

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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**Jonathan Diuguid**

**Scott McLaughlin**

**David Malukas**

**Josef Newgarden**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are starting this morning with Team Penske. Joining us, Jonathan Diuguid, Josef Newgarden, also Scott McLaughlin, and on the far right, David Malukas.

The 52nd year Team Penske has entered the Indy 500, coming back in 1969 with Mark Donohue. The team's first win in 1972. A total of 14 different drivers have won for the team. The list reads off like a list of Hall of Famers.

This year the team is celebrating its 60th year in motorsports. Since the first INDYCAR race in 1968, Team Penske has 247 wins, 310 pole positions, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway alone the team has 28 INDYCAR SERIES wins, 20 coming in the 500, three in NASCAR, one in IMSA.

Certainly you know the list of accomplishments of the drivers. I always love this stat: combined this year the three drivers, all the team personnel, 700 years of INDYCAR SERIES experience with this race team.

Good morning. J.D., you've been with the team since 2005?

JONATHAN DIUGUID: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Leading this team, you talk about the stats, overwhelming. Now you're leading this team. Your thoughts on what it's like to lead such a championship-winning organization?

JONATHAN DIUGUID: Like you mentioned there, 60 years of Team Penske is quite a milestone. I've been a part of that for two decades. Have good experiences sitting in this seat. Last time I was sitting in the media center was when Josef won in 2024.

You come in here and there's a lot of pressure, there's a lot of pressure not just on the drivers you see up here, but the rest of the team, to build fast and competitive race cars.

We feel confident so far with the running we've done this week. That's kind of the best place to be. We're really excited to turn the engines up, let Chevy get to work on making the most power, seeing the precision that Josef, Scott and David are going to have to have on the racetrack to put four competitive laps together. It will be weather-impacted. Being able to execute when we do go on the track is going to be important. That is what we all build up to.

THE MODERATOR: David, you know well the list of names that have driven for this team. You're added to that list. Any pressure there?

DAVID MALUKAS: I'm super excited, I'm just a little bit sick.

For me it's very special. Being a part of Team Penske has always been a dream come true. I always said, I guess an early life crisis, why am I here, why am I on the planet? It was to be remembered, written across history. What better way to do that than at Team Penske, my name side by side with these great names, to be remembered as a part of this list.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, been a heck of a run the last three years. What's the hunger like going into a weekend like this?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it feels the same. Good morning to everybody. Always love being here. How could you not? It's just the best time of the year. I think we all look forward to it.

Once you drive into the facility that first time every season, for us it's really the open test a couple weeks ago, but when you drive in for the first time, it just brings you back to those excitements and nerves and memories for sure.

I love being here. Love being a part of this organization.



Love working with my teammates. That's really what drives me every day. We have a great group of people that are constantly pushing each other forward.

One thing Roger always talks about is the human capital of the team. That's where I'm going towards. I love being here. I love trying to win this race. I love working with the people on this team.

You don't really get to know what that's like until you join the organization. It's one of the best of the best. Proud to be here driving the shell car. Team Chevy has done a great job for us. We've been working all season, making good progress. Certainly we have a championship that we're going after as a group. We got to try to get this right first. Starts with this weekend. Let's see what we got.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, the car looks great. So many memories. You're a large part of those numbers with this team over many years. What will it take to add a 500?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I guess you got to be ready for anything really. I've seen a lot of it over the last six years I've been here.

Very proud to represent Team Penske and Pennzoil. Obviously celebrating the 250th anniversary of this country as well. Pretty excited to see what Pennzoil has done with the blue, red and white on the car with some stars, Evil Knievel on my suit. Pretty fun.

It's an awesome opportunity we all have this year to have a crack at this amazing race and put yourself in those lights with the people that have won this race before. I'd be lying if I said this is something that I want more than anything in the world. I'd love to win this race. Working really hard to do that.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up for questions.

**Q. David, this track has nothing in common with Phoenix, but you were impressive in Phoenix. How much of that can you transfer over to this?**

DAVID MALUKAS: I mean, yeah, they have their differences. We've had a lot of good testing so far this week. Just comes down to a team perspective, right? Getting good information from Scott and Josef. I think we have a good opportunity to be up there in the end.

**Q. In the history of this race, more drivers have won it in their fourth start than any other year. This is your fourth start. Are you confident you can match that?**

DAVID MALUKAS: Well, based on that information...

JONATHAN DIUGUID: Pretty wild stat. How long did it take you to find that?

**Q. I have nothing better to do (laughter).**

DAVID MALUKAS: Out of the past four years I've been here, I think this is the best opportunity for it, being a part of this team. So many resources for me. I can show 110% of myself.

**Q. Josef, you talk about the people at Penske. There are hundreds of people. When I look on this stage, there's two different faces than were up there a year ago. How different is Team Penske from a year ago?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Hmmm...

I think in a lot of ways it feels completely the same to me. The great thing about this group is most people that walk through these doors, they're here for a very long time, which is unique. I think the average tenure has got to be at least 10 years, maybe longer.

JONATHAN DIUGUID: 12. There's my stat for the morning (smiling).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It also took me 12 years to win the Indianapolis 500. Interesting stat (smiling).

It hasn't changed much to me. I remember Jonathan was engineering Helio at the time. Funny, you get to work a lot of different people in the group. You always hope you get to work with different people in certain capacities. Jonathan was one of these guys, I would love to work with Jonathan. I had a great engineer already.

Funny how it cycles around. You see strengths in everybody within this group. What I'm trying to contextualize for you is that there might be movements within the organization, but to me it feels the same every day I walk in the door. I would say the same today.

**Q. How did last year's situation rally you guys and make you stronger a year later, if it has?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You asking me?

**Q. Anybody.**

JONATHAN DIUGUID: I'm fine to answer.

Obviously call it turmoil, whatever you want to call it, that we had here. It took some time to get over and time to structure ourselves appropriately. I think you could see



towards the end of the year the team was operating on top form again. We captured two wins and won the final race of the year. Already captured a win here in Phoenix, a few poles already. Our performance here they Speedway this year has been strong.

Like Josef said, a lot of teams are built around process. Specifically in our reorganization, we promoted a lot from within, leaned on the strengths we had. It is a different team, a different group. Mainly the approach we're taking it very similar. We've improved in a lot of areas, too, to be honest.

I think we've got a strong group and everybody is pushing the rock the same direction. A lot of confidence going onto the racetrack tomorrow for qualifying.

**Q. David, you said you're sick. What's going on?**

DAVID MALUKAS: Just sore throat, coughing. Just your average kind of cold. I don't know if it's a cold, whatever. We're working through it.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: You'll be fine (smiling).

**Q. You guys want to sit closer to him.**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I moved away already (smiling).

DAVID MALUKAS: Instead of saying how you doing, he said you're sick.

**Q. Scott, I was at a dinner last night where everybody had to name their pick. Somebody picked you because they wanted to see a worst-to-first storyline. Do you look at it like that?**

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I mean, I guess an opportunity to go zero to hero in some ways.

I have an equal opportunity like I had last year. Just circumstances that happened. Very focused on what we need out the race car right now. Just trying to work towards getting through qualifying here, then I feel like our race car's pretty decent. Just trying to focus on the little details that will help.

You just got to set yourself up for that final stint, hopefully put ourselves there. I feel I've got the experience that I can sort of do it.

It's going to be tough as always, as close as ever. It's anyone's race in some ways.

**Q. Jonathan, you talked about getting back on track**

**toward last season. What efforts have you made specifically to try to stabilize everything within this team?**

JONATHAN DIUGUID: Yeah, I think we had a very strong team before. We have a very strong team now. We promoted some people into some different roles, created a different team structure.

We have Dave Faustino, technical director, focused on technical development of the car. Ben Bretzman is overseeing the at-track operations from the engineering side. We didn't have those roles before. They were split between different team. Now having focused accountability has been quite strong. We have a continuous development path while people are at the racetrack and people back at the shop.

Reacting to some of the personnel limitations that I viewed we had before was probably the biggest thing. Adding some capacity by promoting some people, it's paid dividends, and it's going to continue to in the near future, as well.

**Q. Josef, we haven't seen you on the podium since Phoenix. You still have had pretty consistent results. How important has it been on all these street and road courses to stay consistent and gear yourself up for May and the rest of the season?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think we're making very good progress as a team pulling our program back to where we expect it to be week in, week out. The GP was another representation of that where we're trying to steer the program into consistent speed and performance. That's more natural.

We got there towards the end of last weekend. We had two top fives which was great for the team. It's how can we convert that to wins more consistently? That's the goal.

To Jonathan's point, we're making a lot of progress. I feel very encouraged. Certainly from a championship standpoint, you have to do that. For us, we have to be up in the front every single weekend if we want to fight for the championship. That's where our mindset is at. We have good momentum as far as how the team is operating. I haven't seen the team operate any better than this in my time here. I feel very encouraged by what we have in front of us.

**Q. David, what did you learn that's going to take you one step up on the podium from last year?**

DAVID MALUKAS: I was in previous Indy 500s before last



year. I would never really race at the front towards the end. Last year it's a completely different ballgame. Those last 20, 30 laps, very different race. I feel like I've learned a lot from that race of where to position the car, where you want to be, strategies from that perspective.

Going into this season, if we end up in a similar situation, now I know a little bit more of what to do.

**Q. Josef, you mentioned the 12 years it took you. When you got over the line, how did it change your life winning here?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think that's a common question, right? Everyone wants to know what's the big change.

For me it's pretty instant. I don't know if this is the answer that people expect or want. It changes a hundred feet before the line is my experience with it. It is absolutely instant when it happens. It's very hard to describe it to people. I mean, it is a tremendous feeling that you get. I think it's got to be the greatest feeling you can have if you're a motorsports person.

That's that instant gratification that you've been working towards. I think that immediately removes some pressure on yourself. You can be at ease. That's how it has changed my life. I don't feel like I'm here that I've got anything to prove to anybody. It certainly changes that aspect.

I still have a lot that I want to prove to myself, there is a lot that I want to accomplish. All of that stays the same. You're personal feeling, your relationship with the Speedway changes a hundred feet before the line when you win this thing. That's really what I've experienced with it.

**Q. You say you still want to prove stuff to yourself.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: There's plenty. I have a high bar internally. We'll see if we can keep notching everything up.

Look, we could sit here forever and make a list. It's like Roger. Roger makes a list with 15, it turns to 20, then 25. It's never going to stop. That's how I operate, too.

**Q. The history of Team Penske, your 60 years in motorsport, successful in INDYCAR, NASCAR, IMSA. Nevertheless I think there's still unfinished business when you remember the famous PC1 back '75, '74. You think one day Roger will enter again F1?**

JONATHAN DIUGUID: I would say it's unlikely. I think

he's got a lot of different goals focuses. He's pulled a lot of different directions. I would say entering F1 is pretty far down the totem pole of things he's trying to accomplish.

We talk a lot about preparation and things like that. We have a focus of making sure that Team Penske cars are the best cars in the grid. That transitions from how we look in the garage to how we look on the racetrack. We try to bring the highest preparation and presentation we can.

**Q. David, compared to your experience one year ago with AJ Foyt, what does the program look like in terms of logistics? What has the Penske difference made?**

DAVID MALUKAS: I think it's just preparation, keeping my mind at ease. There's so many resources. That comes out not even before the 500, but pre-season.

I went into St. Pete, I felt actually very calm, the calmest I ever felt just because I had so much prep. Any information that I needed from the team, they would provide it. There's no need for that overthinking that you would fall into. Any thought I would have, I could tell the guys, Fernando, Mustafa, James, by the time I wake up, they'll give me all my answers.

Bringing that into this qualifying weekend add the 500, I feel actually calm. Any thought process I have, it's going to be there.

**Q. J.D., weather this weekend. You have three drivers that want to lock out the front row. Josef has won here from 17th. How do you manage that risk/reward of letting your guys go for it but knowing what you have and being satisfied what you have throughout the weekend?**

JONATHAN DIUGUID: I think a lot of it goes to relying on the feedback from the drivers, to be honest. Practice run here, you can go from feeling like you have the best car, put a new set of tires on, have a hit to your confidence.

I think it's really about finishing on a good base and a good confidence level. If we go out there and do one run today, Scott says I don't have anything else to learn, we'll take it back to the garage.

It is risk versus reward. I'll pick on Scott a little bit. Last year we had a crash leading up to qualifying. That's the risk. It takes months to prepare these cars. When you have those kind of setbacks, it can impact your race, have a knock-down effect all the way through.

It is all about building up the confidence through practice. All three guys are at a very high level right now. It's just



about executing what we need to get done today, putting it in the garage preparing for tomorrow.

**Q. Can you take us through how maybe the past drivers are different in terms of what they offer in terms of advice.**

DAVID MALUKAS: It's all different forms of advice. For me coming back from 2024 off of the wrist injury, I went through so many different teams, was able to collect so much information.

I'm 24 years old, but in the grand scheme of things I'm young. I'm ripe for absorption of information. Right now here at Team Penske it's been the best. There's information from Scott and Josef. I can also look at the history from previous years and really collect a lot of that information.

Overall whatever team I've joined, it's all helped to become who I am today.

**Q. Anything from Rick Mears in particular that you've tried to soak up?**

DAVID MALUKAS: Other than some good stories of the past so far. I have more time to talk and get some more information.

**Q. Jonathan, throughout Team Penske's history, there's been certain eras in management. Did you feel like one of the benefits that has happened is now it's your turn? Guys like yourself and David Faustino, Ben, this is an era where now they're getting the opportunity to go out there and shine in additional leadership?**

JONATHAN DIUGUID: Yeah, I think so. We put people in these positions, we try not to micromanage them. For them to be able to put their touch on certain things, it's important for them to have accountability but also share in the successes, too, as well.

Indianapolis is the absolute benchmark and absolute test of everything. I guess time will tell here in a few weeks if we made the right decisions and put the cars in the right position to end up in Victory Lane. That's the ultimate goal and judgment.

We can feel good about finishing 10th, but that's not what we come here for. We come here to win first place and take home the trophy.

Really excited to work with those guys. A peer challenge environment: I challenge them, they challenge me. I think

the solutions that come out the backside, we are better for it. The amount of respect that everybody has for what everybody is bringing to the table is extremely positive. It's a good working environment.

**Q. Tim Cindric said when you have all that responsibility, a man in that position really thrives in having those extra duties. Do you feel the same way? Are you thriving in this role?**

JONATHAN DIUGUID: It's a challenge. That's probably the best way I would describe it. Like Josef mentioned, I have my own internal goals, use that to determine if I'm thriving or not. The finishing position is how the rest of the world views it.

In general, I'm quite happy with wherever the team is. I'd say we're not done with what we're pushing on. Hope to continue to raise our form and be in Victory Lane more regularly.

**Q. Josef, you said you have a lot more to accomplish. Do you have a certain number of Indy 500s you want to win, certain number of championships? Do you have those numbers in your head?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I have all the numbers in my head, yeah. That's where they'll stay for now (smiling).

DAVID MALUKAS: He's going to beat the pullup world record, then the squat world record (laughter).

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'm curious, too. Sorry, my throat. Probably David.

DAVID MALUKAS: I started it.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'm fine.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: David is fun to have around. He's unique. He's a little different. Sometimes you need that.

DAVID MALUKAS: Is that a compliment or...

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Up to your interpretation.

No, I meant it as a good thing.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: He's a perfect fill for the 12.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's hard to replace what was in the 12, but we definitely got something different.

DAVID MALUKAS: You always say it like you got something different. Something unique (laughter).



SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Something very different  
(laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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