

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, July 13, 2024

Pato O'Ward

Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Pato O'Ward joins us, second runner-up finish of the season, second straight podium, 24th of his career. Pato will start seventh tomorrow.

Josef Newgarden started 22nd tonight, finishing third. Third podium of the season, 55th of his career.

Pato, your thoughts on this evening?

PATO O'WARD: Yeah, it was a lot less physical race than what I was expecting. I think tomorrow will be hotter, you'll see a difference in the cars with tire deg and stuff like that.

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't bummed about the race and how it raced. Really tough to get that second lane working. Compared to I don't know how many on-track passes we had last year, probably not even a 10th of that. That was a bit frustrating because I thought we had a very strong car, definitely a car that was capable of winning. Just no way to get around a car.

Yeah, awesome job by the guys in the pits. That's truly what got us in this position to fight for the podium. We're starting somewhere around the same place tomorrow, so see what we can make happen.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, you were able to make up a ton of spots. Thoughts on tonight?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, tough night. I think for us on the 2 car, we ran out of time and real estate, so... I wish we had maybe one more fuel stint, would have helped us, at least if you're looking at tonight specifically and the setup.

It was a great recovery by the team. My goodness, they were really good in the pits, like really, really good. If Pato's guys were good, mine must have been double as good. I made up probably 80% of my position in the pits tonight.

They've been good all year. Tonight they really brought it and we needed it. You can't start 22nd, especially this year. If it was last year, I would have been okay starting 22nd. This was like almost the kiss of death this year to start that far back. That was the tough part for us.

Tomorrow we're a little bit higher. I'm excited about that. I think we start 14th tomorrow. Not great by any means, but better than what tonight was.

Everyone did a super job. Really proud of Team Penske. Scott with the win. First and third on the podium. I don't think we can be too disappointed as a group. A solid night for the team.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up for questions.

Q. Josef, you talked about how the pits helped you. How were you able to get around some guys?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Calculated risk tonight. You were flirting with disaster. It wasn't a given. There wasn't the real estate to use, just secondhand. It's not like a second nature type thing you could use. You were risking the car every time you tried to move offline on somebody.

I did it a couple times. I had to. We had to take a little bit of risk to get forward. Even at the end I thought we could get another spot or two.

Look, our race car was fantastic. That's always the difference maker. When you have the best car in the field, it's easier to do what we did tonight. I think we had that. Like I said, we ran out of time and real estate.

The pit stops were the biggest part of it. That's what got us the most. I think we put ourselves in position to make those pit stops what they were. We got a little bit on the racetrack. Tomorrow we need the same deal.

Q. Pato, at this point do you think they should just repave the entire track or what should be done before next year?

PATO O'WARD: I mean, I don't think it's up to me, is it? Probably up to NASCAR. I don't know who decided to do



this change. They ruined a fantastic race.

The track is very enjoyable by yourself. The problem is it's not very fun when you just can't get by anybody. You can't fight. It reminds me a bit of, like, a Texas 2020 I would say where there wasn't really a second groove. You might get there on the restarts, which is what you saw. I flirted with it a little bit. I know Josef probably did. I saw Santino. I saw a couple cars doing it, especially for the lead.

I know Herta and McLaughlin were going at it a bit. When you're done with that first lap after the restart, you can't. Once you get the momentum going, it's just accepting the wall basically, or at least really crapping your pants.

That's just how it is.

Q. After qualifying, what really happened that caused you to qualify so poorly?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it's been a timing issue. 50% of this year we have just been off sequence timing-wise. Qualifying was a result of not being in the right place when we rolled off the truck, then kind of running in circles a little bit.

It was productive circles. What we did on Friday was productive, but we were in the wrong spot right before we needed to go into qualifying.

You're guessing a little bit on what you do then. We just didn't get it perfect. The balance was way off, way off. It doesn't take a lot to really lose lap time. I think I was 4/10ths off, which is pretty tiny even at Iowa for a massive imbalance.

I feel like we got ourselves in that situation in Mid-Ohio. It's disappointing for me because we are a good group. I mean, I've got total faith in what we're doing. The 2 team is strong. We have a good process. We just have had our timing off. That kills this weekend. If you qualify 22nd and 14th, it nearly kills this weekend. It's tough when the timing is in the wrong place.

Q. When you started picking the cars off in the first laps, is that when you realized you had the best car?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I knew it in practice yesterday I had a really good race car. It's what do we do for qualifying? The other unfortunate thing, I'm the first guy out. Just circumstantially the way this year has flowed. That is another timing issue. We're sitting 10th in points.

It is like a cascading thing. It just keeps adding onto the pain. We don't get anybody to look at. If I'm going second,

two teammates to look at... If we're guessing on the 2 car, at least we have something to guess with. We were the guy helping the other guys guess.

It's the way it goes. It's our own problem to deal with that we're sitting that far back in points. I think that's a reflection of what happened in qualifying today.

Q. Pato, on a couple of restarts, when you got on the power, the car did a little bit of a fishtail in the back end. Is that a result of the slippery track or the power coming down on this hybrid assist?

PATO O'WARD: No, I wouldn't say it's the hybrid. I would just say this race tire that we're racing this weekend is quite I would say temperature sensitive. When they're cold, like, they really are like, No, no, no thanks. They really reject anything that is like push, push, push. That's probably just what it was.

Q. Pato, second in the points. Talk about this momentum and ride you've been on since the Indianapolis 500.

PATO O'WARD: After the 500 I just felt like it was a consecutive results of just very frustrating weekends. We kept getting caught up on issues that we weren't even a part of them in the first place, we just kept getting caught there. There are blockades everywhere. Some people are driving like maniacs. Don't get me wrong, I've been that idiot many times in my journey.

For example, this weekend, where it's so tough to pass, guys that want to make up spots have to take so much risk. That risk usually maybe you look like a hero, barely made it, or it ends up in yellows. That just seems like it's been the story of the series the last few races.

Like Detroit. The start of Road America to me was very odd to have it at that track. Feels like there's a lot of frustrated minds out there trying to make up positions. A lot of time you just get stuck so you're trying to make it up I guess in the most condensed parts of the race.

Yeah, it feels really good to kind of get back into my normal form because I feel like after the 500, those three races were like I was finishing seventh, eighth, and you feel like you've done the race of your life, obviously it's not the race of your life because you're eighth.

Q. Josef, he said lunacy. What were the restarts like, knowing had you to pounce on that lap or two after the green?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I think it was difficult for

everybody tonight. It's hard to pin anything on anybody because it was tough for every car to make something happen. I don't care. I thought our car was great and it was really difficult for us. I would imagine any person up and down the grid was fighting to make something happen on those restarts. That's tough.

It's very different to what it was last year. Last year you had a lot to work with. That's why I think you saw so few cautions, a lot of racing, green flag running, not as many incidents.

It's tough. Unfortunately I don't think our car and our formula works super well for this type of track adjustment. We're different than a Cup car. We've developed our car differently than they have. It doesn't always mesh. It definitely didn't mesh tonight. I think everybody was working hard and it was tough to make stuff happen.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, guys.

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