

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, March 7, 2026

Josef Newgarden

Jonathan Diuguid

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcoming the winning driver today in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, as well as team president from Team Penske in Jonathan Diuguid. Josef Newgarden led eight of the 250 laps, including the last six. His first win of the season, 33rd of his career. 10th on the NTT INDYCAR SERIES all-time list. 19th win on an oval. The last 10 wins for Josef have come on ovals. Has now won a race in his 12th consecutive season in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES. For Team Penske it's win 247 all told for Jonathan and company.

Josef, for you, how proud are you to get a win early here in 2026?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, what a day. I didn't know how today was going to go. I don't think any of us did. We were trying to make our best guess as how do we build a new car, approach this. I think we came in with a good mentality.

At the end of the day I think the team just executed. They executed at a super high level. That is what it takes to win these races. I am not going to sit here and say we were the best today. I don't think we were. We have work to do leaving here. We're never shy to admit that when we're somewhere. I think we try and be realistic about where we're at.

We executed at a super high level. Everyone was on it. The timing stand did a great job, made the right calls, great pit stops. When we needed to be fast, we were fast. Really proud of the execution.

Just like St. Petersburg, we had a really tough start there. We executed on race day. We've been talking about this, this is what we need to do, we need to be better every time we show up, do our jobs to the best of our ability, I think the pieces will fall into place.

So far it's definitely been a decent start. We got to keep it up.

Last thing I'll say is it was a good race. I didn't know what we were going to get. That second lane really started to open up. People were exploring. There were some really good cars out there. Guys were doing some amazing things in the middle of the race, even the beginning.

It just turned it into certainly a show, something you could pick apart. You could choose your battle at the end, what you want to do. It was fun to be a part of that.

THE MODERATOR: Jonathan, obviously the tire change helped out perhaps at the end for Josef. This is a big weekend for Team Penske.

JONATHAN DIUGUID: Yeah, absolutely. I think Josef mentioned it, getting a win this early on in the season is fantastic.

I think he mentioned St. Petersburg there. I would say we were conservative, kind of had a boring strategy today. Today before the race started, we decided we were going to be aggressive.

The opportunity came with 40 laps to go, that caution came out. Decided to give up the track position we had, take tires, put it in Josef's hands. He did an amazing job.

10 laps from the end, I was like, Okay, I don't know if we're going to do this. Then we started moving forward pretty quickly.

It was amazing to watch. Really happy for the group.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. This really stands out like last weekend at St. Pete where Josef charged through the field, great result. Team went through a huge evolution during the off-season. It feels like we're seeing the effects of that. What do you say after two races?

JONATHAN DIUGUID: I think it's just starting. What Josef said there is we pretty much talk about everything, whether it was finishing second in qualifying yesterday. We could



have gone around and gave each other high fives. We were talking about why we weren't on the pole.

We qualified poorly in St. Petersburg. We talked about how we could be better.

I think that's the biggest thing that's going to keep moving us forward is being open about the good parts and the bad parts. I would say that's what got us the win today, was we had a plan. We stuck to it. We were pretty open.

I think if you listened to the radio, you could have probably figured out what we were going to do. We weren't talking any codes or anything. We wanted to be exactly clear and make no mistakes. Like Josef said, it was execution that mattered.

Q. With David as a teammate, you had some fun on track, but also demonstrated what you are capable of. Thoughts about the two of you working together.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I got asked about this at the beginning of the year on Content Day.

I think David is doing excellent. I'm not going to be surprised to see him win sooner than later. I just won't. I think he's done a good job.

He's a little different. I don't mean that good or bad. He's younger. He's like from a different generation. He acts differently to me and Scott. He's very complementary in some ways. It's always nice to see something new. He's got that youthfulness to him.

You can tell he's eager to perform. I think he does a good job. He performed excellently in St. Pete. He had a little bit of a mishap with the braking, but he was fast all weekend. His feedback is good. It's concise and consistent.

Same thing here. When he says something, you can kind of trust what he's saying. That helps propel the team forward. That's all we really need for him. I think he's a great addition. I got nothing but good things to say about him. I think he's going to win a race at some point here soon.

I'll echo J.D. We're on a good start. Pretty open and honest in trying to move the ship forward. So far so good. I think we just got to keep our feet on the ground.

It's very early days. You can't get too excited after two races. We're working on things. We still got some things we got to work on. We got to be better leaving here. We're going to talk about that. There's a lot of other places

we got to be better that we are working on. We just got to stay on it together as a group all year.

Q. Is it too early to anoint you a championship contender?

JONATHAN DIUGUID: At least a championship leader.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That is a factual statement. We are leading the championship.

Palou had his mishap early. Two races, it's a very small sample size. Not surprised to see that everything got shuffled up there.

Look, I don't recall a time being at Team Penske where I didn't believe we could achieve any goals we marked out. If you go, Hey, look, for us winning the Indy 500 is most important, then how do we excel at every other track and win the championship.

I've never come into a year with this team and thought I don't know that we can excel this year, I just don't know that we can get there. I never believed that. I've always seen the potential with this team.

It looks a little different now. But that potential was always there in the past and we could deliver on it. I think we can deliver on it this year.

It's an everyday process. We're going to take it one step at a time. Doesn't mean there's not going to be some turbulence. I think if we do our jobs and control what's in our control, I don't see why we can't be in the fight.

Q. You come to a track that nobody has been to since 2018 and you win.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think we just had a great day. Typically when you see me in Victory Lane, it's probably 'cause I had the best car on the day.

I got to say I was not a believer midway through the race. But when I needed that car to be good, it was really good. I mean, it's not like I was doing something magical. It was right where I needed it to be.

That was just down to working on it, kind of going the wrong way, then coming back the right way and having the right calls, having the right support.

That's what should happen. When you show up, you're prepared, you do your job, put yourself in position and you execute. You should be able to win races. I think we did that today.

Q. Talk about the competition level out there. You were battling McLaughlin. Talk about midway through how competitive this was. Also talk about the last pit stop to take tires.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, it was a tough day. There's a lot of good cars I saw today. I think you got to have tremendous respect for the competition in this series. There's not just one guy I look at. There were a few cars that looked really competitive at different times.

I think Christian looked phenomenal. He was just driving a great race. Then Kirkwood looked really good at certain points. Certainly at the end. There was many others. I could sit here and talk about it all day. I think there were a lot of people that had great potential in this race. It's tough competition. You have to have respect for that.

I was happy to see that the race turned into a good battle is the way I would put it. The second lane did open. It got better towards the end of the race. I thought the track was in the best position at the end. That would make sense. Even the lane condition was the best at the end. I was able to go where I needed to. I could find grip when the car was starting to lose grip in certain areas. It was really cool.

INDYCARs have not always been that way. I don't remember 10 years ago where I could start searching for lines to find a better compliance or better grip level for my car. I was doing that at the end there. It was really fun to race.

I hope the show was as good as it felt from inside the car.

Q. Pit stop...

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: The pit stop? I mean, Jonathan already touched on this. We just stuck to our plan. We knew what we were going to do as far as our process going into the race. I think we stayed true to that. We made the right calls, right stops, we executed at the end.

Q. Josef, to the pit stop point, were you surprised that more people didn't gamble on tires?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Actually no. I think because of the prior situation. The restart prior, we were talking about this on the radio.

JONATHAN DIUGUID: 26 and 27 were able to stay out front.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I was really shocked when they

did that. It kind of coincided us with de-tuning our car. We didn't have a good stint on that restart. I was really surprised how competitive the people that stayed out on the prior yellow were. I think they maintained their position, from what I saw.

Q. Lost the lead to Rasmussen.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: So they were pretty good.

I think you sort of pick your poison at that point. Gamble to some degree.

If I'm gambling, I want to be on the offense. I would rather be on the offense and lose the race. We did that today. Ended up working out.

Q. Similar to the way you won the 2018 race. Describe the similarities or not the similarities.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, different day. I mean, very different race. We weren't doing this. I mean, I thought guys were about to run the fence in one and two. It was wild looking on some of this. It was cool.

It was not like that in 2018. 2018 was a little bit more simplistic. Same sort of deal where I thought we were stronger on an attack position on a restart, so I won that then there. I felt that today, too. I could make more happen in an offensive position at the end. That rung true.

Yeah, it was a very different race. We were all over the place today in a good way.

Q. J.D., the boys early in the race were all together and banging wheels. What were your thoughts about that?

JONATHAN DIUGUID: 'The boys' meaning teammates?

Q. Yes.

JONATHAN DIUGUID: I thought it was close racing. Like Josef said, there's a pretty high level of respect. When you're racing your teammate for the top five, that means your teammate is doing a good job.

They understand that as well. They're not going to put us in a situation where we have to talk about something different. Like Josef said, the group did a good job today, covered the strategies there with the 12 staying out. The 2 took tires and the 2 took the day.

I think they all respected each other and raced quite well.



Q. Before you came here, maybe you had proven this during the test at the short oval, how is the traffic situation? Is this a risky factor for the race?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Was it tough when you get in traffic?

Q. Yes.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think that was a big component of this race, which is pretty typical nowadays for a short oval. If you want to excel in this type of race, you've got to be excellent in traffic. I mean, there's just no getting around it.

That's what happens on a short oval situation, is the circulation is so high that you can't just kind of sit there and control the lead. You've got to be able to go. People are going to press you. I think people pressed hard today, really hard. There were points where they were pressing us and they were winning. We had to kind of raise our level at the end there. It all worked out.

But yeah, traffic is critical at a race like this.

Q. It is shaping up to be a Penske weekend sweep. Malukas had the pole, you win the race, Joey Logano has the pole. How important is that to get a sweep? There aren't many opportunities where that can happen with him winning both series at the same venue.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it's incredibly important. It will be so disappointing if the Cup guys do not deliver tomorrow (smiling).

JONATHAN DIUGUID: Horribly disappointing.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Great point, Bruce (laughter).

It's always fun. We got to go first. It worked out. Now you got to put the pressure on him. Look, it was very hard. I didn't think we were going to win today, to be honest with you.

It's fun. I wish we had more weekends like this to be honest with you. It's fun going on an oval together. Has it ever happened?

THE MODERATOR: First time on an oval.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's so cool. I think we could get a couple more like this.

Q. There were fans in the grandstands that have

probably never seen an INDYCAR race in person. What do you think they're going to walk away with?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'm excited to watch it back personally. It was pretty thrilling to be in it. I hoped it would turn into what it did.

The first stint, from my vantage point, didn't feel that exciting. I thought it was going to be a little processional. That does happen sometimes.

Look, we can't make every race the most incredible racing show out there. I think today turned into a good INDYCAR product. This is what we expect now when we put an INDYCAR race on a short oval. This is the type of racing we want to produce.

There's not an exact science to that. I think this sort of tire compound mixture versus the downforce level and track condition, there's all a little unique, they need fine-tuning.

When we get it right, this is the type of show we want to produce. I was happy we were able to have that in front of this crowd today.

Q. What do you think it is that made this race so good compared with your win in Phoenix in 2018? Is it the tires? The reconfigured track? The fact it was held in sunlight?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: There's multiple factors. I'm telling you the number one factor is that we have sort of taught this field a lot of things. The tires are different. For whatever reason, they seemed to produce a little less dust and marbling, kind of both those things. It does happen.

I'm telling you the number one factor is that more people explore the track now. It is not possible to keep all the lanes open unless people utilize them. You have more individuals now in this series that are open to kind of driving the car all over the place.

The car is capable of doing that as well. You can run the second lane because of the grip and downforce level and not be super slow. This all kind of feeds on itself.

I do think the difference we have now is you've got guys that are constantly trying to find that second lane, and they keep in it during the race. That's why I ask my spotter who is using it, where they were at. I could hear people were using it. I was using it. I was trying to keep it clean just so we could have a good show. If they don't do that, 50, 60 laps, it will close off. You have to wait for a caution to get a new opportunity to open that back up. But I think that is the biggest difference.



Q. Josef, can you help with a compare and contrast from 2018? I swear we had more fans here today, more energy than maybe for all three of the last races here. Speak about that. This feels like something really powerful might have been started.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I just think a great opportunity to have the type of race we had today. I really was hoping we'd have a good show. I think we produced what we expect from the INDYCAR SERIES.

I hope there was a lot of people that have maybe not seen an INDYCAR race in a while that are going to leave here and go, Hey, I should give that another look.

Both should complement each other. If you're a motorsport fan, you're just getting way more value for your weekend to have the top two motorsport championships together on the same weekend. I don't see why we can't do a little more of this. I think it's good for everybody.

Very fun to see the crowd. Everyone seemed open and welcoming in a good way. I saw motorsports fans here this weekend that seemed excited to watch racing. We put on a good show. I hope the Cup guys put on a good show tomorrow. Let's see if we can do more of it in the future.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on the win.

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