

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Josef Newgarden

Alex Palou

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up qualifying Alex Palou will be on his way. He has pole position.

Josef Newgarden, with his first NTT P1 award of the season, 19th of his career. Kind of a unique qualifying format. You had two qualifying runs here to make up for a busy weekend.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think it just prioritizes. Unfortunately, the cars are just so close. Very close today. I don't want to say easy, but they're kind of easy to drive in this state. That's why you saw the lap times so very, very, very close, and you sort of prioritize lap one, lap two.

Definitely with the hybrid usage, depending how you use it throughout the run, it's going to favor lap one or lap two, and then each one is important because it dictates the grid for each race.

I think our lap one was really solid. I don't know that we could have done much better except being more risky and putting something more aggressive on the car.

Then lap two was good as well. So we're in the mix. It's certainly a tough qualifying session because you got to get it just right.

THE MODERATOR: The start of a big weekend for Josef. Questions, please. .

Q. It's been no secret how much of a struggle it's been for Penske this season as a whole. Getting the pole for today's race, how much does it mean to take a really good step in the right direction with a track which, A, you've dominated so much in your career and then, B, that it's so hard to pass that seems like it's going to be hard for anyone to out-master the King of Corn Country?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: This place is very different to what it used to be 12, 24 months ago. It's a totally different race.

Last year no one could really do anything, and it was like the one time you needed to qualify well was here last year, and we had a disastrous qualifying.

I don't really know how to analyze what the race will be. I mean, it's hard to perfectly predict it. I don't know that it's going to be very different to last year, but let's wait and see. It's hard to speak it too early. We'll see if we get a second lane working in there. Right now it seems tough.

So I guess that's to say that you just never know what's going to happen in the race. Qualifying is a good thing. I think we've had a lot of speed all year at different times and at different places. Not every time, but there's a lot of times where we have had speed, and it's just not materialized. I don't think today is necessarily a surprise for us, but it's always good to get a little win on the board. That's really all it is.

The race is what's going to matter, so we're focus on that this afternoon.

Q. If we have a similar product like we did last year, even if you win today's race or one of the races this weekend, do you still think that we should be doing double-headers here at Iowa or maybe think about doing double-headers again like we did at Milwaukee or maybe at St. Louis where the racing has been pretty fantastic in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know we need double-headers anywhere. We just need enough tracks and enough different track types. I think that's the correct formula for us.

Double-headers really got introduced at times through necessity on the schedule, but I think ideally you shouldn't need them.

Q. Josef, how are you balancing with the results this year? How do you balance wanting to have trust in the process and keep doing what you're doing versus if you keep the theory up well, if you keep doing the same thing and getting the same results, then that's kind of insanity?

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JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it's a good way to formulate that question.

I have zero doubt in our process and what we do. Man, I've been here a long time. I've worked with it feels like the best of the best, it really does, across the board. We have really good people, still do, and I think the worst thing to do would be to change what our process is. To overreact would be the wrong decision. That's definitely not what we should be doing.

It's been a unique stretch for us, but we've got the team, without a doubt. I believe in every individual here, and we've got a fast car with Astemo. It's great to have them on board.

I like this red car. It looks really good. I liked looking at it walking up to pit lane. I think Team Chevy has done a good job for us. We don't have any results to show for it, unfortunately, so we're trying to change that today.

Q. I know with the surface change here last year, a race that had forever been a tire race turned into a fuel race. I know you said you don't maybe quite know yet what to expect in the racing. If you had to pick between this being a tire race or fuel race, do you feel like you have an idea yet?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't, no.

Q. A lot of drivers say if more drivers go up to the high line, there will be a groove up there, but yet, not very many of them want to attempt the high line. Is it almost like a fait accompli that what everybody wants, nobody is willing to try?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's not an exact science. They're in a tough spot right now with this formula. I think the only way to get people to go up top is to take downforce off right now.

One thing doesn't work at every track are. The formula that's currently in place here, if you want people to go find different grip and to use the second lane, I think you have to take downforce off.

I said I don't want to talk too early because you never know. This could be a great race. It's one thing to say a prediction in here and then all of a sudden we have an amazing race. That's why I say it's not an exact science.

You almost have to run the race to see that the package and formula work. I don't think it's probably exactly where it needs to be, but let's give it some time. We'll find out

here in a couple of hours.

Q. For both of you, because Josef, you're on the pole in fourth tomorrow. You flip-flop. You're fourth, Palou, tonight. How quickly do you need to get down when starting? Do we know yet? Let's say on the starts since you're sitting on the outside, how quickly do you need to get down to that lower level? Can you stay up top on a start or a restart for five, ten, 15 laps or we don't know yet?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think we're all going to find out. The start for sure you can be up top. Most people will. I don't know how long it will last.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, we'll find out. I don't know. I have no idea, honestly. Yeah, I don't know. At the beginning of the high line session, the car felt good, and the grip was very, very good, but as soon as we started running more than ten laps on the bottom, you couldn't go up again. Yeah, I think we'll find out.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, we'll cut you loose. Thanks.

Alex Palou, with the fourth NTT P1 award of the season. Do you like this format, lap one, race one, lap two, race two? Nerve-wracking? A lot of pressure there or no?

ALEX PALOU: No. I prefer if it's not a double-header. Like today I'm happy, but I'm, like, not --

THE MODERATOR: Over the moon.

ALEX PALOU: -- over the moon because we're starting fourth. We wanted to celebrate, but the 2 car were celebrating and taking the pictures. We're, like, Oh, this feels weird.

Yeah, it's good. At least we got pole in one of those, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Alex, this was a weekend that slipped away from you last year. It looked like this was going to be your first double win. You probably prefer to get the first double win at the Indy 500.

ALEX PALOU: For sure.

Q. How important is it to capitalize on this pole position in race two and also that fourth position in race one?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it's great starting positions. I think last year on both races we were also, like, top five, top

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four. We for sure have good cars in qualifying here, but yeah, it's a long race, man, and it's, like, 25 laps longer each. It's going to be a tough day I think with the strategies and so on.

It doesn't really guarantee you much, apart of the first 10, 15 laps, that hopefully it's going to be a little bit calmer, but you never know. Yeah, it's good.

Hopefully we can have a good start, we can have a good car towards the end of the stint, so we can fight and we can move up front.

Q. So that would indicate that you are thinking tires are going to be a factor, or is it fuel? What's the most important?

ALEX PALOU: I think it's both. Hopefully it's not as fuel as last year. Last year was 100% fuel, and tires were not an issue at all.

I think it's going to be a little bit towards tires now, although fuel, it's obviously going to dictate a lot. I still don't really know because today also the practice was so short that we were just focused on qualifying.

Yeah, hopefully it's one of those that you start struggling towards the last 15 laps of the race and then you have to pit, or you either stay out and lose couple of positions. So hopefully it makes it entertaining on the strategy side.

Q. Last year in race one you were involved in a crash in that race. How difficult really is it because they still haven't repaved the front stretch and back stretch here. How difficult is it to still fight through those bumps on those sections of the track?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it's tough, especially on used tires. I think last year when I had the issue, when I spun and crashed, was out of turn four on the bump just because the tires were a bit older, and I was pushing a bit too much.

Yeah, it's tough. So hopefully it's going to be even tougher this year on tires, and hopefully makes it just more passing opportunities. I think in practice today was a little bit better than I thought. So, yeah, we'll see.

Q. What's helped you master the element of racing on the short ovals because now back-to-back years where you're going to be starting from the best starting spot in race two?

ALEX PALOU: I think qualifying alone is one. Racing against 27 other cars, it's another thing. Yeah, I think it's easier to qualify than to race.

Q. Alex, you had your best and worst finishes of your career here last year. Given your lead in the championship, what's your mindset entering the weekend?

ALEX PALOU: Hopefully we can win both of them and get my first short oval win. I don't know. The mindset is just to, I think we have a great opportunity in terms of speed and the car, the car speed and my confidence to try and fight for wins for both of them, both of the races.

If we can make it today, it would be great because we're starting on the best spot tomorrow, and if we cannot, we have something to look up for tomorrow.

Yeah, I'm excited. Hopefully it's a great track for us, and hopefully we can get a win.

Q. You've now got obviously this giant points gap in the standings. We've seen with multiple lanes that you might go more aggressive than usual. With your points gap, do you go more aggressive than usual or play the chill game and wait for opportunities like you usually do? What's the approach when you have not as much to lose as others do?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, driving-wise I think we've been driving aggressive all year. That's what got us to this point. I don't think that we need to go overly aggressive just because we have points because you can lose them very quick, especially two days back-to-back.

But it's more in terms of, like, strategy and stuff. Instead of just trying to settle for a top 6, maybe you're, like, Okay, let's just go for trying to get a win. Even if it doesn't work, we want to try and get that.

Yeah, I don't think we need to drive overly aggressive. We just need to keep on doing the things that we've been doing this season so far.

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