

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Wednesday, January 15, 2025

Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Josef Newgarden is the No. 2 Team Penske Chevrolet. Why don't you start things off with the off-season, what you've been doing, mindset in 2025. What are you looking forward to?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Thank you so much for having me. It's great to be here. Mindset is a good question. Great place to start. I'm glad you asked that. My mindset is really good right now. I feel positive. I feel excited about the year.

I think our team is in a good spot. I think we have all the potential in the world, as always, and that gives me a lot to look forward to. Certainly the Indy 500 is going to be a highlight, as always. We're all looking forward to that. But really FOX is probably the most pivotal ingredient.

I think they're going to be transformative for this series and what they've done so far has been tremendous and we haven't even hit the ground running yet. Very excited for what we have to come and can't wait to really hit the ground, like I said, in St. Pete and see how far we can go.

It is good to be back. It's been a busy day. Tough day. For me, this is always the hardest day for me. I know no one has any sympathy for that, but you've got to get through this grind today, and I feel like when we get through this day, then we can start the season. That's kind of the carrot at the end of the rope.

Q. How does it feel to be told you're better looking than Tom Brady?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think Tom disagreed with that.

Q. Alex doesn't like your book, too.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That was the best part was Alex's bit. They've done a good job. More than a good job. They've done a tremendous job. It's been a long time since we've had a partner like FOX that has fully bought in

and understands the significance of INDYCAR.

I think it can't be overstated how appreciative we are of Eric, his entire team. The FOX team is a big group. They're very innovative. They're capital intensive when it comes to entertainment and as far as production quality and innovation. They're not scared to try things.

I think we have needed that for quite a while, and they're going to help push the sport where it deserves to be. I don't think we're -- I've told this to people a lot, but we're not hoping and dreaming for INDYCAR to be this thing that it's never been before.

INDYCAR used to be a household name, and it deserves to be. It's been this hidden gem for so long now, so I think FOX will take it to new heights, and really excited about what they're doing.

Q. I know as a driver you've said in the past that winning an INDYCAR Series championship is a great reward because it's what you've done for an entire season. Probably in some ways more of a complete package of your work, your body of work. But now that you're also a two-time Indianapolis 500 winner, do you find you get mentioned a heck of a more than a two-time INDYCAR Series champion?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You do. I think it's kind of the nature of our championship. The Indianapolis 500 really transcends anything else. There's nothing like the Indianapolis 500. You certainly realize that after you win it, to your point. And I felt the magnitude of it, not from the recognition afterwards or how much notoriety there was, but more so like the personal impact. You really feel the weight of the 500 in the moment, when you're there and winning it.

It's crazy what it feels like than just being in the race. It already feels like a huge deal when you're in the race, but when you win it, it just hits differently and you really feel the impact.

To answer the question, winning the championship is certainly a different task than winning Indy. It's so hard to compare the two. One is a single event that's a big



buildup, it's a lot of time commitment throughout the month of May. There's more pressure to win the Indianapolis 500 than anything else, so that's the key difference there.

Then for the championship you have to be good for so long across so many different types of courses.

They're both gratifying. I think they both deserve extreme recognition. They're just different. You can't put them in the same category.

Q. We asked Alex and Pato about this yesterday, but curious to get your take on what that experience was like going out to LA and filming the spots for that commercial that we saw on Sunday.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was great. I mean, I had an awesome time. I was there for -- this is a 45-second spot. I think we filmed for eight hours, and they probably needed more. But we've been -- my message has been we'll give you whatever you guys need. If you're willing to give us everything, we're going to give you everything. We're really trying to work as a team.

It felt like the real deal. When you were out there it was like, okay, someone is giving INDYCAR the platform and recognition that it's probably deserved for a long time.

I don't say that arrogantly. I believe that for everybody. Everybody in this room, everybody that makes up the INDYCAR Series, they deserve to have a big platform, and it felt like FOX was delivering that. I certainly felt the magnitude when you were in LA.

You saw the spot; it was better than I thought it would be. I remember looking at the script when it was first presented to me and seeing the vision. I thought, oh, that's funny. Like that's really well written. It's a great idea. Like that should be pretty good. Then I saw the actual spot, and I thought, that's even better than I could have imagined.

Yeah, just feels like the platform that we've been missing in a lot of ways.

Q. I know you had a very notorious previous INDYCAR commercial that we sometimes joke about that you filmed a while back. Did you have any nerves going into this knowing that you were probably going to be the first one that was going to come out knowing that maybe that didn't quite come out the way you were expecting it to before and maybe just seeing a script that you thought was cool, but again, until it comes out you probably don't quite know what you should expect?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, not really, no. I've got to tell you, I felt pretty trustworthy. When we first started interacting, I've really liked everybody on the team. It has not been difficult to get used to everyone and start moving forward. I felt very trustworthy in what they were going to put together, even if it wasn't -- even if it's not a home run, I felt like they were going to put a good piece together and they cared about what they had in front of them, the asset that they had acquired, that they were now needing to protect and grow. I think they understand it.

So trust is probably the number one word there. It's pretty easy to trust and feel like they're going to do the right thing. And I don't think that means we're going to be perfect. We might make some missteps. That's normal. I think we should have a little bit of grace if we make some missteps and we probably will.

But I think they'll try to do the right thing, but if we make a misstep we'll correct it and moving forward.

Q. Do you get any speaking time in Alex's spot?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't, no. It was supposed to be something different originally, and when it turned into Alex doing it, it just became more perfect. It made a lot of sense, too. It's the reigning champ, so he brought the humor to it. It's going to bring that visibility to Alex.

They're going to connect, create dots that people can start connecting, which is really good for everybody.

Q. The question is going to be awkward, but for as good as you've been in Indy here the last couple years, you've just not led a whole lot of laps in this event. You're actually tied with Conor. 10 guys have led more laps at Indy than you have in this race. Have you thought about how you'd change your approach to the race, or is it still I want to lead every lap and I just haven't?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You know, it's a good question.

Q. Just a dumb statistical question.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No, it's a great question. I'd have a simple answer for it. We have figured out how to win the race twice so far. I like our process. I really do. We'll see if it keeps working. If it doesn't, we'll change the formula. But I think we've got a good process.

Q. Can you explain how you did the ping-pong scene in the commercial? Could you actually see --

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's a lot of practice.



Q. Is it random?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: At home I was like, I've got to blindfold myself, I got to get this right. It's got to be amazing. Just hours. I mean, hours of practice. When I showed up, I was ready.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Oh, I do remember that now. I cannot believe he said that. That's terrible. He should take that back. No, it was a real blindfold. The fun thing about today's day and age and when you have a real production, they make CGI stuff so easy.

You just have to make it look pretty good. Even the hedge, that wasn't there. There was a tiny hedge in front of me that I was clipping, and then I had the big thing.

They crushed it. They make it look easy to be honest. I think it's because it's the A-listers. It's their main team. This is what they do, and they do it at a high level.

Q. I just wanted to get you to reflect a little bit how 2024 went because obviously there were big highs but also some lows there, as well. What do you feel was maybe behind some of the peaks and troughs, and like you spoke about last year, has there been any recalibration this off-season?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I do think it was a dynamic year is maybe the way to put it. It was a year of great highs, as you said. There was multiple strong points to it. But then there were some tremendous lows. Very volatile and rocky. But I would say transformative, if anything. For me, it was a really good year to go through.

It makes me excited about 2025. It ended up being a really positive year for the way everything transpired, even the waviness of the year. It just put us in a good spot to come out firing in 2025, and I think we can do that.

I don't have many more adjectives for it. It was just very up and down. So many good things to take from it. Certainly Indy was the biggest highlight, but a lot of positives all around. Even within the negatives, they all turned into positives I thought.

Q. Following on from that, what do you feel like you've learned about yourself or learned about the team? Anything in particular?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, lots. We definitely -- we're always growing. I think that's the goal, is you've got to get

better every year. Certainly I think even as humans we're trying to constantly evolve and be better prepared or be in a better spot year after year, and I think that's true for us, and certainly after a season like 2024, resilience is a word that comes to my mind.

I think we have tons of it, so everybody is rallied together and ready to go.

Q. There's been a lot of talk about a possible new car for 2027. I'd just like to get your take on what you feel a new formula would ideally consist of?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Less weight is critical. For me that's the number one point. I've expressed that. I think most everyone has expressed that. But certainly the engineering team led by Rich is very strong. They're doing a great job already.

We certainly know the direction that they're headed. They've given us a lot of time for feedback and opinion.

I think as you look at the car now, it's developed into a pretty heavy race car. I'd like us to get the weight down. That's ideal.

Then producing a high-horsepower car, more than we have now, with a stable aero platform, it's always kind of the ingredients you look to have in this type of series.

Our racing product has been quite good over the last four or five years, so I don't think we want to disturb that or completely overhaul it, and they're working on some new ideas how to even improve that.

Indianapolis is probably one of the places that could be mixed up the most where we have a great racing product there but maybe it's not completely what we want. Having more competition throughout the field and ease of passing throughout the field is something we're lacking at the moment. You can pass up front between two cars but not five deep.

So improving those type of things is top of mind for the development group and what they're going to put in front of us for '27.

Q. You've always been known as the king of ovals, but how much work has gone in over the winter to try to become a consistent challenger at the front on road and street courses? Can you take any learnings from Power and McLaughlin?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, '24 was kind of unfortunate in a lot of ways when you look at the numbers and you



study average position, all of these sort of metrics. We're in just as good of a spot as we've always been. There were some outlier events as everybody is aware of in 2024, but when I look at the numbers I go, this is really not different to what it was in years prior.

When we were spreading wins across the board on ovals, road courses and street courses and kind of getting the trifecta, I think that's still very intact.

I'm not dwelling on that too much. I think we've just got to right the ship in some ways from what we saw last year. We just had choppy water, and I think once we find a little clearer water, we're going to be in a good spot.

I guess that's what I took from last year, when I really dove into the numbers, that nothing was that far off.

Q. You've been working at Penske a couple years back, the team really struggled at Indy to qualify well. Then front row last year all of a sudden. I don't know how much could be attributed to the joint engineering with Foyt now that Michael Cannon was at Foyt, but now he's gone to PREMA, and they have such a history of being so competitive. What do you expect to see from them, and do you think it's going to make a difference from cannon being there?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You know, it's hard to predict. I think PREMA should be a powerhouse much like a Carlin. I had experience a very short time in Carlin and seeing their transition over to the States and to be a part of INDYCAR, I would expect PREMA to have just as good if not better of a trajectory.

I think they're both very reputable strong teams. That's the first thing that comes to mind. Indy is its own thing. It's hard to assess the Cannon deal. Some of this stuff you would say, well, crossover and they should know this and they should know that and they should just apply. Sometimes it doesn't work like that. Every case is a little different.

So we'll see how they perform at Indianapolis. It's its own beast. But they'll definitely have a great opportunity to show up and be competitive right away.

If that doesn't happen, then that's just the nature of motorsports. I'm sure they'll find their way at some point. They're a strong enough team. They'll have strong drivers, strong engineers. They will get there at some point, and I think they'll be a great addition.

But Indy, we could talk about that forever. It's its own thing. So we'll see how they hit the ground running. But I

think more than anything they're going to add a great dynamic to the mix. It's another strong team. It's international, which I think is great.

It's one of the things I love with INDYCAR. I don't really think of INDYCAR just as domestic product. I think of it as the collection of the best people from around the world, whether that's engineers or the team talent or the drivers.

I love seeing an influx of more global talent, and PREMA adds to that in a great way, so I think it's only positive across the board for the INDYCAR Series.

Q. You talked about Brady earlier, but I'm curious, I found out that you only found out 24 hours beforehand that you were even sharing a commercial with Tom Brady. I was wondering your thoughts when you found out, what, wait --

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, he wasn't in the script. I think the way I understand it is no one promises Brady because you just don't know if you're going to pull it off, and obviously they did. It's FOX.

But yeah, it's really cool. I think it legitimizes things so much. I have a great affinity for Tom. I think he's had just a tremendous career. I've always admired the greats of any sport, and he is one of the greats certainly. Really cool to have him in the spot. I think he's coming to Indy, and rumored to obviously have a bigger play there.

Great time, exciting time. I think the sport is in a good direction, and to have him involved is only a good thing.

Q. What were your thoughts when you found out --

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I saw it. When I saw the spot 24 hours before, that's how I found out. I was like, oh, he's in it, that's great. Yeah, it was just a cool moment.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.