that good, and we made some big changes before qualifying, and it was really good. A similar story to Marcus. I feel like maybe if I had just done the lap, I could have been in the Fast Six. I feel like I was definitely fast enough.

But yeah, I feel like we've done the right thing with certain tires and strategy-wise for that sort of stuff. Hopefully puts us in good stead for tomorrow. Eighth is not all too bad. I'm excited to start from there and see what we've got.

Q. Watching Will on screen there with Mario, was that frustrating knowing y'all are in the title hunt, or was it okay?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We all want pole, but I think at the same time it's an incredible milestone. The guy has wanted it probably almost more than a championship, so yeah, just happy for him to get it.

Q. Josef, can you take me through -- I don't know if you've had a chance to diagnose it yet or watch the video, what happened as you were going down through the corkscrew there on that spin?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's just a mistake. I turned in too early and I hit the curb. As soon as I hit the curb, I was all out of sorts. You can hit that second one in the bottom, but if you touch the first one it's going to send the car in a mess.

Kind of a simple error and a very sad error, so you know, we were done pretty early today.

Q. Josef and Scott Dixon, you were talking, Scott, about maybe this gives you a chance to flip the strategy. I would presume it's the same for you. Do

you approach it like we can just stop more often, especially with the tire deg, like this could be an opportunity in a way?

SCOTT DIXON: I think having started where we have a few times this year, you generally have more options. The leaders can kind of get locked in, and I know having been in that position before, you kind of -- sometimes you're a bit of a sitting duck.

We'll see how that plays. I think the tire thing is kind of a bit of an unknown, even though we've all run them and think we have a pretty good understanding. It may change a little bit.

Yeah, I feel like the guys mid-pack and back kind of always have more options than the front rows.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I've had it happen more times than not this year where starting up front didn't work out, at least not perfectly as you'd plan it. I would welcome it working from the back, for whatever reason. If something mysteriously happens and it's like, wow, you actually wanted to start in the back? I would be very appreciative to have the other end of this argument --

SCOTT DIXON: That sounds good.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Sounds great. I'd love it.

I mean, look, I've seen it -- there's so many races I've been in this year where I was like, should we have just started in the back? We'll see if that's the right thing for tomorrow.

Q. Saying that the tire degradation is still sort of unknown, will the warmup be the determinant? Will you have a good sense after the warmup how the stints can go and if you can go four stops or whatever?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. I guess we could because we have two sets of reds. I don't know. I think most people save their tires. I think we were even saving tires in qualifying today, so I think that kind of gives you a bit of an insight on where people think it's going to go. Could be as many stops as the Indy 500 this year.

Q. I'm going to take you slightly off topic here. Final Supercar meeting at Pukekohe this weekend. I just wanted to know one thought from you each an what Pukekohe means to you in your careers. I know McLaughlin it was your first Supercar win and of course Scott D the famous cushion thing, but do you have another memory other than those ones?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, the cushion was a good one. I think my first memory actually was the very first time when I was trying to get my license at the age of 13 and I was driving a Suzuki Swift around there with a steward to sign me off. A family of ducks actually were walking through Turn 1, and I avoided the ducks and nearly rolled the car.

But he still gave me my license. I don't know, it was a fond memory.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: For me, it's probably my first ever win in Supercars. That was my -- awesome place to win your first race. At home, as well. But yeah, it sucks that it's going because it's a great track.

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