

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Colton Herta

Josef Newgarden

Tony Kanaan

Alex Palou

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Wrapping up this two-hour practice session on Miller Lite Carb Day at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Getting set for Sunday's 107th running of the Indianapolis 500 practice out of the way. We'll be hearing from Alex Palou, Josef Newgarden, Tony Kanaan here on the fourth floor of the Dex Imaging Media Center.

Already joined by the driver of the No. 26 Gainbridge Honda for Andretti Autosport with Curb Agajanian, Colton Herta. Seventh quick today, he'll start 21st on Sunday. Did you check all the boxes, get everything good to go for Sunday?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, felt good out there. A little bit different weather conditions than Monday and probably a little bit different weather conditions than what we'll see Sunday, so we have to take that into effect.

But for right now was fairly happy with the car. I think we can make some minor tweaks to it to make it a little bit better, but I think we're right on the ball with it so far.

THE MODERATOR: The difference between your qualifying setup and the race setup, feel better about things?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think just the car itself just doesn't have speed, so obviously it gets exposed in qualifying, but during the race it doesn't really matter as much. Obviously if you're leading you'll still have somewhat of that effect.

But yeah, it felt good when I was following cars, and from where we're starting, it might take a little bit to lead, so hopefully we'll make some good passes and move up.

Q. Colton, Marco had said qualifying was embarrassing. You sound much more encouraged today. Do you think you guys have race cars capable of winning?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I never really doubted the race car stuff until Fast Friday. So after Fast Friday I knew that we might be in a little bit of trouble, even though we were only -- I think we were still fifth on four-lap average but our first lap wasn't amazing.

I think I knew we were in a little bit of trouble, but the car still has speed in it in the race trim, which is more important, obviously, so I'm not too worried about it.

Q. If there is the expected cloud cover Sunday and the temperatures are like this, how much better will that make the track?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I don't know. I think you might want it a little bit hotter to make the tire wear a little bit better, make a difference between cars. Yeah, that might open up some opportunities for other guys.

I think you do want it a little bit hotter.

Q. It looked like in the session guys diving in pit road, a lot of lockups, a lot of movement on the cars, just under braking. Is that just a byproduct of trying to charge into pit road and maximize the in-lap, or was it just trickier, dirtier coming off the track?

COLTON HERTA: I mean, you have a -- I think it's a tailwind. Yeah, would be a tailwind today where on Monday you would have had a headwind, so that would make a big difference.

Also I was fine besides that one incident, and that was on like the second lap, so it was probably a little too early to push. I didn't have any brake temperature, which caused a big lockup. But other than that, I was happy with that. I hadn't really seen anybody else, if they had any problems or if it was a big problem, but it could be from the tailwind or it could be from other things.

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I feel like guys get a little crazy on today. I think because they start to give a little bit less, and they run it more like what the race is like, so they're running you deeper into the corner, and if they don't want you to go down the inside, they'll make sure that you can't go there.

Yeah, the biggest thing is guys just running deeper into the corners, where before you see every day of the month before this everyone is kind of lifting off and being nice. I think it's your last kind of check to kind of see what you can get away with going into the race, so guys are a little bit less friendly.

Q. Is there anyone -- I don't know if you can see a board, but is there anyone on the board that is a surprise that maybe people are not looking at or thinking about?

COLTON HERTA: I mean, Canapino was pretty decent. He was pretty far up there in this session, but he looked all right. I think he's still got a little bit left to learn from following him and whatnot on his gaps and his timing, but he seems like he has a fast car. I think if he can make some adjustments driving-wise, it could be really good for him.

Yeah, that's the first guy that comes to mind.

THE MODERATOR: Have a great rest of your time. Appreciate your time.

Joined now by Josef Newgarden, driver of the No. 2 Shell Powering Progress Team Penske Chevrolet, who starts 17th on Sunday, finished ninth in today's two-hour practice. What did you get done today?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We just tried to sort of practice race, literally. Kind of seems self-explanatory, but I think everyone approaches this last session differently. We just try to do a dress rehearsal from our end and really get into the rhythm of what we're going to do on Sunday, and I feel good about our car.

I think the Shell car is quick. I think it feels comfortable. We got it really good at the end there. We've just got to be solid on race day as always. Can be no mistakes here, good execution. That's what it's going to take.

Q. Since you drive for Team Penske and with you also being sponsored by Shell, between now and race day, what will your week be like in terms of all the personal appearances and everything that you need to do not only for Roger and Tim but for Shell?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's been busy, but I wouldn't say

abnormally busy. It's just always jam-packed today. Tomorrow is very jam-packed. But I will say one of the greatest things about driving for Team Penske is they don't request anything from us on race day morning, which is lovely. I just think it's fantastic. We get everything out of the way on Saturday. It's a busy day, but then we can wake up for race day and be free and clear, just get ready for the race. That's our only commitment.

Yeah, not a big deal from my end. It's great to be here with Shell.

It's fun to drive the Shell car because of what they're doing. This is a big year for the series. Obviously we're touting it Powering Progress, and the whole field is powered by Shell. We're all running sustainable fuel, and with INDYCAR and its positioning on sustainability with Firestone and everyone else, I think Shell is doing a tremendous job, so it's fun to be carrying that flag on race day.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Tony Kanaan, driver of the No. 66 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet, who starts ninth on Sunday. 11th quick today. What did you get done today? Happy with it?

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, went through some pit stops and tried a couple different things that we're just going to guess what we need to do Saturday night and Sunday morning, but yeah, fairly happy. I think it's been a very smooth month. So time to go now.

Q. How do you think you guys will perform on Sunday in traffic?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know that it's going to look tremendously different to last year. I think it is easier to stay close, but in the train, everyone is kind of utilizing the tow. Until you get to the back half of a stint, there's probably going to be a little bit of sitting, but certainly up front, it's easy to make moves in that situation.

So I think the race for the win will be exciting as always.

TONY KANAAN: The same, like he said.

THE MODERATOR: Alex Palou is joining us, who happens to start from the pole on Sunday - not to be rude - driver of the No. 10 the American Legion Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, starts from pole, fourth quick today. Your thoughts on that?

ALEX PALOU: My thoughts on -- I think I missed the question. Running in traffic?



I think it's pretty hard when you are fourth, fifth and behind that. And it's too easy when your first, second. So we'll see what we get. It's the same for everybody. Hopefully when we start it's going to change a little bit, but I think it's too easy now to pass from second to first, which we didn't have the past two years. But yeah, it's all right. Same for everybody.

Q. For any of you but specifically Tony, you said on the radio on coming in, "It's too crazy out here." Was today's session abnormally obnoxious?

TONY KANAAN: No, I mean -- no. It's been crazy. We saw what happened the other day. But when I saw three wide into Turn 1, 20 minutes to go, why do you want to do that? So I'm like, I'm out. I don't need this.

Some of us are starting fairly in the front, so I said, all right, I'm not planning to have 20 cars in front of me; hopefully that's not going to happen, so I'm not going to run out there in the back, and that's exactly what happened. Somebody is trying to go to the back, and some of these guys are -- I don't know. It's not a big deal, but I'm like, I don't want any part of it.

Q. Did either of you think today's practice was aggressive?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think there was parts of it, but you always get that on an aggressive end to a session when it's like a Happy Hour or specifically today. Everyone was really racing today, and like Tony said, there was probably some moments where it was unnecessary.

But I think the intensity was up. Everyone was kind of race running today, trying to really practice what it was going to be like, which is good, but there's probably a couple moments you just don't want to insert yourself into.

Q. I asked Herta this, as well. Ganassi, McLaren, Penske, is there anyone that we're overlooking that people are not really paying attention to? I can tell you who Herta said.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Who did he say?

Q. Canapino.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: All year, man, Canapino.

ALEX PALOU: I mean, he's P6, right?

TONY KANAAN: Yeah, I think Santino can be fast if they all get it right in the pits and stuff. He finished up front here in the past, he ran up front, and he has a really good car,

so I think he's going to be tough.

Canapino maybe 20 laps to go, he's going to get the welcome to Indianapolis.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think you put Canapino in position at the end and, ooh, he would go for it.

TONY KANAAN: He would go for it.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: He's got Argentina on his back, the whole country.

No, he's been impressive. I'm not knocking Canapino. He's very, very impressive this year and people wrote him off before he even started. He's done tremendously well for no experience. I can't speak highly enough about it.

But to answer your question, I think it's hard to really single anyone out these days. Obviously you have favorites and reasonably so. You're mentioning the top teams. But INDYCAR is just so competitive nowadays, and we say it every year, but it is continually getting closer.

Anyone can win this race, genuinely. The strategy can flip on its head with 50 to go and all of a sudden the front runners are in the back and vice versa. You just don't know how it's going to shape up. It could be a normal day, it could be a crazy day. It's always a guess when you come into these things. You have a plan, but you've got to be able to move from your plan.

Q. It looked like coming to pit road was tricky for a lot of guys today. Is that a byproduct of trying to maximize the charge into pit road, or was there something different coming off of 4 trying to get to pit lane?

ALEX PALOU: Well, I think it's always tough to adjust coming off of 3 to today coming off 4. Yeah, I had a speed violation quite early on. Just finding the limits on my side. I didn't see anybody struggling, like I didn't see something happen. Maybe I missed it.

But yeah, it's challenging as always. It's so tight that you don't want to lose any positions on the pit stops.

Q. Josef, Alex was saying the other day that starting on pole, you can't really control the race here (indiscernible) sort of rush to the front. Starting from 17th what's your mindset? Is there more urgency to get in the mix and then know that things sort of unfold --

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, no, there's no rush with 500



miles. I would say that. Certainly not in the first stint.

When there's an opportunity to make passes to start the restart, those are your best opportunities so you're going to try and maximize that. But there's not a hurry, I think, starting 17th. I don't think there would be a hurry if you're starting 25th. You've just got to have a really good consistent day and march your way forward. We started pretty far back last year and had the same trajectory going that I think you need to have and then we had a bad pit stop in the middle of the race and it totally derailed the race for us.

No, I don't think there's urgency. I'd much prefer to start up front next to my pickleball teammate, but we are where we are, and we've got to make the most of it, and I think we've got plenty of time to get up there.

Q. How'd you guys play?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Not good. We played bad.

ALEX PALOU: We played really bad. Our attitude was there, but I don't think our skills were matching our attitude.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We had an amazing mindset. We almost came back. I mean, it was a great effort.

ALEX PALOU: It was really good.

THE MODERATOR: How were the teams selected?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You just pick who you like. I like him.

It was aggressive. It was aggressive.

ALEX PALOU: But they won. They knew they were going to win, so that's why --

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was a bit flashy.

Q. Alex, the other day you said that if Rinus was going to pass (indiscernible) what happened to your first stint?

ALEX PALOU: I do really know because he didn't want to pass today. He just wanted to save fuel on Carb Day and I didn't really understand what he was doing on track. But if he drives normal, yeah, we're going to be exchanging a lot. I don't know if it's going to be me or somebody else, but yeah, I think when you are second, it's easy to pass, and when you are first, you cannot really do much.

I just hope that they don't go crazy on the guy that is

leading, trying to save fuel while you're leading because that doesn't work and then it's crazy behind. So yeah, if I'm in control, if I'm leading, I'll try and just go and try and play with somebody, and if they don't want to, like Rinus didn't want to today, so yeah, we'll see what happens.

Q. Everybody has been talking about how tight this race is going to be, but does it have the potential to be a slugfest, lots of wild passing throughout the race?

TONY KANAAN: No. I think it's going to be competitive, and just yeah, you can look at it both ways. You can say this is boring because nobody passes or I was inside or trying to set up a pass, and passes will be happening late if not, but I think it's going to be tough. It's not going to be easy.

I mean, if you're not in the top 5 the ending of the race, I don't think you have a chance.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I think at the front it's not going to be too aggressive, but when you're at the back, if you have a chance, you need to go for it, and then everybody is going to be diving in quite late. But I don't think it's very different to the past. Like last year I remember when I dropped to the back being used to being up front at the beginning of the race, I was like, oh, wow, these guys are going for it really hard. But that's always like that.

So yeah, hopefully it's not too crazy.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I agree with these guys. I just don't think it's going to be that different from last year outside of the very front. The first two cars, it is easier to follow. We have more downforce. But the effect behind the first two cars is sort of similar to where we've been, so I don't think that's going to be drastically different.

Q. Drivers have been saying that at the white flag they want to be second with the opportunity to make the pass on the last lap, but how can you position yourself to make sure you're second?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You have to watch to find out.

TONY KANAAN: Same. Watch it. Different times. Last year I was third and I couldn't do anything. Especially with the zigzag new model of racing that we created in the last two laps lately, it's tough.

ALEX PALOU: Hopefully I need to use it. That would be a good sign, yeah. Yeah, I think we will see that from the leader 100 percent.

Q. TK, what's your experience been now that we've



got a big crowd today, big crowd tomorrow, big crowd Sunday, parade? We've talked to you about your race, we've talked to you about your own approach, but now that it's getting real, what's this like with the people?

TONY KANAAN: It's awesome. It takes a lot longer for me to go from A to B. Everybody has something nice to say, and I'm just taking it in.

It's really cool. I mean, I don't think none of us here started racing to be famous or to be recognized by fans. We just race because we love. But then see the impact and how much people appreciate what I've done, it actually honestly feels quite nice.

I'm enjoying it. I have big moments of happiness and then I cry, and I'm happy again. But I knew that was going to happen from today on, tomorrow the parade, and I don't know how I'm going to hold myself at drivers' intro, but after that we'll just go what we need to do. We'll leave it all out there for one last time.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming up. Appreciate you guys.

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