

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Friday, May 16, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

**Tim Cindric**

**Rick Mears**

**Will Power**

**Josef Newgarden**

**Scott McLaughlin**

Team Penske Press Conference



Roger getting No. 20.

This weekend Team Penske has a chance at capturing its 700th pole, as well, with almost half of those, 306, in fact, collected in INDYCAR competition. McLaughlin leads the way for Team Penske with 70, all told in the organization, power a close second with 64 for Team Penske, part of his INDYCAR record 70. All told, this team, Team Penske, has over 720 years of experience at the Indianapolis 500.

Tim, we'll open things up for you. Your first win came back in 2001 and I believe the story goes Roger came up to you and said, hey, we're going to go for 20. I don't know what your reaction was at the time, but now you guys sit here with that number, if not more, for years to come. How much pride have you taken in the run that Team Penske has had here?

TIM CINDRIC: It's hard to believe that we've got to that point. For me, just winning one race here was kind of a dream come true. Sitting there in Victory Lane with Roger in 2001 with he and Helio, I just said to Roger, because that would have been his 11th Indy win, and I said, look, I know this is kind of old hat for you, but for me this is a big deal. He said, I've never finished first and second here, but I want 20. I thought he said 12, because it was 11. He's like, no, 20.

Anyway, to be sitting here knowing that we accomplished that is pretty cool.

THE MODERATOR: Rick, welcome back to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. I'm hoping you've had a chance to visit the newly renovated Indianapolis Motor Speedway museum. Yes?

RICK MEARS: Yes, I have.

THE MODERATOR: What are your thoughts on that?

RICK MEARS: It's unbelievable. It really is. Everybody, great congratulations. Just a tremendous job, everybody involved in that that had a hand in it, it's just tremendous.

I think the section we're talking about with the four-time winners, that was -- first of all, I never dreamed of being

THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the DEX Imaging Media Center here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Obviously a big day ahead. We'll get started with our Fast Friday news conferences leading off with Team Penske, followed by Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing around 9:15, followed by Chip Ganassi Racing at 10:00 a.m. this morning, followed by Louis Schwitzer Award at 10:30, and then at 11:00, an Indianapolis 500 event update as well. A busy day. We'll get started here shortly with Team Penske.

So many traditions at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and Fast Friday and team news conferences are certainly among those. We're starting this morning with Team Penske, and Tim Cindric, Team Penske's INDYCAR president joins us this morning. Also Josef Newgarden, driver of the No. 2 Shell V-Power NiTRO+ Team Penske Chevrolet. Scott McLaughlin is here, driver of the No. 3 Pennzoil Team Penske Chevrolet, Will Power, driver No. 12 Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet, and it's always great to welcome back to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Rick Mears, four-time winner of the Indy 500 presented by Gainbridge. All four wins with Team Penske.

109th Indianapolis 500 marks the 51st year Team Penske has entered the race, first coming back in 1969 with Mark Donohue driving a McLaren, the team's first win then just three years later in 1972. From there, names like the aforementioned Rick Mears, Unser, Hornish, de Ferran, Castroneves, Will Power have all won victories for the captain, of course the last two by Josef Newgarden. 14 different drivers have won the Indianapolis 500 for Team Penske. Newgarden, as mentioned, delivering the last two. Last year's win also accomplishing the feat with

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included in a list like that to begin with, period, so to be there with all four winners and the way it's done up and to be able to sit there and watch all the videos of each race and everything, to be able to be involved with it just brings back a lot of memories to begin with.

Just such an honor to be in that section.

THE MODERATOR: Will, for you, big announcement during the open test last month that depending on where you finish, going to help out some veteran debt, as well. Here we are a week out from the 500. Any pressure now? What are you going to do with the veteran debt? You've got to finish in the top 10 to double that.

WILL POWER: I do, yeah, a million dollars if I finish in the top 10. They're going to wipe way \$6 million worth of veteran debt --

TIM CINDRIC: Is that what you offered?

WILL POWER: The 6 or the 1?

TIM CINDRIC: The 1.

WILL POWER: If I win -- I think we can all put in, right? No, seriously, I shouldn't say that.

But yeah, it's a great initiative between Penske, Verizon, Colts, IMS. It's a tough position to be in for these guys, these veterans, to rack up so much debt through no fault of their own because it's all medical debt. I'm really proud to be a part of it.

I actually have a veteran on my car, Blaine Hardy. He's been on my car for more than a decade, and some of the stories you hear about these guys that went and fought for our country and ended up in a terrible position, I think it's a very cool initiative.

THE MODERATOR: And the car is running well, too, so who knows on race day, right?

WILL POWER: Yes, sir, that's the plan. Not top 10, the plan is to be No. 1.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, stop me if you've heard this before. No one in the 108-year history of the 500 has gone three in a row. You've gone two in a row. Getting that second one, I feel like you come in maybe relaxed going for the third? How would you describe your week so far for you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'm just happy to be here. You have no idea. I know that sounds like a line just to state,

but I wake up happy. It feels like Christmas. It's just the best. I love living here for three weeks. I almost wish it was longer. It's definitely one of my favorite times of the year if not the favorite. It just gets better when you win it.

I feel like I'm already -- I'm looking back in my life while still living it. I know we're going to look back on this and feel so cool about what we were able to do as far as being able to drive for Team Penske with this group. It's been so fun. We have a really, really good team across the board.

Yeah, excited to go racing. Look, we have an opportunity, obviously, to set history next weekend, which would be tremendous. I'm not focused on that. I think it's circumstantial in a lot of ways. I want to win the race, and I think all of us do sitting up here. We all want to win the race, and that's what we're focused on.

If we win the race, everything you just spoke about kind of falls in line. But we've just got to focus on doing our job every year and enjoy that process. That's what I've kind of brought myself back to the last two seasons. Yeah, like I said, I'm happy to be here. I'm happy it's the month of May.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, you seem more and more comfortable around here, as well, obviously last year fastest four-lap average, winning on ovals and other tracks now. How much confidence do you have coming into this month of May for you?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I feel every time you come here, you just take that next little step. These guys have been coming here a long time and I'm still leaning on them a little bit throughout that stage. But yeah, I feel super excited for what's ahead.

I think having the experience of running up in front last year was crucial for me in my development and how I learnt from that, and I feel like I've sort of judged on what I did wrong and what I did right last year and just trying to mold into a better person and a better driver as we work forward.

Really proud of the group. The team has worked so hard. We were fast last year, but at the end of the day, we haven't rested on our laurels and we've worked even harder to be better again.

That's what it takes in INDYCAR. It's so tough out there right now. The margins are so tight. You've just got to dot your I's, cross your T's, and hopefully at the end of it you've picked the right settings and you make the moves at the right times.

**Q. Two, like always. One question for Rick Mears and**

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**one for Tim. Rick, from the very first time you sat in an INDYCAR cockpit until nowadays, what do you think personally for you is the most significant technology development in INDYCAR racing or INDYCAR motorsport? And question for Tim, a couple of weeks ago I got a media release that you want to cut back your activities with Team Penske. Can you describe what you're doing now?**

RICK MEARS: Yeah, as far as the biggest change to me is the safety. I think that's one of the largest things.

When I started, the cars that we ran, say the '79 car, it was state-of-the-art, the safest car out there, and I look at the cars before me and think, wow, how did they drive those things.

But again, you can go from where I was at in '79, if I get in that car today and look around, I'm thinking, how did I ever hit the wall with this. It just keeps progressing, and today the safety is the biggest thing.

That and electronics as far as measuring everything that the car is doing, all the data readout and that kind of thing, to be able to fine tune in small areas, which we couldn't do back then. But really safety is probably the biggest thing.

TIM CINDRIC: Yeah, for me, I guess it was after the first of the year. I'm basically doing the INDYCAR program that I've always done. I started in the INDYCAR world and then spent the last 20 years doing whatever Roger decided he wanted to do in the racing world.

I looked after it. Just decided it was time for me to maybe have some time for myself and a bit more flexibility and go INDYCAR racing exclusively, really. Yeah, I still look after the car collection and archives and all that kind of stuff for Roger, but beyond that, it's business as usual on the INDYCAR car. But don't really have responsibilities beyond that.

**Q. Rick, what does Josef do that would allow him to win a third consecutive 500?**

RICK MEARS: We talked a little bit about this the other day. All I can do is kind of go off what I felt I should do. I can't really speak for Josef. But to me, it's just treat it as another race.

Myself, if I had two or whatever, it didn't matter. Each year you go into this race as a new race, and you're here to win it. That was all my focus was on this day. It had nothing to do with whether it was No. 2 or No. 3 or No. 4 or whatever.

But I think to me, that helps keep it just as another race.

This is Indianapolis; it's almost impossible to keep it as another race. But that's the frame of mind I tried to keep when we were running.

That way I'm not pressured into doing something that I shouldn't do possibly. I just think that's the best way. That'll be up to him how he wants to approach it.

**Q. For Josef, you've obviously used the word "perfect" quite a lot in kind of what it takes to win here, but can you define what perfect means at Indy and what it takes to get there, whether that's something in the team, your approach? What does it take to be perfect after all those years to get over the line, not once but twice?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, maybe "perfect" is the wrong word. I don't know that you can have a perfect day any day, but you have to be as close to it as possible. I guess the way I would sum it up, Indy magnifies the team effort more than anywhere. I've stated that a lot, and I think it's very true, abundantly true here at this speedway. Everybody has to pull forward and really perform in an excellent way.

I don't know how you win this race without the complete team.

It's the same thing sitting on the pole. It just magnifies the team effort through and through.

On race day, you can have all the ingredients. You can feel like you have the winning car underneath you. You can feel really good about the moves you're making. But if everything is not complete from a team side, you will not win the race. It just has to be almost as close to perfect as possible.

I think that's what I've tried to just continue to repeat, is that it's such a team effort here. It is everywhere, but it's magnified at Indy to another level that we don't see for the rest of the year.

**Q. For Rick, you obviously did this four times, so you had to be, quite unquote, kind of perfect four times to win this race. Looking back, how did you manage to achieve that feat, and how much did it mean to you to be remembered in that exclusive club?**

RICK MEARS: You know, having the right team and the right equipment and the tools you need to get the job done is what it takes, everything being in place at the right time, no mistakes. The old saying is you're only as strong as your weakest link, and try to control all the variables and then have a lot of lady luck with you, also. There's always

a little lady luck involved. You control your own destiny to a point, but there's a little lady luck there, too.

It's just all got to come together on the day. It's like I've always said, you never know about this place until you see the checkered flag. We were talking about that the other day. Somebody asked me after my first win, when did you realize you had it sewed up, and I said once I came off of Turn 4 heading for the checkered flag, not until I got by pit end because once I got by pit end, then I knew if all the wheels fell off the thing I could slide the rest of the way. But that's as soon as I let myself feel I had it won.

**Q. For Scott, we've obviously seen Simon Pagnaud with you again. What areas has he helped you the most, and what more has he helped you with this year, as well, and is this solely an Indy thing or is he helping you in the wider season, as well?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We're talking the whole season, but I think Simon has been just really helpful in a lot of ways, just how I look at things outside the box.

I'm probably -- a detriment to my own career throughout the years is I haven't been as intricate with looking at little details, and I think Simon is the professor in that regard. Like he's very, very -- strives for perfection in a lot of ways in how he sets up his car and what he feels.

It's probably allowing me to look into more details and just the way I look at myself and the driving, the lines and what I'm doing with weight jacker and bars. It's really helped sort of accelerate my progress here, and really am enjoying working with a friend, as well.

**Q. I've got one question for Josef. How do you handle stress and pressure when you know that you can make history, like winning three Indy 500s? No one ever did that before, so how do you feel about it?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, there's two ways you can look at it. One way it could be very low stress. The odds of us winning it three times in a row are astronomical. They're not in our favor. So what's the stress then. Just go out and enjoy the day.

To me that's one way to look at it. The other way to look at it is, to Rick's point, this is still Indy. You feel the same stress every year when you show up here regardless of the circumstance. There's a lot of effort that goes into every single season. This is a 12-month process, building these cars, strategizing for what we're going to be doing throughout this month, and you want to perform every year for the team. All of us do.

All of us feel that pressure on race day. I don't know that that changes, to Rick's point, whether it's the first time or the fourth time or whatever time it is. You feel the pressure regardless.

So when you're here for many years, you either end up enjoying that pressure or you let it sort of break you down. I enjoy the pressure of this race day. I think it's fun to go and perform when it's really going to matter on the race.

From the pressure standpoint, I don't think it changes year over year, and then if you just want to really simplify it, I don't know that the odds are very good for us to win it three times in a row, so what does it matter; let's just have a good time running the race. For me, it's easy going.

**Q. For Rick, as somebody who's a young racing fan myself, I want to know how tricky was it driving in Indy in those days, particularly when it was so dangerous? Obviously we had Gordon Smiley's accident in '82. What was it like knowing when you get on to that track that anything could go wrong with the car? Nowadays it still happens, but what was it like back then knowing that the chances of something going wrong were so high?**

RICK MEARS: Really, you never really think about that. Driving a car is what I love doing, and that's the whole reason I got into it. It started as a hobby just because I loved driving the cars.

You always try to keep it -- I always felt like if I stay within my limits and the car's limits, there's not a problem. Don't have to worry about it. But there's always things that can happen. Things end up happening around you from time to time, but the old saying, you just kind of put that out of your head and continue on down the road.

But the main thing for me is because it's what I enjoyed doing. Now, obviously if I wasn't having fun at it and it wasn't what I loved doing, you couldn't make me get in one. I think that is the main thing is if you enjoy what you're doing, you just put it out of your head and go on.

**Q. For all three of the drivers, trueing out, turning up the boost, qualifying mode at Indy is always tricky. New circumstances this year; is it slightly trickier, significantly more difficult? How will the next 48 hours be here for you or 72 hours be?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think with the weight, it is more difficult or it's more on a knife's edge. You saw a couple of crashes on the test we had here.

I think the wind is the thing that will play the biggest part in

how difficult it's going to be. Yeah, it will be interesting to see how it all plays out. The temperature will be a bit cooler, but you're going to have big winds, and these cars are affected a lot by that.

**Q. I don't know if maybe Tim's best for this question, but Simon has really enjoyed working with you, Scott, and it's a role that he thinks that he would like to expand if possible. Is there maybe something at Team Penske that he could do that involves him with the team and he can work with your drivers?**

TIM CINDRIC: Simon is always welcome within our team. We spent some time together last night, and obviously how Scott wants to approach the race and how these drivers approach the race, my experience is every driver is different. So I think it really depends on where the benefits are from an individual perspective.

But Simon has a lot going on on his own, beyond our team. I know Simon has been offered some really good things to do, but there's only so much that Simon really wants to do. I think he can be a benefit for anybody around this place. I don't think there's any limit in terms of what he does, but at the same time, he wants to be productive.

Just hanging around probably isn't what he wants to do, either. I think we have a pretty good balance, and we're always open to him within our team. We always look at all the drivers that have been here as kind of part of our team, and I think that's what makes us special.

**Q. Everybody up there was part of the 2018 Indy 500 win except for Scott, who wasn't here yet. Do you think that with the added weight from the hybrid we'll see more of a 2018 style of race than what we've seen the past couple of years, which is more passing?**

WILL POWER: Only if it was like a 90-degree day. It seems pretty similar to last year at the front, just switching back and forth. Yeah, I don't see anyone just driving away. It would have to be a very hot day for that.

**Q. Josef, do you remember back in 2018, it seemed that track position was extremely valuable; once Will was in the lead it was very hard for anybody to pass him because of the way the aero was at the time?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I've answered this earlier in the week, too. Just to echo Will, it's going to be, in my opinion, a very similar show to last year, bearing the weather isn't crazy hot. If it's a 90-degree day, then it can string out more.

I think the cars in a lot of ways drive in a similar fashion to

last season. There's a new element with the hybrid. That's going to change up the way you race. But I think the ability to pass is not going to deviate that much from last year.

**Q. But at the end of the race, I believe you were telling me you need to be in the top 3 because if you're any lower than that you're not going to be able to fight it out.**

WILL POWER: Yeah, the top 2, to be honest. Yeah, top 3 if these two get together type thing. But yeah, I think you kind of get locked out if you're not in the top 2. Those guys are going to go back and forth, back and forth, sort of the same situation as the last lap last year.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: As far as positioning, you're going to have to watch to see. I don't know yet. You can start studying during the race. I can tell you that.

**Q. Do you guys think it's better on race day to soak in all the pageantry and absorb all the crowd and all that stuff or try to block it out and get into the zone and focus? What's better for you at this place?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I mean, coming here my first time in '21, it was like 50 percent, and I thought that was pretty crazy, and then the next year after that was where I saw a full-blown 500. I enjoy just soaking it in. I think it's our one time a year where it generally feels like our Super Bowl and it's our biggest race. You don't know how long you're going to do this for; it's just really cool just to be a part of it. That's how I approach it. I enjoy having some friends come out and watch, and yeah, soaking in what's going to be a pretty cool day hopefully.

**Q. Will, at Long Beach last year you looked in the crystal ball and predicted a Team Penske front row lockout. I know we haven't had Fast Friday practice yet, but what do you think this weekend? Are you three going to be sitting here Sunday night?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Hold on, this is very important what he says because Will has an incredible crystal ball. I don't know how. He, like, can predict the future. It's really weird.

TIM CINDRIC: He predicted his draw number last --

WILL POWER: A couple years ago.

**Q. What's your outlook this week?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think one of our cars will be on pole, and I'm not sure about the front row lockout. We have the potential to do it, but the wind is going to play a



part. Yeah, I think one of our cars will be on pole.

**Q. All three in Fast Six?**

WILL POWER: Yes.

TIM CINDRIC: We settled this a while back. It was unanimous that the drivers are going to draw from here on out, and they've done a good job.

WILL POWER: My wife did mine last year. She will do it again.

TIM CINDRIC: I should say the drivers are going to decide who draws for them from here on out. Certainly I'll decline.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I was just thinking as you asked that, like, what if I ask Tim to do it. He'll probably say no.

TIM CINDRIC: No, we're in a good place. I got booed. I deserved to be booed.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Your last one was a bad one.

WILL POWER: That was crazy. I can't believe you got all three just like --

THE MODERATOR: With that, we'll wrap it up. The three drivers will be briefly available for one-on-ones, Rick and Tim a little bit longer than that. Thanks for leading us off here on our Fast Friday news conferences, and have a great day today.

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