

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, July 22, 2023

### Josef Newgarden

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by now five-time winner here at Iowa Speedway, Josef Newgarden, leading 129 of the 250 laps, driving the No. 2 Hitachi Team Penske Chevrolet. It's career win No. 28.

You climb now. You're 98 points back of Alex Palou of the overall season long championship. More importantly, another win here today. Congratulations.

What came to you there after that first stint and a half or so that you were able to get past Will and stay up front?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was just unfortunate that we came off the truck so good -- Luke Mason did such a great job with this car. I was so happy yesterday, pretty immediately, and then to qualify as disappointingly as we did, I think for us, for our expectation, if you will -- it wasn't a disaster, but it wasn't where we thought we should be. I know it's not where the car should be.

I was really -- I've done that a lot here. I've not qualified where I think we should. That exact problem was sort of the same in the beginning of the race. We were trying to counteract it and didn't quite get there. It took about a stint, stint and a half, to really get the car where it needed to be.

Then it was great. It was back to sort of the beginning of yesterday. It was just a nice car. Team did a great job as always. They always give me a fantastic car here. You can't win a race around this place without having the best car in the field, and I feel like we've always got that when we show up.

**Q. Josef, you were really upset, I remember, last year after qualifying. I believe you were second in both races behind Will to start. Is it the way you drive the track you're doing wrong or setup?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's a combination. It was mostly setup today, which is not on anybody. I'll say it's on me. Like I just didn't quite know where we needed to be.

I mean, you're kind of guessing. We were supposed to

originally qualify at 8:30. It was going to be a lot colder. So you're basing the setup around that. Then you have to think about the race. We were also probably a little bit more lean to the race than other people because you've just got to choose a little bit.

The temperature is going to keep rising in the race. Do you want the race car to be right, or do you want the qualifying car? And you're kind of in the middle a little bit. So I don't think we were fully optimized for qualifying, but I also just didn't get the balance right.

I would say it's that. Last year was the same deal. I could have done better personally last year. I didn't drive hard enough, so I was kicking myself for that. I felt like I drove hard enough today. I just didn't have the balance I needed. We were pretty upset about it, but we knew we'd have a chance in the race.

We've got a great car. We knew that right from the jump. It was just a matter of I felt like we could do more today. Even leaving now, we've got a lot of homework tonight to be even better. It was good, but it wasn't quite good enough. It's going to need to be better tomorrow is my feel.

**Q. Yesterday you were telling us how you went a step beyond being a teammate to Scotty and shared everything about this track, and he was explaining that after qualifying today that you reviewed every lap he made and every lap you made last year. Did you have any regrets about that in the closing laps and knowing he was breathing down your neck at some points during this race?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I knew he knew everything. I tried to be as transparent as I can with him as a teammate. He's been -- he's a great member of the team. He's a good pal. I want to kick his ass as much as anybody. It's got nothing to do with that, and I'm not giving him any favors necessarily. I just think it's the right thing to do.

If your teammate wants to learn something, I hope he would give me the courtesy the same way. When he's got something on me, I want him to teach me it. I think that's

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how it should be. You don't always get that, but I'm happy to teach him what I know.

I look at it that it doesn't really matter -- if he knows exactly what I know, then it's just going to come down to who's doing a better job. If he does a better job than me, then he deserves to win. I hope he doesn't do a better job than me tomorrow, but if he does, he'll be a deserving winner. Let's see what happens. He looked really good today. I'm going to probably have to step up a little bit more tomorrow.

**Q. In Victory Lane, you were obviously upset with some of the lap traffic today. Pato and Scotty were both in here and shared your concerns about that. Are you going to name any names for us? Anyone you want to call out in particular?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: There's a lot of people. There's a lot of people. It's one thing if you're leading the race. If you're leading the race, you're really within your right. If you're fighting with people around you, seventh, eighth, ninth place, you're all fighting. You're within your right to fight as hard as possible.

I think, the way the rule was written, it's also legal for them to fight to the death to stay on the lead lap in front of the leader. It is legal. I'm just telling you you're not making any friends when you do it. There's 20 laps to go in the race, and I was getting driven like it was literally to the death for the end of the Indy 500. It was just crazy. I couldn't believe the way people were mirror driving.

I've never seen it that bad here. Normally if you're the leader, you're not getting a handout, but you're at least getting the courtesy that you are the leader and you're about to get lapped. You don't have to pull over, but just don't be aggressive and weave in front of the leader, block the leader, chop the leader.

Like there's just a point where you've got to understand that that comes back around. If you do that to someone, I'm going to fence you the next time I see you. If you're the leader the next time, I am going to do you so dirty if you did that to me.

It's common sense. Everybody in the paddock knows it, and they're just -- for whatever reason, there's just people who just can't get it. You know what, if they can't learn it by now, they'll probably never learn. I guess where I'm going with this, you can tell I'm frustrated by it, which a lot of people are. I can't change people's behavior. If they're going to continue to do that, I have to study and figure out how to counteract it because that's how they're going to play.

I'm going to assume they're going to play like that tomorrow, and I've got to be in a better position and better equipped handle it.

**Q. Scotty said he might go talk to some people tonight.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'll go talk to some people too. They need to know. Look, it's not cool. It's not cool. If you want to play that game, that's fine, but you should be thinking long term.

**Q. Josef, you said earlier the car was good. Nevertheless do you think the car has enough to win tomorrow?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's definitely in the window, there's no doubt. The tough thing about Iowa is the window is so tight here. You can have a stint where you're really good and a stint where you all of a sudden lose a ton of potential and time on the average, and it's really easy to bounce back and forth between perfect and way off perfect.

I think the car's in the window. We've just got to maybe clean some areas up. I've got to get some new tools in my toolkit, figure out how can I arm myself a little bit better for the way everything is flowing nowadays?

Everyone is stronger. It looks like that. Everyone has more maneuverability. Everyone is getting coached by their spotters now on exactly how to race people hard. So it is a tougher game than I think it's ever been around here.

Our car is capable. We've just got to make sure we maximize it.

**Q. So much of the history of Penske Racing has been drivers who are great oval drivers like Al Unser and Rick Mears and now yourself. To be in that category, and when you win on an oval race for Team Penske, how special is it?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't really feel differently about it than any other track, to be honest. My goal is to be strong everywhere. It doesn't matter the discipline or the track type. I want to be good everywhere we show up. If there's a place we're not good, it's number one on my list to figure out. Why aren't we good here? Why can't we win this race?

Anything is possible for us and our team, and we need to approach it that way. So just in short, it doesn't feel different to me, whether it's Iowa or it's Toronto or it's Detroit or Road America. They all matter. You take great pride in being able to work with the team and put a victory



together. They're all difficult.

It's not easy to win a race in this series, so they all feel the same.

**Q. Obviously the goal is to come here tomorrow and win again. How do you feel the prospects are coming out here and getting out the broom?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I was hesitant yesterday to -- I feel like everybody -- when we walk in here, they just assume, oh, we're going to be quick. It's not the attitude that you can have. You just can't feel like there's anything given. I think we did a good job today recovering. I was really proud of the team.

To feel disappointed with qualifying and then to just really improve the race car and do a great job today, I'm proud of that, but that doesn't guarantee tomorrow either. I think Scott's going to be really good. Pato, he's going to come back better. I think Will's going to be strong. You never know who else is going to improve overnight.

I'm focused on being better tomorrow because I'm going to assume that everyone else is going to pick up their game.

**Q. Obviously laser focused, and obviously frustrated about the traffic and stuff like that. I don't know if you feel like you're putting more pressure on yourself this weekend because of maybe your own expectations and what everyone else is expecting you to do. When you come into this place, it feels like you're quite pent up at the moment. Is that the pressure you're putting on yourself for this weekend?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Maybe a little bit. There's a pressure that's on us, I know when we show up here. It's that assumption. It's the assumption that we're going to be great just because we should be. We're the 2 car. We should be really good here.

That's okay because I think there's always a pressure that exists. You show up to Indianapolis with Team Penske, and there's only -- there's only one place that people accept as okay for Team Penske, and that's winning the race. We deal with those pressures. It's not like it's something new.

But I think, more than anything, it's just been -- it's honestly been a really tough year, like we've had some good moments, there's no doubt. Obviously the 500 was just -- it was the best moment for everybody this year. Other than that, it's been a really tough season, really, really tough. It just feels like one of those grinders again. We grinded last year.

I want to figure out how to get us in a place where we're not grinding and try to figure it out week to week. I've got all the confidence in the world. The tough thing for me is I know the potential of the team, I really do. It's there. It's always been there, and I just want us to realize it more.

We're continually working on that. For me, I'm just a perfectionist, and I think working towards that potential and maximizing it is what you're seeing from me.

**Q. Have you thought about the points at all in terms of what today means for that? And if you allowed yourself to kind of think about that? Or is your focus solely on tomorrow and trying to keep that out of your mind?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yes and no. I'm very aware of it. I've seen it climb from the beginning of the season. Alex has had a great run. He's really had no bad races. I explained this in the past that, when you're a great driver like Alex and he's got a great team around him and you don't have any bad races, that is what happens points-wise. You build up a cushion the way they have.

It's a tough deficit that we're in. I'm aware of it. I'm not putting any pressure on this weekend or to the end of the year. It kind of is what it is, right? I can't control what happens with Alex. I think the odds are higher that he has some bad luck at some point, but that doesn't mean it's ever going to come. It just may be a great year for those guys where they don't ever truly see it, and that's okay.

I've just had to learn over the years that you can't control these things. You really can't. I focus on trying to be the best that we can be every weekend. This weekend's no different. It's just you're dealing with that scenario that you brought up that everyone expects us to be really good here and win a couple of races. I know that.

Regardless of that, I just try to make sure we do the best job. We did the best job we could today, and we need to do that tomorrow.

**Q. I was going to ask about points as well. Just following up on that, you were 126 out coming in, and now you're 98 out. You took 28 points off today. Is that a good chunk? If you do that tomorrow, do you feel good about leaving here?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I do. That's a great chunk. You win another time, what does that put you at, I don't know, 72? That would be great. That would be great. We're going to for sure need that.

You can't spin this any way. I'm not telling myself a story to make myself feel better tomorrow. There's no doubt we have to win a lot of races, and Alex has to inevitably at some point hit bad luck. It's just the way this whole thing goes. If that doesn't happen, then we're still going to focus on winning races, and hopefully we have a lot of wins on the year and we get close. Or maybe just winning a bunch of races and he doesn't need the bad luck, and that's enough to get us the championship.

I have no idea how this is all going to play out, but yeah, tomorrow -- they all matter at this point. What is there, six to go? They're all going to be critical. We can't afford a bad weekend anymore. He can, but we've got to be pretty much perfect, which when it's like that, it just almost doesn't matter. Like what's going to be is going to be. I think a lot of people are in this mindset. They're just trying to win races.

It's kind of a good way to go about it because you can't just take little bites out of him. It's just not going to work. You've got to be hitting it with a hammer and hoping that fate kind of swings back your way. So I hope we get that, but there's just no telling if that's going to happen.

**Q. Speaking of the hammer, do you feel like you need to hit two nails this weekend? It seems like you're having trouble celebrating this win because you feel like you're only half done. Is that accurate?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think that's very accurate because you've got to look at it as a complete result, the two races combined. That's a very good way to put it. It is not just a single race weekend and then we move on to the next challenge. It is the same challenge two times over.

So we've got to go do the job tomorrow, and then once we get done with that, we'll move to Nashville and start figuring out that problem.

THE MODERATOR: Five-time winner here at Iowa. Go for six tomorrow. Good luck. Josef Newgarden in Hitachi Team Penske Chevrolet.

That will wrap things up. Next warmup comes up tomorrow morning here at Iowa Speedway.

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