

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Josef Newgarden

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Joined now by someone who might be catching his breath after everything he went through winning the race that he had long been awaiting to do, Josef Newgarden, driver of the No. 2 Shell Powering Progress Team Penske Chevrolet.

Led five laps of the 200; got it done in thrilling fashion there at the end. Congratulations. You visited the stands, which no one saw coming. Congratulations.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Thank you. You'll have to bear with me. I feel emotionally depleted. I really do.

Obviously I've never had the honor of winning this race. I was in awe of sitting next to my boss Roger Penske and realizing this is his 19th. So it was very special.

To win this race is indescribable. I think being at this event is indescribable. Someone has to come and see it and be a part of it to understand what it is really all about, and I've always wanted the honor to win this race because I wanted to go in the crowd if it was ever possible because I know what the energy is like here in Indianapolis.

So to me, it was an unbelievable finish to be able to be here with the team and do that.

I'm a little out of words. I apologize that I'm running out of steam here. It's been a lot.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously the 19th for Team Penske, first American to win since Alexander Rossi back in 2016, and of course here's one for you, the first Tennessee native to win the Indianapolis 500.

You've got that going for you.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Oh, cool.

Q. Josef, when you were growing up, all those years that you and your dad drove up from Nashville to go to Newcastle to race go-karts, you either had to go



through Indianapolis or around it. When you reflect back on what you did today, how much of that do you think of your father, the effort and sacrifice that he made when you were a kid to help you become a professional race driver?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Oh, it's undeniable. I wouldn't be standing here without my dad and my mom. It's an impossible career to make happen without support, and they are my No. 1 supporters.

I think about the time that we drove up here starting when I was 13, and, I mean, it's just weekend after weekend learning about racing together. My dad really put pretty much everything on the line, like probably irresponsibly, to allow me to have a career in racing.

It was very fitting, I think, for him to be here and to see it. And to do this in Indiana, it's like a second home to me. Very, very special.

Q. We saw Marcus use the tail of the dragon to his benefit to win last year. Do you feel this year you beat him at his own game?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Look, it's impossible to not use that because of the ease it is to follow one car. It got even tougher this year. I think sitting in first place was even more difficult than what we've seen in years past, even just last year, and when I was able to get by him on the back straight I was actually really surprised how much momentum he still had in 3 and 4.

He was like super close and had a good run coming off 4, and with that, I thought, I've got to be as aggressive as possible to not let him by.

Today we had an opportunity to win the race, and I wasn't looking to take anyone else out of the race, but I was going to put my car on the line to win. I was either going to win the race or I'd end up in the wall. I wasn't here to finish second, third, or fourth today. I was here to win.

So I just did everything I could at the end there.

Q. Josef, you talked after the race about always

... when all is said, we're done.®



wanting to go in the stands and celebrate with the fans after you won this race if you ever got there. Had you scouted out where you wanted to try and get to the fans? Because I know there's a lot of fencing up here and it's not super easy to do.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I knew exactly where the gap was. I'd been over there many, many years. I've seen that photo, whole spot, and really it's just like an access point that you can crawl under. It looks like it's closed but there's a way to get through. I knew exactly where I was going at the end of this race.

I planned to go higher in the stands, but it quickly got a little out of control, and I thought, maybe the best thing is for me to leave again. I hugged a couple people. I felt the energy, and I'm like, I need to get out of here.

But it was really cool. You just can't beat the Hoosier hospitality, the energy that people bring here. It is second to none when it comes to a sporting event.

I've always known that, having the privilege of being here many, many years and seeing it, and I just wanted to be a part of it. It was always something that would be a dream come true to be able to do that.

Q. You've obviously been waiting 12 years to finally capture that win. Roger has been waiting three and a half years since he bought the speedway to try to win this race as a track owner and a team owner. Do you have a sense of just kind of what this means for this whole organization that's been waiting for another one of these?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I think it's gratifying for the entire team. There should be a tremendous amount of pride across the entire Team Penske group because we've had a tough go here the last three, four years, and we've had a lot of questions to answer every day.

After every qualifying weekend we've got to come and put a brave face on and say that we just didn't fully get there.

I knew this year, similar to last year, but even better this year, that we had a good race car and a car that could win the race, and I wasn't worried about where we qualified.

Of course we wanted to be on the front row, and if possible qualify on the pole, but it's very gratifying for all the work that's been put in.

I know firsthand how much effort has been poured into the last two, three years to figure out how we win this race again, and for our standard, we don't show up here to be

average. There's nothing given; Indy doesn't owe anybody anything. It doesn't matter how many 500s you have. It doesn't matter what team you are. It doesn't matter how much money you have. It isn't an easy place to succeed at.

I don't think we came with an ego, and to work through the difficulty the last three, four years, this victory is a win for all of us on our team, and it's very gratifying for every member that's put the time in.

Q. Josef, I wanted to ask you about -- we know how much pressure you put on yourself and the weight of expectation that you've had on yourself for so long to try and win this race. I just wondered how difficult that's been to fight that off year after year and what it's like to have that released from your shoulders now?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'll be honest, it's annoying. It's been terrible. It is mentally draining to be here for three weeks and just to know that you really only have one opportunity, and it comes down to today, and that's the day you've got to be perfect and great and everything has got to work out.

So you spend all this time and effort, and it's really just a mental grind to work through that. The more you've been here, the more it's not worked out, the more that grind really starts to gnaw at you.

I don't necessarily subscribe to the fact that if you don't win the 500 your career is a failure, but I think a lot of people really view this race and this championship with that lens, that the 500 stands alone, and that if you're not able to capture one, then the career really is a failure in a lot of ways.

It's impossible to not recognize that or to absorb that from people when you're here, and I just didn't know if circumstance would ever work out where it would really come to be where we could win the race.

I just said -- especially after '19, where I did have an opportunity to win the race and we fell short, I said, if I'm ever in a position again to win this race, I'm not coming back with a top-5 result. I just don't care what happens. You come here to win the race, and we're going to do that.

Q. So you committed to win the race and the rest of it goes out the window, but you spend the year so focused on winning championships, Team Penske, and doing your absolute best to stay consistent through a whole season, so what's it like to come into May and to have that total change of an opposite mindset almost to come in here and treat it completely



differently to the rest of the year?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: In a lot of ways it was nice to just be -- look, I just went out there and drove today. I knew I had a pretty good car. I was pretty happy with Fast Friday. Luke Mason did an amazing job. We basically just went back to our test car from the pre -- from the April test where our car was so good, and we had never run that car again in May, and we were both looking at each other laughing, like what are we doing.

We left that test and said, if we have this car, we're winning the 500. That's what I said. We never ran the car until Fast Friday -- sorry, until Carb Day.

We ran that car, and I said, okay, you did a good job; we're going to be just fine here.

I didn't study a lot. I typically, like, pour over every detail. I don't leave a lot of stones unturned. But I was just pretty relaxed. I was like, you know what, I'm not going to overthink this. I'm not going to overdo it. I've been here before. I think I know how you need to win this race.

I'm going to relax and I'm going to show up and go race on Sunday, and that's what I did. I just came with kind of a carefree attitude and just tried to trust my natural instinct.

It worked, so I was pretty happy.

It was so much more than that, obviously. I'm kind of simplifying my own personal -- my internal messaging, but there's a lot more than that. The amount of -- I'll come back to the team side, but the amount of effort and timeline to get to this point really makes everything happen.

But just from a personal stance I think that was the right approach for me this year.

Q. Marcus was unhappy with the call by INDYCAR, the way the race finished. He felt like there weren't enough laps left leaving the pits essentially when they're throwing the green. Did it surprise you that they made the third red flag call, and what did you think about that whole process?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I'm happy they did it to give a good finish. Obviously if I was in Marcus' situation, I would have said, yeah, just end it. That's great. I've got to the line and they're not going to go to a -- I've also been in a lot of races where you get ahead of somebody like that and the yellow just comes out, and you're going back to the timing line of Turn 4. And I'm like, what are you talking about? We've been sitting here for about five seconds where I'm in front of this person.

There's so many different ways that this could have played out and you could have said this is fair or that's fair. I've seen it all. At this point I'm just really thankful they did it the way they did. I'm glad I had the car. I don't really care. I've seen a lot of situations where it didn't go our way. Today went our way, and I'll take it. I'll take it all day.

Q. Using Marcus' move to beat him when he used that move to essentially beat Pato last year, you guys were way below the white line coming off 4. Can you describe that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I was about driving through pit lane. It was legal is all I'm going to say. They were very clear that they are not enforcing that line, and they didn't enforce it last year. They said they're not enforcing it again, and I'm coming to the checkered flag and I'm going to do everything I can to win this race, and I had to be as aggressive as possible, because the tow effect to just the first car was even more difficult than last year. You were just a sitting duck if you were in the lead.

Honestly, I don't love that. I think the cars should be more difficult to drive here. It's a very -- terribly difficult balance for the series to walk because you want to have a good show. You want everybody to be as close together as possible and you want it to be difficult for someone to win this race, and I agree with that.

But I think it's not difficult in the right way. We've got to find a different formula where we can trim the cars out and they're easier to follow in the pack. Basically all this downforce that we've added has only made it easier and easier for the first two cars, so when you're the third car you're still just stuck in that tow line where no one is really going anywhere. We're all closer, but it's only the first two that can really do something.

So we've got to change that formula where it's easier to follow in the pack, but you can also be rewarded if you're better at driving the car with less downforce. I want to see the drivers that really excel get a better advantage.

That's why they pay us to be in the seat. That's why they pay the engineers, to find the perfect setups that we can make an advantage and get away with it. Not so we can win by two laps, but I just think the dynamic of the race, the complexion could look a little differently.

Q. If they do that, it takes care of itself, the discussion, the debate about the way these races are ending takes care of itself?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: For sure. I just because we've

added downforce year after year. You sort of noticed that at first with probably Pagenaud was the first time we really saw that, 2019. We've just added more and more downforce, and it's become more important to try and break the tow.

What are you going to do? Just sit there and get -- I mean, if you sit in a straight line you're just going to get passed super easily.

I don't hold any grudge against anyone that's doing it in front of me, as long as it's not a true block, which it's not if you're -- if you're not reacting to the person, if they're following you, that's not a block.

It's just the style of racing that has become imperative because of the style of racing.

Q. If I remember correctly, when you made the move from Indy Lights to INDYCAR, you drove for Sarah Fisher's team. Any reaction from her?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yes. I saw Sarah's daughter, Zoey in Victory Circle. Actually, fun note: Zoey texted me this month and said, I just have a feeling this is your year. She's never said that before, and she was very adamant. She said, I don't know why, but this is your year.

I've heard that from a lot of people, okay, many times, so it's hard to react to any of that stuff, but she made a good call this year. Maybe she's my good luck charm.

Q. INDYCAR champion and Indy 500 winner. Does one feel more rewarding than the other?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think this feels more relieving. There's no doubt that this was a bigger weight.

I think I'm still in the camp that the championship is tougher. In a lot of ways it is, because there's so much more that goes into it.

This is the single-most difficult race in the world to win. I'll stand by that. There's no doubt. If you're looking at a single event, you cannot beat the difficulty of the Indy 500.

But I don't know how you compare the two. You're looking at one standalone versus a championship, and putting a championship together, I think, is very, very difficult. You really see the best rise to the top. You see the best team, the best pit stop performance, consistently it adds up over a year, and it's very difficult to do that.

They felt very different. I just don't know that -- I classify them as different things. I think internally I feel differently

about them.

Q. Do you feel like a more complete driver now that you've won both?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I don't. I'm going to be honest, I don't feel different -- the only thing I feel is the weight of what everyone else wants to put on you because they think the Indy 500 has to be won.

I think about all the drivers that probably should have won this race that never won it, and it doesn't make a difference whether they won it or not. Their career is still fantastic. It's more just a shame that it didn't work out for them.

That's really how I feel about the event. I'm not here to take anything away from it, but I don't like looping it into the category that you have to have it to be complete. I don't feel differently as a driver because today happened, I just feel less weight.

Q. In 2016 when you finished third, your post-race interview, despair, frustration, and all that. Today with the elation, could you elaborate on how one place can evoke such a wide range of emotion in one person over the course of their chosen career?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Absolutely. There's no denying that Indianapolis, this is the most difficult motor race in the world to win. It's the pressure that builds this entire month. You have so much time to potentially get it right, and it comes down to really one day to be perfect.

You can have a good qualifying. You can have a good Fast Friday. You can have good Carb Day. If you're not good on Race Day, it's all for nothing.

That's what makes Indy so terribly pressure filled but terribly difficult, too.

I think that's what has made it special today to win it. I just feel overjoyed for the amount of work we put in this month.

On the flipside, when you don't win it, that's what makes it so demoralizing. You pack up, you say we, lived here for three weeks' and we put everything we had into this and it didn't work out. It just breaks your heart. It's broken my heart every year.

And so I feel -- I just feel amazing now that it didn't break my heart this year.

Q. You mentioned earlier about the sacrifices that your parents made to get you here, possibly irresponsibly. What made it that way growing up, that

they sacrificed that much? What did they have to do -- I'm assuming they didn't put the house up for mortgage, but how far did it have to go for you to get to this point?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I won't go into the details, but my parents, they gave everything for my career, I can tell you that, and more. It's not from a lack of effort and belief.

I think my dad has really just been wired that way, that anything is possible, and he's always given me that belief. I'm a pretty pragmatic person. I'm very realistic. But I also have an internal belief that anything is possible because of him. He's instilled that in me.

Look where it's gotten us.

Q. In terms of the milk celebration, had you practiced it in the mirror before? How did you feel it went today?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Dude, no practice. I haven't. The only thing I really had in my head that I wanted to do was go in the crowd. That was the only thing I felt adamant about. If I was lucky enough to win, I was doing that.

The milk, I felt good about it. It tasted so good. I love milk. I drink a lot of milk. So for me the Indy 500 is kind of the greatest thing ever. Other people might not like to get milk after. That's the choice I would have made, too. I love Louis Meyer. I love that he threw that up as a tradition. I'm a big milk guy.

Q. We spoke a couple months ago, and Scott McLaughlin said that your love language is finance. What do you plan on doing with the prize money?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We're going to the NASDAQ on Wednesday. I can't wait. We're going to talk about equity. NASDAQ is up 18 percent year to date; Dow is lagging. I'm excited. Finance is my love language. I don't know. The money, we're going to invest it into a prudent mutual fund and let it grow sustainably over 20 years and then look at it and say where are we at and what can we do and be responsible and budget.

These are high-level questions. I have no idea what we're doing yet.

Q. You've made it a point that you've wanted to win this, and now you have. How does it feel? Is this your dream? Is this what it feels like?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's amazing. I just really wanted to emphasize that to me there's no bad seat in this house.

I've been a fan here. That's kind of where I started.

Everybody should take a lot of pride in being at this race, whether you're someone sitting in Turn 1 or Turn 4, you're working on the car or you're a partner or you're a friend or you're the driver. All the seats matter, and they're all special.

I genuinely mean that. We all make the energy that this event is, so I just feel incredibly lucky to have been able to be here for 12 years and drive this race and try and win it, and to win it with such great partners like Shell, and especially the messaging they've had this year, it's been -- you know, it was really fitting to drive this car, this Shell car this year with that livery and the powering progress message that they have.

They're all running Shell fuel this year. It's all sustainable fuel. It's a very big deal for this series.

Yeah, I'm just elated. I don't know how to put it more into words how special it is to have an opportunity as a driver here.

Q. Tim Cindric talked about the importance of getting an Indy 500 victory with Roger Penske as the track owner. How important was that to you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I don't think it -- honestly, it doesn't matter the circumstances at Indy. Indy is just special.

But there is, of course, another layer to that with RP now owning the track. To see Roger and the family, and the amount of work that he's put into this place has been impressive to witness. Very, very impressive.

I think you really notice that with everyone that was here, that they appreciate the event and they appreciate how much he loves the tradition of the Indy 500.

This team was built off the Indianapolis 500. Roger came here, and this is what brought him into the world of racing and has built this whole Penske Corporation.

I think it is so fitting he is the custodian of the track in elevating it to a new place. To win for the first time that now that he owns it is definitely more emotional, very, very special.

Q. When he won in 2019, his 18th victory, he said his goal is to get to 20. Now that can happen next year. How important would that be for any one of the three drivers?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That's what I said. I put my hand on his shoulder in Victory Lane and said, now we got to get 20. He was the first one to go, absolutely. He didn't even take a breath. He was ahead of me in the thought process, as you know.

He's eyes forward. It will be important. We need to come back. There's still areas we can be better, so we'll go and analyze after this weekend and see where we can improve. But we'll come back ready to fight and get No. 20 for him.

Q. You said that you're a man of process, but can you tell us about that time when you are doing the pass for the lead?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, it was a good position to be in. I think second or third was a good start or a good position to be in on the restart, particularly with only one lap to go. That's where you want to be.

For me it was get the lead at all costs, whether that's Turn 1 or Turn 3. I wasn't premeditating that Turn 3; had to be the spot. If I had a little better jump I probably would have passed Marcus in Turn 1.

Maybe that wouldn't have been right, but I think you have to go at the first opportunity because of the potential for the yellows.

We had a yellow come out for that second red flag and we didn't even get to the start-finish line. You just don't know what's going to happen, and I think it's the mentality of getting the lead at all costs is where you have to be.

If it doesn't work out, if a yellow does come out when you're not in the lead or something goes wrong, then that's okay, but I think that's the right approach to try and win the race.

Q. Was it the best drink of milk that you've ever had?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: 100 percent the best.

Q. It seemed like Ricky Bobby was right based on what you said earlier, that you're either first or you're last or at least here. That is it, right?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's a funny quote, but it is true at Indianapolis. You're either walking away the winner with your team or you're walking away as someone that didn't win the race.

That's not true for everywhere that we go, but Indy, the only thing that matters is winning the race, so that's why for me it was extra special to have that mentality today.

Q. You're familiar, I think, with the term red mist. Maybe you're not. But there was carnage out there the last part of this race. Three red flags, unprecedented. What comes over drivers? Can you explain it? With the Indy 500 on the line, et cetera, that they're willing to -- you are willing to throw it all out there, so to speak?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I think you saw exactly what it means. Everyone probably carried the same attitude that winning the race is the only things that matters here, and so you saw everybody going for it.

Everyone was doing everything they could to win the race or to position themselves to win the race, and you can't fault people for that. That's what this place brings out of everybody. That's why we spend so much time here, to just give ourselves a chance to potentially win it.

Yeah, it just gets more elevated at this event probably more than anywhere else because of that reason.

Q. I asked you on Thursday, does this place owe you anything, just like I asked Tony Kanaan one time, and he said absolutely not; you have to earn this race. Was that the lesson further learned today?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I was a believer of that many years ago. I never expected anything from this track. I don't believe that it owes anybody anything. I wholeheartedly believe that.

I think you can't have any ego when you show up here. I'll say that about our team. Doesn't matter who we are, it doesn't matter how much money we have, it doesn't matter how many times you've won the race, this place doesn't owe you anything. You have to go and earn it. I think that's why you have to carry the attitude that you either come here to take the win or you're not going to win the race.

Things can happen, obviously. Maybe it falls in your lap. But I think more times than not, you have to go out and earn the win.

Q. When we were talking about the 500 versus the championship and what's harder, and now that you're a final winner of the 500, are you upset about the removal of the double points?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We already said -- we said, you know what, now that they took the double points away we'll win the race. We just knew it. Knew it. But I'm very happy it's not double points. I'm very, very happy.

It would have been lovely today, but that's okay. I was not a fan of them ever.

I think that it also took away from what the 500 is. You shouldn't ever be here racing for points. It's the Indy 500. You're running for the win. You don't leave fifth here and go, we had a good day, we finished fifth, we got good points. That's not how it works.

I'm not saying you've got to be reckless and wreck people, but you have to give everything to win this race. Yeah, probably bittersweet about the points, but I'm happy the way it is. I think it was the right call to go back to single points.

Q. I overheard you talking about stocks coming out of the elevator. What makes you fascinated by stocks or finances?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I was joking around. I am into finance. I think it's a great career path. It's probably something I would be doing if I wasn't driving cars. It's kind of as simple as that. I won't bore everybody, but I love that world. I think it's super fun.

Q. Do you own any stocks?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I do. I carry equities, yep. I have many positions. We could go on a lot of different paths on that, but I think, yes, looking after a portfolio yourself is prudent.

I think you should have good advisors and you should make good long-term decisions with your investments and your budgeting. I am a man that, yeah, likes looking after most of it myself. I think everybody should be educated on finance in this room. I think it's a good thing.

I didn't think we were going to be talking about stocks here.

Q. Just a quick note on Tony and his final Indy 500. I know growing up you probably looked up to Tony, and a lot of other Indy 500 drivers did, too, and just what Tony has meant to you as a fellow racer.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I think Tony has been a tremendous ambassador for the sport, first and foremost. He's been a great Indy 500 champion, as everyone in this room knows. He's a fan favorite for a reason. He wears his heart right on his sleeve, publicly displayed, and I think that's why everybody loves him.

He's been a tremendous competitor.

I think someone that is tough to race against, but also

someone that you could go to if you needed advice or assistance. He's pretty open minded and ready to help the young guys if needed. You're seeing that even more so now that he's working with younger drivers in his team.

He's been great for the sport. I'm so happy that he was still here for this final race. I'm also in the camp that doesn't believe he's done, like most people are.

But if it is his last go, then he's had a tremendous career, and we should all be thankful that Tony was here.

Q. Josef, now that you've been out of the car, I'm not sure if you've had a chance to see the final lap or the reactions, especially from your wife. Watching the last lap, she was really emotional. It was a really cool video. I'm curious to know what it's like to watch someone who's been in this with you for so long and their reaction to this dream of yours coming true.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, my poor wife gets the -- she's probably got the toughest job in our family, not just because she looks out for everything and helps make my world go round, but she sees the negative impact, she sees the heartbreak more than anyone else, so she knows what that's like.

I'm just happy we were able to finally win it. She knows that, too. I don't know why I'm getting emotional about it. She's just as competitive as me. I can imagine how happy she was.

THE MODERATOR: I know you've got a long laundry list of things to do today and tomorrow, but enjoy it.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I appreciate everybody, all the coverage, all the support in this room. I really mean that when I say that there is no bad seat in this place. There truly isn't.

We all make the Indy 500 what it is, so thank you for covering us and pushing the sport. I think we're all trying to elevate INDYCAR back to where it belongs, so thanks for all the effort from this room and everybody that's given us time and feedback and great coverage. Thanks for being here today.

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