

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Josef, you've had some time in the car since Nashville. Obviously you have a couple tests coming up soon, St. Pete. What are you looking forward to the most in 2026?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, a lot of things. I mean, it's going to be interesting to get to Phoenix and see everybody out there. We had a test. It was so difficult to understand what this week is going to be like. We'll be excited to test in a couple weeks' time.

Q. I'm talking Phoenix by the way.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I was talking Phoenix. Excited to go back there. Arlington obviously, Markham. There's a lot of new, a lot of variable in here. It's going to be exciting to see how we stack up as always. Ready to get back to the track in full racing style once we get everybody there.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up for questions for Josef.

Q. I know your thoughts are elsewhere. How bad did you get hammered with the ice storm?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Pretty bad. It's not great.

Q. Do you have any idea when you'll be able to get any type of power restored to the house?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No, not sure. Working on it.

Q. The fact that you got to get your focus on the racing while also doing that, how difficult is that for a professional athlete?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: The racing thing is kind of on autopilot. We've been moving all winter. That thing is ready to rock. So that part is all good, yeah.

Q. I want to ask about the commercial, perfect neighbor. What was that like for you going on the fake grill?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: FOX has been great. They're honestly so fun to work with. They've got a great team. Really not just the commercial, but whenever you get to interact with anybody at FOX. I think they're having a good time.

It's been fun. It's been fun to have them as a partner. I think they've done a lot for us already. They're continuing to do more every single moment that I interact with them. Seems year over year they're continuing to step up.

It was fun. Really enjoyable. When you rock up to those sets, things are falling. When you go to the set, it's like a real deal. I said this last year, but they don't have -- doesn't seem like they have an A and B team. Seems like you're always with the A-Team. Very fun.

Q. Your lowest finish last year since 2014. What are you looking to recover from that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: To be more consistent. For us we just can't have as many bad results as we had. There's a lot of them that could have been different. They're not. So we've just got to focus on being more consistent. It's kind of simple to say that, but that's just what it will come down to.

If we don't want to finish 12th in the standings, we've got to finish more races.

Q. Penske looking for a bounce-back as a team. Any changes in the off-season routine?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think certainly we have a lot of changes. I think the core of the team is very similar to what people will have known with Team Penske. By 'core' I mean the heart, sort of the people. A lot of that is not changing. It will very much be Team Penske like we've always known it. Some of the structure is going to be different. Some of the way we different will be a little bit different.

Change can be a good thing. We can just improve some of the things that we've been doing. We're going to look to be better versions of ourselves coming into this year.

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We obviously hold ourselves very accountable for a high standard. We're trying to just be the best versions of ourselves as we possibly can. So we'll see as we get into the year what our work has proved out in this off-season.

Q. You've won the Toronto race twice. Now this year we're going to a new track in Markham: long straightaway, hairpin, long straightaway. How do you think it might be in comparison?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That's a great question. To be honest with you, I really don't know much about it. I haven't been on a simulator or anything yet. We don't have a model yet. Haven't even been on Arlington. I know more about Arlington than I do Markham. I can't speak to it much.

I heard that neighborhood is vibrant. People speak highly of it. I'm excited to go back to Canada. I think we have such a great presence there for the INDYCAR community, the INDYCAR fan base. That will still be a highlight for us, similar to Toronto.

I don't know a lot about the track yet. I'm as excited as you guys to learn what it's like.

Q. When you look back at last year, you have a new teammate in David Malukas; American kid. Kind of reminds us of what you went through with Penske. What advice have you been able to give him?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'm excited for Dave. I think he's going to do great. I think he is. I think he's going to do a great job.

It's a tough environment now. Like, everyone's good; nothing's easy these days. We've all got to work hard to be where we want to be. It's going to take all of us, as always. We're a team when we show up. We're helping each other in a lot of respects. We're going to help Dave. He's going to hopefully help us. We've got to help each other than great.

I'm excited for him. I know he's excited to get going. We'll have something to talk about here soon. We haven't done much together. We have had no track time. Get through the month of February, we'll have more to talk about, hopefully see where we can become better and where we can hopefully be great. That's what we want. We just want to have great cars every track we show up to. That's going to be the ticket.

Q. Josef, win at Nashville last season. Do you carry that high through the off-season and take it into next

season, or is it a hard reset every new season?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, I don't think Nashville really does anything, to be honest. I was just happy the year was over.

Yeah, I think it will be a hard reset, for sure, when you come to St. Pete.

Q. You mentioned testing at Phoenix earlier this year. You mentioned that you're not sure what that's going to be like. Why specifically don't you have a good read on it?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's so hard to say. When you go there with two cars -- it was 55 degrees. It was freezing for Phoenix conditions. They were still deciding the tire. There was no track grip. Will and I weren't doing anything. We weren't trying to run the second lane. I have no idea. It's impossible to say.

It will be. What they need to do is when we go there for the open test, we need to -- seeing as we've gone through this process where we run a high line session, we need to do that at the open test. The only way you're going to learn how the thing is going to race is when everybody is there and they're trying to run in some sort of race situation.

Even open tests can be tricky. You got to try to force people to run somewhat in a race condition, then you'll be able to see if we can work with what we got or not.

There's no perfect science to this. You can't just say this worked at this track, so take this. They're all different. What works at Iowa doesn't work at Gateway doesn't work at Nashville. They all need a specific tuning to it as far as the downforce and tire package.

Obviously we know when we get it right per each track, it can create a great race and we can have two lanes. That's all that's going to matter at Phoenix; can you make two lanes or not. I hope that we can.

I'm not saying you can't; I just have no idea yet. We'll have to find out when we get there with everybody on track.

Q. Something that has been in the news recently is that INDYCAR has commented they're looking at a Washington, DC race for this year. Do you have a comment on that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I know less about this than probably you guys do, to be honest with you. I have no idea. I like more races. If you're telling me I get to drive the car more, I love that. I love that.

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I don't know much about the event, though. I really can't tell you anything.

Q. It's difficult because we're thinking about you and your family right now with the ice storm, but if you can separate that, one thing you've mentioned about the off-season is an important reset point for you, get away from the racetrack. Has this off-season been that for you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, the off-season has been great, yeah. I would say it's been similar to previous off-seasons. Yeah, I mean, I don't have much to report from it. It's been good. Everything has been normal. We had another kid, so it's been a little busy. Other than that, everybody is healthy, which is like the only thing that matters at the end of the day. Is everybody healthy? Great, everyone's healthy.

Q. Does this kind of feel like a new era of Team Penske? Does it feel like there's a new era at Team Penske now?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, there's a Lex Luthor. We are good to go. We are the Evil Empire about to strike. We have the 24. Just wait. We're coming full attack.

Yeah, I mean, I don't know. I want to tell you, yeah, it feels all different. It feels similar in a lot of ways. When I go to the shop, obviously we're going to have some changes. Feels like business as usual in a lot of respects.

I'm excited. It's that time of year where the cadence is starting to pick up. We're going to at least finally get some tests here. February is always fun for that. You just don't really know anything until you actually get on track with everybody. Then you start putting some pieces together and saying all right, this is that, and this is what we still kind of need to work on.

Yeah, it feels just business as usual. Nothing really that new.

Q. What was Phoenix like, Will with a different team, different fire suit?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That was weird. That was weird.

It was more weird seeing Ron. I was like, Ron, what the heck. I wanted the debrief with Ron. I was like, We like this tire, right? It was so silly. I'm like, What are you doing over there? Both him and Will. That was very weird. It's going to take some time to get used to that, that we're not on the same squad.

Q. You talked about the changes that we might see, some things that will remain the same, but there's going to be some subtle changes within Penske. What kind of things are those?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think the way we debrief. Probably communication flow. A lot of mundane things. A lot of like process-driven things I think will be different. Almost refreshed, if you will. It will just be a new workflow. That's probably the best way to put it, there will be a workflow that will be slightly different, a different cadence on race weekend. Hopefully it will be a good, positive change.

Q. I don't want to call you the old guy on the team because you're only 35; at the same time, once upon a time you were the guy that could lean on Simon, Helio, Juan for the month of May, Will. You're the guy that people are going to be leaning on. How has that transition been for you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Fine. You know what, I am the old guy totally. I can't believe I've been doing this for 15 years. I've always had a strong sense for what I've wanted. That part is not going to change. When I was young, now I'm older, I'll still have the same projection in my voice on what I think we need to be doing. That part is going to be similar.

Q. Tell me about heading into 2026 coming off of a couple of seasons that I know haven't been everything you wanted, last year in particular. What comes to your mind when you look to this new season fighting for championships? Have you found anything in yourself, in the team operationally?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I just have like a pothole detector. Instead of not seeing where they are, I'm totally going to find them this year. That's my strategy. It's not a good strategy. If I can just avoid them without falling into the crevices, I think we're going to be better off.

I'm almost 90% positive if we fall in less potholes we're going to be better. That's my strategy right now.

THE MODERATOR: If you got one, the state of Indiana would love to borrow it.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's perfect for Indiana. You can crush the 465.

Q. Bad luck avoidance.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That's another way to put it.

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Q. Tell me about David Malukas and his influence on the team. Seemed like a kid who could be on pole, win his first race.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think little Dave is going to be great. Honestly I think he's going to do a stellar job. He probably has some people looking. You can just feel the air. I think some people are like, why is Dave in this seat? I think he's really good. I think he's going to do an excellent job.

Time will tell. It's hard to predict anything with great certainty. But as far as support, he's going to be supported super well. We've always been an open-book team. That's the great thing. You come to Team Penske, whatever tool, whatever insight, information to maximize yourself, you're going to have it available to you. It's a matter of if it works or not. You sort of sink or you swim.

Time is going to tell on that, but I think he's going to do a great job. He's smart. He's fast. He's definitely got the capability to win races. I'm not going to be surprised if we see him win races earlier than later. It's not going to be surprising.

I think it will be a great addition as long as he shows up and he is as fast as he's always been, has great feedback. That's all we can ask. I think he's going to be just fine then.

Q. Spoke with an INDYCAR team owner at Daytona who said they were looking forward to hopefully speaking with you about future opportunities. I have you atop my possibly free agent list. Are you wanting to be an INDYCAR driver for many years to come? Are you interested in staying where you've been?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'm just focused on the next task. Right now for me that's St. Petersburg. That's my focus.

Q. You're not going to know what Phoenix's conditions are like till everybody is out there. Do you think for the open test it would be a good idea if maybe they had a sim race, a short sim race, 20, 25 laps?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Actually yes. I think it would be great. In a perfect world, it would be nice to have that. I don't think that will ever happen. That's not the intent of an open test, is to run something like that.

If you're speaking about it, truthfully the only way -- the only way you can actually assess how something is going to race is to run a race situation. It's the only way. Everybody's going to be on new tires, full fuel. You got to

prepare to go out and do a full stint. That's the only way you're going to understand if it's possible or not.

The next best thing is to run a high line session because then you at least give people some comfort. Within that 15-minute period is it possible for people to run up high? The other thing that it does is it gives people confidence to do that. Not everybody has confidence to just go up there. It's good for the field.

Yeah, I don't know. I don't mean to be speaking in circles. We need to run a high line session. I think that's a minimum. If you wanted to take a step further, it would be great to run a single set race simulation. I think at a minimum, running the high line session, you'll have somewhat of an idea of is this possible.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I could suggest it all day. It's not going to happen. I can tell you the answer on that. I don't say many things with certainty. I feel very certain about that. Watch me be wrong now. Maybe that is my strategy, is to say something with such confidence that it won't happen that I get it to happen. Ever think about that? You put that in my head.

What have you been doing this off-season, Bruce? You seem different. You seem elevated. I love this. You've been eating barbecue?

Q. No.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Maybe that's it. You cut the barbecue out, you have some inception stuff in you. I like that. I'm watching your ass. I'm just telling you. I like this you, Bruce. I do that. Everybody better be on watch here. You think they're looking at me, they're looking at you, Mr. Bruce. You take the hot takes. Bring them all year.

THE MODERATOR: With that, here is for year 15 for Josef.

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