

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Josef Newgarden

Scott Dixon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Josef Newgarden joins us. Two wins this season. Tomorrow will be his eighth start on the Mile. Two-time pole winner here. Best finish of fifth back in 2014 and 2015.

Quallie sim maybe at the end there?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, we got a pseudo sort of half run.

THE MODERATOR: P1 in practice today. Your thoughts kicking off the weekend?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was an okay start. We'll see what tomorrow brings. It's going to be a tough race. I think there was a lot of learning with the tires just 'cause we had two different compounds to start. Wow, I shouldn't say. They were different compounds, different ages, as well, which is a big difference. Feel like everybody was trying to figure out how to make the most of that. You have to adjust. You're kind of tuned into one, then you have to tune into the other.

I think it was a pretty good start. We'll see how the weekend goes. The Snap-On car looks amazing. I really like the livery. We always have something different. I like the one we brought this weekend. Hopefully we can be fast with it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for Josef.

Q. This has been your statistically worst track. If that is a conversation you've had with the team or a coincidence?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I had no idea that was the case until you just told me (smiling). Is it really?

Q. Bringing the good news for you.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I had no idea. No, we've had zero

conversations about that. I don't know what that means. We'll see what happens this weekend, I guess.

Q. Is there anything strategically you feel has been missing here compared to all the other short ovals?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I got wrecked from the pole one year. Never had that happen except for at this track. I would hope for that to not happen again. That was one of 'em. Maybe that's part of the evidence for the jury (smiling).

Q. With the lack of practice, just one session, how do you feel about it? It's like a get-after-it type weekend, get out there and race twice.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That's a good way to put it. Feels like a go-kart event, which is not a bad thing. Go-karting is the most fun that you have in racing, okay? It feels very pure, kind of a little bit kind of chaotic, get after it, just go do it. I think that's a good thing. It's kind of fun.

But it's also tough. It's tough on the teams. Kind of have to show up with your A game when it's like that. If you don't roll off the truck good, it's very difficult to catch up on a weekend like this, very difficult.

You're sort of trying to learn through the race then to fix it for race two, which is a really bad equation on the doubleheader. You don't want that to be the case.

I think we've done our homework for the most part. I think we should have something to fight with. We were all here testing, so you have to lean on the tests a lot for what's happening. The only caveat to that is the tire difference. Slightly different to the test, so you have to factor that into your decision making.

Q. You mentioned the livery you've got. Really is pretty stunning. Is this one of your favorite liveries?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah. We could go pick some barbecue up with that thing. You and me, Bruce. Convert that bad boy to a two-seater.



Q. Here they call it a pig roast.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We'll do a pig roast. We can barter with them with wrenches (smiling). We'll talk about it offline, Bruce.

Great-looking car, though, I agree.

Q. Josef, of all the different ovals you've driven on, how fun is this one to drive?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I love everywhere we go. We have such a diverse group of tracks. The challenge of trying to master different types of tracks is what's fun about INDYCAR. I like everywhere. This is certainly up there.

Obviously the most historic racetrack that you're going to find in North America, which is a cool fact about Milwaukee. INDYCAR specific when you look at DNA. I think that already makes it a fan favorite.

It's fun to drive, because it's flat. Unforgiving track if you get it wrong, which makes it challenging and exciting for drivers. It's gratifying when you make a good car around here because it makes you feel like a hero in some ways. Can look good out front. It can be a very fun track if you get it right.

Q. A doubleheader weekend, do you believe there should be different lanes for the races?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yes and no. I mean, I think I remember back, what was it, two years ago when we did the doubleheader, the second race really changed because the grip level changed.

You got through that first round, then I didn't even run it, that's the one I got wrecked on the pole, so I wasn't in it. I remember watching it. The strategy altered because the way the track was driving. Balance of the car was different. You'll get natural deviation. Different weather conditions. From what I looked at, it looks like it might be hotter on Sunday. That will change the way you race as well.

I'm not too perturbed about it being the same distance.

Q. On the format question, you mentioned it's kind of like a go-kart race. Would it be better to qualify today?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: All of our preference would be to have a more standardized format, which we would normally see a practice, a Q, a practice and the race. That's INDYCAR's preference, too.

I think maybe some of this came down to some variables, TV, et cetera, how can we get the best audience. That's what was explained to us. You can't fault FOX or INDYCAR for trying to put the most eyeballs on the sport.

I think, yeah, it doesn't bug me. If there's a preference, we like the standardized format. Coming, showing up, having to do it this way, it also doesn't bug me. It's still fun.

Q. Big TV numbers in DC. Can you comment on that.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Pretty incredible. That was a lot of the goal of the weekend was that: How do we expose people to INDYCAR racing? They just executed a great race, too. It was a fun opportunity.

It was very surreal to be there in the moment. We had thought about it and talked about it for six or eight months. Being there was a whole different deal.

It just hit home how cool it was to be in the capital running race cars around. I think everybody was envious of that race. Other motorsports championships I think wanted to be there and be a part of it.

INDYCAR did a great job. I saw the stat or someone sent us a stat that 40% of the viewership was new people that had never seen INDYCAR before. If the goal was to get new eyeballs on the sport, I think they achieved it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Josef.

Scott Dixon joins us. Six-time INDYCAR SERIES champion. 2009 winner here at the Mile. Tomorrow will be his 17th start on the oval.

Good start it seems for you, the team. Thoughts on practice today.

SCOTT DIXON: Decent, yeah. As I'm sure others maybe commented, I think it's hard to try and put in qual sims, race runs, all that kind of stuff. It seems like everybody doesn't go on the same program, like the speeds on track can be very different. Definitely interesting there.

We did the first Q sim, then went into race running. Obviously everybody had an older set of tires, too, which balance was quite tricky on those. Then we were meant to do another Q sims, did one, got the caution, so didn't make much of that one. Then we just went back straight into race running.

Speed-wise I think the car's pretty good. I think they rolled off quite well. We didn't really emphasize enough later in the session on straight-up speed and Q for tomorrow.

Hopefully we'll be okay.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Your career with Ganassi started here in 2002. Does this mean a little bit more this weekend because this is the last one you get to do with Chip Ganassi Racing?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. Yeah, definitely started here. It was definitely an interesting race. Remember it well. I think almost missed qualifying. I was asleep in the truck, somebody had to come and get me (smiling). That time for me, a lot going on. There was a lot of changes, a lot of uncertainties. Obviously it worked well.

I think we had a very fast car in the race. I think we had an issue in one of the cautions there and moved backwards a little bit. We were running in the top four or five for most of it. Fun memories of this place. It's been a great track.

I hadn't really thought about much where it started here with Chip. Hopefully we can finish it well this weekend, as well.

Q. What's the key to winning here?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think like most of them, stay out of trouble. I think the starts and restarts, having a car you can really trust. We saw that from Rasmussen last year. Didn't really have straight-up speed, but he was able to be on the bottom, on the top as well, maneuver the car around quite easily.

I think that's really where for us we struggled a little bit. We kind of have good pace, a certain portion of the track that we stick to, but if we try to move off it, it gets a little bit tougher. The working window is quite small.

I think all of us tried quite a bit of stuff today. Felix and myself, especially on the long runs, seem pretty happy.

Q. You raced here in Indy Lights, in CART, in the IRL, then the unified series we have now, then a long stretch where we didn't race here at all. Yesterday they announced a five-year contract extension. You as a competitor, how important is that?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, stability is key. Obviously this race I think is definitely a marquee event for what the history and heritage is of INDYCAR racing.

It's definitely a very difficult circuit, difficult to win here, difficult to have a clean day. Obviously it's double difficult with having a doubleheader, as well. It's great news to

hear that. Fantastic for the sport.

Yeah, I think this is going to be fantastic racing tomorrow and Sunday, but also for the next five years.

Q. Of all the cars you've driven here, what was the most fun to drive and why?

SCOTT DIXON: That's a tough one.

I don't know. The Indy Lights car was good. I think we nearly lapped the whole field (smiling). CART was pretty impressive I think with a thousand horsepower at this circuit, the little speedway wings. There was definitely a lot of power, a lot of management throughout that race tire-wise and things like that.

I don't know. They're all very different. I think then when we came here in '03, '04, you were flat in those cars around here, which was insane. The cornering speeds were extremely high. I think any driver, if you can go around a mile oval flat, is pretty nuts.

I don't know. They all kind of have their own kind of special feeling. The winners are always a lot of fun.

Q. Do you believe the races should have different lanes to alter the strategy so it's not just copy and paste from race one to race two?

SCOTT DIXON: Probably doesn't matter. I think where the cautions fall really change how the race plays out anyway. I think we see that throughout the year. Race one in previous times that we've had doubleheaders to race two I think strategy-wise have been quite different.

It just really depends on where the cautions fall, where you have accidents and things like that.

Q. How much has your car translated from the test a month ago to today? How do you feel about it overall from the test to today?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think the spanner in the works was the first set of tires everybody had. We actually stuck it out for almost I think 50 or 60 laps on that first set, where a lot of people after the first run switched straightaway. Then going through notes from other cars, looks like everybody was very loose on that first set. It wasn't really comparing apples to apples, which was unfortunate.

The car at the test was quite good. We had weird situations where we tried to do qual sims and had yellow flags, as well. I guess that played true today, as well.



Yeah, hopefully tomorrow no cautions in our qual sim.

Q. Do you think we need to practice closer to the race day, like right before the start of the race?

SCOTT DIXON: You mean as in conditions and stuff?

Q. Yes.

SCOTT DIXON: These schedules are kind of strange. I alluded to it at the start. Trying to put qual sims and race runs in the same practice is not particularly easy. I think Josef touched on it, too. It's what everybody has to deal with, same for everybody. It's not perfect, but I know for next year they can switch that up.

Looks from race one to race two the conditions are going to be vastly different. Good thing is, same for everybody.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming in, Scott.

SCOTT DIXON: Thank you.

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