

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, August 25, 2024

Alex Palou

Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by the third-place finishing driver, Josef Newgarden. His best-ever finish here at Portland, fifth podium of the season, 57th of his career. Now tied with Sebastien Bourdais for 18th on the all-time INDYCAR SERIES list.

Josef, your general thoughts about this afternoon?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it was a good day for us. I think in a lot of ways close to our potential. Looking at it from, like, a far distance, it looked like we were a second-place car today. I think third is really close to what we could have achieved.

I think we probably had something for Alex, but not for Will. I think Will was probably lights out the best today. A great result for our team. Obviously Will is still going for this championship. It's a great result for him to be up front.

For us, you always want more. I want to win every race I'm in, so I don't like finishing third. It's a good weekend, good, solid weekend. Proud of the team. Proud of having Tire Rack on our car.

True story. Fun story. I've been a customer of tirerack.com since I was a kid. It was always my preferred site to go to when I was trying to figure out specifications for tires. It's funny to come full circle now that I am 33 to and have them on the car. Pleased we can take this to the last few races of the year and finish strong.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. Josef, much calmer post race today than last week. Was it that pedestrian on the track or still a pretty busy race today?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it wasn't super action packed today. Not quite like Gateway, right? Gateway was probably a little more intense in a good way. Today was a little bit more calm. It wasn't enough to mix it up.

We didn't have a yellow get thrown in there to kind of mix things up.

I think the top guys were pretty strong in their own right so they stayed stationary once we settled in after that first stint.

You can't have the greatest show every weekend. This is probably a little less than what we experienced last week at Gateway. Still a fun fight. I always enjoy trying to get these races right. The fuel saving, the way you choose when you're pitting, all that sort of stuff, it all matters and still fun to get it right on a day like today.

Q. Was it hard to keep the right pace and hit your numbers?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Definitely. It's always tough. The car is not easy to drive on the edge, do it consistently every lap without making mistakes or a wrong decision. It's a tough day. It's not like we were all just cruising around.

Yeah, maybe a little more settled and professional than we would have liked. A little more action probably would have been good for the fans. Still a tough day to get this right.

THE MODERATOR: We're also joined by today's second-place finishing car in Alex Palou. Second runner-up finish of 2024. Third podium finish here at Portland. Sixth podium finish of 2024. 54-point lead in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES championship.

Alex, congratulations, another podium. Your thoughts on your day?

ALEX PALOU: It was tough. It was a hard race. I think we didn't really pick the right choices on tires. But it comes from yesterday's qualifying. We didn't really think that the used alternates were going to last. Used both of them in qualifying.

Yeah, a shame that we couldn't really battle much. At the beginning I thought we had a lot of pace when the 12 and the 14 were on primaries. I was really comfortable. But as soon as Will went on reds, I just couldn't really follow him. I had a chance on the back straight when he had a little bit



of traffic, but couldn't really make it.

So yeah, happy, but obviously a little bit frustrating that we couldn't really get there. It was tough. Like, our pace was not at his level today. I think he had a seventh gear today. Couldn't really catch him.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

Q. Josef, you talked about how Will is back in this championship fight. The next three tracks, Will has raced at and won at. Alex has never raced at those tracks and never won at an oval. How much does that count or matter if at all?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It means a lot. It's very indicative I think to how Alex is going to perform. He should be nervous about that. It's tough for a guy like him (laughter).

Are you following this? Are you listening?

ALEX PALOU: No.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You should be very concerned.

ALEX PALOU: I'm very concerned (smiling).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's not good for you history-wise. Alarming. Alarm bells are going off, let me tell you that.

ALEX PALOU: (Indiscernible) if I show up to Milwaukee, I'm so nervous.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's so bleak, you might as well not go (laughter).

No, look, this guy is excellent. I don't have a crystal ball. I think Alex is pretty damn good at what he does. Look, never raced at Milwaukee. Okay, he hasn't raced a lot of places and proves pretty well.

Speaking logically, ovals have been our strong suit for the last multiple seasons. Alex is a great competitor. So difficult to understand how this stuff goes. INDYCAR, as soon as you try to predict it, it does something different.

I think he's one of the most formidable opponents that you can find in racing across the world, regardless if it's INDYCAR or something else.

I wouldn't feel confident or overconfident with anything that we're doing. I think we have a tough fight ahead. As a team, we're going to try to get in front of him. He's one of the best that we're going against.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, your thoughts? Any concern?

ALEX PALOU: I would prefer if it was the last couple races at Indy road course, Laguna and Road America, but that's not the case.

I actually loved Milwaukee. Never been to Nashville, never seen it. Only on iRacing.

THE MODERATOR: Suburban Nashville.

ALEX PALOU: Suburbs of Nashville. Never seen it.

We have Milwaukee. When we tested there, I thought we had a great car. I think we're going to surprise Josef a lot because we going to have so much speed that they're not going to be ready for.

Apart of that, I'm looking forward. It's a great chance for me to win an oval race, having three now at the end. The calendar was released before we started the championship, so I knew that this was going to be the last couple of races, and wasn't the best-case scenario for us. Our job was to try to do as much work as possible heading into those races. So I think we've done that.

But yeah, the most difficult part of the year comes now, the next three weeks. Yeah, hopefully next week I can win an oval race.

Q. Josef, you started on red tires today. What do you think about your tire strategy? Do you think it worked very well?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it was a good day. Like I said, I think it's about what our potential was. The only way we finish higher is if we start higher. Need to start on pole or second place, lead from the beginning if we want to be higher up.

It's going to be tough to match Will today. He had a 10th or two on us. I think Alex was really tough to beat, too. If we had track position on them, maybe we make something happen. I think it was going to be hard overall.

From where we started, pleased with the progress we made. I don't want to finish third, but I think we maximized what we could today.

Q. Alex, why do you think you decided to go with black for your second stint?

ALEX PALOU: We only had one set of reds. That was the idea. That's what I actually pushed for yesterday in qualifying. That's why I did two stints on used reds.

Yeah, I got a lot of fear after Detroit when I started on used reds. I just destroyed those tires in six laps. Went from second to (indiscernible) banana. Didn't want that to happen again. I thought the primaries and alternates were going to be a little bit closer. They were not.

So, yeah, that's what we had to do today. Wasn't the right thing. Yeah, I couldn't really see this coming yesterday.

Q. Alex, maybe a better way to spin this is you have a max points lead, a full race ahead, going to the last three races on ovals. That has to give you a little bit of comfort that you have some room to work with to get the first oval victory.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I love it. I mean, I would like to have more, probably like three races caution, but we couldn't really achieve that.

Yeah, I think it's good. It's not enough, but it could be a lot worse. I'm looking forward. I think that allows us to go aggressive, to just think about the race and not having to think about points and trying to minimize damage or anything like that.

I'm looking forward to it. It's going to be tough. It seems like a lot, but at the same time it's almost nothing. It's only one race. You just said it. Yeah, hopefully we can pick up a little bit more points during the Milwaukee weekend.

Q. How frustrating does it get for the competitors that are challenging you for the championship if you're finishing right behind them? You're going to have to finish a lot worse than second place for them to catch you.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, I think I wish somebody else won, like Josef won. I think he also wishes that I was, like, 17th or something. I think that shows the competition. I think he has done a really good job this weekend. Almost got pole yesterday. Today he was almost untouchable.

Yeah, looking forward to Milwaukee. I think we're going to see the same trend.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it was super close in qualifying. Actually if you look at the beginning of the race, it was super close. It was tough to make differences. As it was a flat-out race, I think we could see the differences between cars and between drivers, as well, just tire deg and stuff.

Yeah, I think everybody expected to see, within the teams,

to see this kind of race where you start to see differences between lap 15 to 30. That's where you really start pulling away or start losing lap time.

Q. Considering how strong Penske have been on the ovals, does this put any doubt in your mind about the outcome?

ALEX PALOU: No. I mean, I'm not 100% comfortable. I think we have a lot of work ahead of us to do. But yeah, as I said, it could be a lot worse. I could be with only one point of difference, then I would have to obviously beat him on those tracks or I could be sitting second or third.

I like where we're sitting. I like the opportunity we have in front of us. As I said, I felt really good at Milwaukee. Maybe we can surprise Penske. Who knows. Maybe we show up and suddenly nobody can catch us.

Q. Josef, you were strong at the test. How much are you looking forward to returning to Milwaukee and Nashville? How do you expect the two tracks to race?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'm excited, for sure. I like Milwaukee. I've been there a couple times in the past before we left for a little hiatus. I always thought it was fun. I hope we can produce a good race.

Nashville is completely unknown to me. I've never been on the track. Out there to watch some testing. Really don't know what that one's like.

I have high hopes we can find a good package for both places. I think Gateway was really pretty phenomenal as far as the combination. It's not easy. It's not an exact science. I think if we could bottle a good racing package where there's usability on multiple lanes, we would take it everywhere.

Sometimes it's a little bit of guesswork, trial and error. You have to kind of go places a time or two to figure it out in this new package. We're trying to figure it out, with the extra weight, hybrid, aero, tire configuration.

I have high hopes we can have a good race package for Milwaukee and Nashville. Overall I love oval racing, too, so excited to finish the season strong.

Q. Alex, in the pre-race show on TV, they had their caldron of hate out. They threw the shirts at drivers that are all having disagreements with one another. Your shirt wasn't one of them. How much would you correlate you being able to avoid all that drama, not being part of this everybody mad at each other, how much would you correlate that to the fact you have the



championship lead?

ALEX PALOU: I think I got lost a little bit at the beginning. You said T-shirts?

Q. Caldron of hate. They took all the drivers that aren't getting along, think of the cartoon boiling pot of water, they throw everything into it. They threw all the drivers' shirts in that are having issues. Yours wasn't one of them.

ALEX PALOU: But his is?

Q. Yes. How important is it that you avoided all that?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it's great. I've been I think in my own dramas in the past, maybe currently. Yeah, I don't know. I don't know how they do it, the debriefs and stuff. I'm glad didn't have any issues.

You were joking a lot to him after the race. It was surprising. It's good. It's good that I'm out of it. I don't care. They have their own stuff I'm not going to get into.

I already have my own stuff. Imagine if I have to as well fight with my teammates. That would be a lot to keep up with. Yeah, I already have my own stuff, which is interesting.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thanks so much.

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