

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Josef Newgarden

Stefan Wilson

Ryan Hunter-Reay

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have Stef Wilson, who is back going for his fifth start in the Indianapolis 500 next month. His third straight. Also great to see Ryan Hunter-Reay back, as well.

We'll start with Stef. Welcome back to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Pretty good day for the team today?

STEFAN WILSON: Yeah, no, really good day for us. To get through the pressure and I think I did 140 laps today, I did a lot more than I thought we were going to get done today with how windy we expected it to be, how windy it got.

Yeah, really positive start. It's nice to be in a positive window. The car's in a decent window right now. I think we need to refine it, but we're not throwing the kitchen sink at it. That's good place to be.

THE MODERATOR: Were you checking boxes going through the program? Maybe get some time tomorrow. Did you get everything done you wanted to?

STEFAN WILSON: Yeah, absolutely. I think so. We didn't actually expect any running tomorrow. We tried to crowd it all in today. If tomorrow happens, then that's a bonus.

Really appreciate all the work that Dreyer & Reinbold have done. All the crew have done an amazing job to prepare the cars, have them do 140 laps today after not running a lap since the Indy 500 last year. Hats off to them.

It was nice to be back after a year, as well. I didn't sleep well last night thinking about what was ahead of me today. It's kind of like riding a bike, you get back in and everything starts to make sense again.

Yeah, thank you to Chevrolet, as well. They've done a really good job with the package coming into the month.

Excited to be with this whole program.

THE MODERATOR: Ryan, you've been gone a couple years now. Is it like riding a bike here?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I only missed one Indy 500 (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back. How was it today?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It was great. The first proper run out, felt like a kid going down a ramp, that feeling of just pure excitement. It was great. I absolutely couldn't wait to do it.

But, no, it's great. Like Stef said, the team has done a great job preparing these cars. Really happy to be joining Team Chevy again. We have a lot of great history together not only the sports car side with GM, Cadillac and everything, but winning a championship together back in 2012. I have a lot of good friends there. Look forward to working with them. It's something that I'm definitely going to take the time and the most of.

Working with the team, it's been excellent. Today we were going through some pretty big-ticket stuff, big-ticket items with the wind and everything. With the starting that refresher deal was really strange, I didn't like that part. Wanted to get through that as fast as possible. Like eating your vegetables as a kid. Not fun, but got through it fast. Yeah, after that, I had a blast.

THE MODERATOR: Worst vegetables when you were growing up?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: When I was a kid, definitely broccoli. With my kids too now. I love messing with them on that.

THE MODERATOR: Josef Newgarden P1 today. Josef, good day for the team, good day for you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Great day. Really great day. I wish it was like race day today. But you don't get to choose those. You got to show up on that day and be really good. I told the team, if this was race day, don't

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touch it. It was very good.

Sometimes have you that around here. Sometimes you show up and sometimes the cars is just great. Sometimes you got to work on it. Today was one of those really good days. We got through a list as well, we learned a lot, which is always positive.

Sometimes you can go in circles around here, sometimes you're inefficient. Today as a team I felt like we were very efficient with time, split it up, divided and conquered. Really happy for Team Penske today and feeling good next month for the Shell car.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Ryan, what do the changes on this car feel like?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, I was expecting a little bit more with the downforce adds that are offered to us. I was expecting a little bit more grip. It was similar.

The real wild card today was the wind, right? Guys were kind of balloon footing it out of two at times. You never knew who was on the new tires. I was getting some really good runs on some guys. You just really never knew. It was a weird day in that aspect.

Yeah, I'm not sure. There's added bottom side downforce, which I would think would help. I mean, Josef looked super strong out there. There were a few others. Passes were not coming as easily amongst the whole group, as easily as they kind of do here when you're the second or third car back.

Q. You can't really compare it to 2014?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: 2014, no. It's not quite like that, no. I would have to really withhold judgment until I can have a day without 20 mile-an-hour winds.

Q. Dennis Reinbold always brings really fast cars here. Good drivers in the past. To be teammates together on a team that just focuses on running the Indy 500, is that an advantage? Does that help?

STEFAN WILSON: Yeah, I mean, I think there's pros and cons. I think the advantage is we're not hustling back from Long Beach to get to this test and we're just focused on that. The cons are that we're not running full-time, so we have to build up to everything again.

But the benefit is that Indy, we've got 11 days of on-track activity before race day. It's not like we're showing up and doing Long Beach one time, where it's two practice

sessions at 45 minutes, whatever it is. I think that allows us to minimize the impact of the negatives.

I think the positives are that we've been rubbing on the cars and getting them ready for this event for a couple of months now.

I know other teams do that, as well. We're really hungry. I think every single person on the team lives and breathes for the Indy 500. Just like Ryan, myself, we're all laser focused on the 500.

Q. Josef, when you were up here earlier today you just finished basically shaking the car down for a couple hours. Now that you had a chance to go out, how does the car feel, how do the aero bits feel different than before? How much will it help the package?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think Ryan's sort of assessment is similar to where I'm at on it. It was a tricky day. Very, very tricky. It wasn't cold. This was a relatively warm day. The wind was pretty gusty. It wasn't just that it was 20 mile-an-hour winds, it was gusting at times pretty aggressively.

Very difficult to assess year over year. It seems like for sure there's a small benefit already to be able to follow relative to last year. I think some of that is just going to be the extra downforce that's on the car.

But we've not explored everything. We've only had one day here. That's really not enough to get through all the configurations.

It remains to be seen exactly how this new package will race. I thought some guys looked really good, including these two. I thought they looked pretty sharp out there.

Let's see. It's very, very early. It's so difficult to predict this stuff until you get into the meat of the month of May. We need a little bit more time.

Q. How did you feel physically in the car? Pains, aches?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No, it was great. Any time you go to an oval for the first time, it could be for the first time in a few weeks, in a month, the first few laps you're kind of tensed up a little bit, leaning into the corner. You can feel your whole body leaning in. It's not necessary to do, but just you're on the edge that way.

Once you get into it a little bit, you start relaxing on the corner of the car. I got into that a little bit quickly. Like Josef said, it was uncomfortable, it was unpredictable at

times. You do three laps in a row going through tree and four, no problem, then all of a sudden you'd have a big one on the nose. It would come out of nowhere. You're questioning was that car balance, a gust. Tricky day to have the first day back, no doubt about it.

All in all, the car was great. Car fit was great. I didn't change one thing inside the car fit from the time I started. I was very happy with that. Team did a great job on it.

Q. Stef?

STEFAN WILSON: I felt great. I did 140 laps, but I felt like I could have done 200, 300, 400, 500 laps (smiling).

No, I felt good. I focused on being even fitter coming into this month. It's nice to have a few extra months to prepare. I think last year I'd given up hope that I was going to be in the race. Maybe relaxed after the training. May 1st I was like, Oh, we're going to do the 500.

The training program was a lot more extensive this year, so that's helped for sure. I've actually got a bruise on my little pinky toe just off the throttle pedal. Something on the driver fit. We'll address that tonight. It's just on my toe right here. We're going to fix that, don't worry (laughter).

It's good when it's like that, the thing we can focus on. Who knew we'd be talking about that (laughter).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Like my index nail is very sore, just on the tip of my nail. Got to work on that (laughter).

Q. Josef, what was your biggest thing you went through in the program today that you were proud to finish up? Major things you went through?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, we were a little bit more Q spec this afternoon, race spec this afternoon. I was just really happy that we went through some of the new aerodynamic parts, kind of put the car in sort of a rough guess for what we thought was going to be optimized as far as the setup. Not necessarily aerodynamically, but...

I felt like for the first look, I was really happy. Sometimes you do that, you assess kind of everything globally speaking from last year. You say, Let's try to put our best guess on what we think are the main hitters that are going to be solid for this year.

We somewhat did that holistically on the race car. I thought it just worked really, really well right out of the box. That was probably the most comforting thing to me.

As I was saying, it changes day by day. You can have a

really good day on one like today. No, we had a great day today. Just having a good day today at Indianapolis does not necessarily mean you're going to have a great race day.

I think staying vigilant around that place is really critical. There's different temperatures, wind conditions all the time. Just because the car was good today doesn't mean it's going to be good the next. I think we have a good baseline to work off, but we have many more things to work on.

Q. Josef, at Texas it was obvious after that the parts you were going to use from the new aero stuff. The whole field went in that direction. Do you feel it's been that straightforward after today that you know roughly what you're going to be using or...

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'd say today is way more complicated. Everyone is going to be more diligent here. They have today as kind of a precursor to May. In May you have day after day to really scan through the stuff and do it methodically across cars for most teams.

Texas, you're basically just coming out with your best guess completely. Everything, mechanically and aerodynamically. I think here you're coming with pieces of your best guess, but you're definitely working through stuff methodically all around.

I don't think what you saw today is necessarily just the ticket for what everyone's going to be using. I think there's still a lot to go through on the list, including ourselves. There's a lot we have not done yet. We've only gotten through partial bits.

Relative to Texas, it's a very different, different set of circumstances.

Q. Josef, all the new aero parts, is it going to impact in terms of how the cars race side by side or in traffic with each other?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Definitely in traffic. I think weather is such a big component. If it's a 65-degree day with low wind, you'd be more packed up than when you were going to be today. I don't think everybody was as loaded up as maybe they could be today. Everyone is going to try to find that right balance and efficiency.

I think purely speaking from what's available, there will be more load on the cars than last year. That should pack everyone up theoretically. I think that will happen.

I don't think you're going to get the Texas effect. This is not a two-lane racetrack. At least not currently. Outside of

restarts and starts, you're not going to have side by side lap after lap. You're going to have really exciting restarts, really exciting start to the race, then it's going to be a matter of how do you work traffic, et cetera.

I think the goal would be giving a little bit more of the frontrunners an opportunity to shuffle around. Typically it's just the front two shuffling. I think if we could get the shuffle going three, four deep, even getting people opportunities in the mid pack to make moves more often, that's really the goal without overstepping it. It remains to be seen if we've struck that right balance. It's just very hard to predict.

Q. You turn up at a test like this with the car you're potentially taking to the 500. Does it subconsciously sit on your mind that this is the car so we can't hit a wall?

STEFAN WILSON: Yeah, for sure. I've been at the shop, the Dreyer & Reinbold guys have spent so many hours working on these cars, getting them prepared. That weighs on your mind a lot. Especially looking at the weather forecast last night, I saw how windy it was going to be. It sort of makes you sort of that risk-versus-reward calculation is always weighing on your mind.

I think because of that I felt like I was probably a bit risk averse today, not wanting to take too many risks. If I felt anything uncomfortable, if we got old on tires, we're deep in the pack, I think I'll wait a bit now, get new tires, let's get back into another pack.

Yeah, we've got a couple weeks before May starts, but an incident today would have set us back a long way. I don't want to do that to the guys.

Q. Josef, what's the car like to run in traffic? A big difference in clean air? How much do you have to play around with the weight jacker and anti-roll bars?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, quite a bit. These guys next to me will attest to that, they know it quite well.

It's definitely you're trying to maximize your tool range. You want to get the car in a good window where you have it set up to run in a certain condition in clean air, then when you get in a one-car pack or you're just behind a single car, you have a certain range of just a minute. If you get into a pack where you're five or 10 cars deep, you have another set of adjustments.

That's kind of the game. The nice thing about INDYCAR racing is you have a lot at your disposal to try to build a good race car around you that's maneuverable in different

parts of the pack.

To answer your question, it's very different. The car feels completely different out front than it does behind one car or 10 cars even. You're constantly playing that game.

Today was extra tricky. As we were all talking about, the wind gusts were really, really inconsistent and kind of hard to predict. It wasn't just a steady wind. You'd get these big gusts that would change the balance of the car in an instant. Some were uncomfortable and violent.

That plays into it as well. It was a hard day to get the balance right to run the car on the edge. But you're trying to find that balance where you can run the car on clean air versus deep in the pack.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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