

IndyCar Media

Conference

Sunday September 4, 2016

Josef Newgarden

Helio Castroneves

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by our second-place finisher, Josef Newgarden here at Watkins Glen International for the IndyCar Grand Prix at the Glen presented by Hitachi. Joseph, this is your fourth podium of the season. It was a rough race for you, you started 12th and were able to work your way up. How were you able to gain so many positions throughout the race?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, I think the weekend in general was tougher than we would have liked. We didn't start -- we were pretty decent in the first day on Friday and then had a little bobble on day two in the morning. Into Turn 7 we had a little wreck, and tried to just have a smooth qualifying yesterday, which I think we did. We weren't as fast as we wanted to be, but we were fairly smooth, and then we had a pretty good race all in all. I think we got shuffled back really early, had to go wide in Turn 1 after there were some spinners. But once we got off strategy we passed a lot of cars. Able to make the fuel thanks to Chevy, and then I think we just had a great Fuzzy's Vodka car today, and that's ultimately what made the difference for us to secure second.

THE MODERATOR: Joined also by our third-place finisher Helio Castroneves, driving the No. 3 Hitachi Team Penske Chevrolet. Helio, you said before you seemed to qualify really well here at this track but the race just never really went your way, but your first podium here at Watkins Glen International. How were you able to break that streak today?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, this time it definitely paid off. The early yellow probably, before we pit, did not help us out when we were running in the top 5, but then we were able to put our back -- my car was really difficult in traffic. I knew my setup was more conservative than the other guys, so it was really difficult to catch on the straightaway. We were kind of struggling a little bit. So during the run we just got another yellow, and we just made a pit stop, and we dropped to sixth, which was very good strategy, but we knew that what we're going to do, we've just got to keep going.

So we decided to do that pit without changing tires, and then as we start saving fuel, RP was on the radio saying, you've got to do better than that. I said, RP, I'm doing everything I can to make it happen but it's not happening, so we've got to change plan here. And it was great because they were able to listen and we were able to execute right away, so we decided to turn the pace and tried to catch Dixon because he had a big gap.

And then my dash froze, so now I don't know what's going on with the fuel mileage, so I'm like, great. The good news is I don't need it. And then we stopped, and about two laps to go, it was about 35, 37 laps on the tires, and it was really difficult, and obviously people started running out of fuel and we were able to capitalize on that. Great team effort from the Hitachi team, Hitachi boys. Looks like now it starts coming back, our luck, especially after Texas. We were able to crash and come back and finish in the top 5. It shows that we're right there.

Unfortunately the win -- it was a little bit far to go unless something would have happened with the No. 9, but he was over the weekend in a league of his own. Good job for them, and right now we're still in the championship top four. I don't think we have a chance for Sonoma, but the good news is Team Penske is very close to sealing the deal.

THE MODERATOR: Everyone has been talking all weekend about how great it is that the Verizon IndyCar Series is back here at Watkins Glen. Josef, now that you've actually experienced here at the track, how great is it that the cars are back here and we're coming back for a couple more years to come?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it's great. Back when I was like a toddler, I was watching Helio around this place, and he was just my hero around here.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: How many years ago?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: In all seriousness, I think 2008, 2009, not too long ago, I did love watching the races around here. IndyCar was always -- I actually watched the 2010 race back last night going to bed, and they always look fun around this place. I was kind of sad

when they stopped coming here, and then you had that five-year gap that we've had not being here. For me it was special because I've always wanted to race here. It's the first time I've ever been here in an IndyCar, in a race car in general, and I think just for IndyCar in general, it's been great for the fans. We have a lot of good fans up here. I think the track really deserves a lot of credit for the turnaround that they did.

We announced this in May. It's three months ago that they announced we're coming back here, so I think for the turnout we did have, it was amazing. I think you saw they were pretty sold out on campers. There was not much space left for anyone to come camping, and you could see that when we were on the parade lap.

I can only imagine what we can do with another year to prepare for next season, and I think we'll come back here with an even better show and ramp it up a bit more. Yeah, for me it was very special, and I think for IndyCar it was very special to be back here, look forward to years to come.

THE MODERATOR: Helio, I'll ask you the same question but from the experience of somebody that was here when IndyCar raced here six years ago and now is back, just your impressions on the series being back here and coming back for the foreseeable future.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Can you repeat the question again?

THE MODERATOR: Just your general impressions of IndyCar being back here at Watkins Glen.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Oh, my God. I said when I was having lunch upstairs at the Legends, which was really an honor for me to be with Bobby Rahal and Dario, it was really cool. This place is the DNA of open wheel. This place is historic. I mean, we're talking about many, many years ago, and Bob Rahal was talking about 1974 coming over here, and how cool is that, that we're still coming back. The layout is similar. They were saying that they used to go without the Bus Stop, which was incredible.

But my point is this is the DNA of open wheel, and it's great to have the IndyCar Series back again. I'm very happy that they signed two more years, and hopefully we keep going because those are the typical type of tracks that suits our racing style, here, Mid-Ohio, Elkhart Lake, hopefully one day Laguna Seca, Sonoma. There's a lot of places that is really, really cool. This is the type of races we should be doing. Long Beach is another one.

He was talking about watching me. I was watching a lot of those guys, as well, back then, and for me just it's

great to be back. Hopefully we keep going, and great job for the entire organization, by the way, because not only about the surface, new surface, back again, there was so many people camping. I think this is becoming a tradition for people to come over here and bring their kids and have a good time.

I have only one complaint, when the guy from the PA system wakes us up at 6:00 in the morning to put Formula 1 -- he was not even talking, he was just putting the Formula 1 on the speaker, I was a little bit upset. But at the end of the day, hopefully I'll talk to the guys to make sure that -- it doesn't need to be at 6:00. It could be at like 8:00. But anyway, it was so good. Everything is unbelievable. Hopefully next year we'll come back the same but not in third place but first place.

THE MODERATOR: Just like the cannon going off at Indy; you should be used to it by now.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: This is my first time I have motor home, so Rev Group is a great group of guys, and I'll tell you what, it was a little bit interesting. Were you here?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't have a motor home yet. Hopefully one day.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Talk to me. I can help you.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'd like that. That would be great. I've got to get your number, man. I don't even have your number.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I'll set you up.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Thank you, buddy.

Q. Helio, can you compare the grip between the last time you were here and here, and Josef, you did it the first time. Did it live up to the hype?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: We're talking about 5.6 seconds faster than the pole position six years ago. That just shows that -- I mean, we're fighting for hundredths of a second, and when you're talking about five seconds, it is massive different speed. It is unbelievable the way we do the Bus Stop -- I'm not sure on TV, I haven't watched it yet, but I'm not sure TV gives you the right speed, but trust me, when you're going on the Bus Stop and just downshift once or sometimes twice, man, that thing is fast, and the Carousel, as well. I was flat out.

I was asking Montoya when he was in Formula 1, I said, that's exactly what it used to be in those days with Formula 1. Just to show that we're right up there. This is definitely physical, but we love it.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, just to give you an idea, I have never added an oval type padding to my headrest on a road course, and I had to add one this weekend. At one point on the second practice on Friday, at the very end -- it was a two-hour session so it was a long practice and we were running a lot. The very last run my head was just going through the Carousel, like Helio said, flat out, and then all of a sudden I was like, I can't hold it anymore. It actually fell over and I was trying to see where I was going still, and it was like, where am I going.

To give you an idea, you never do that on a road course. We have pretty strong necks that you build up after driving the car for a long time and being in the gym, and it's one of the things we work on. But the speed here is the highest we've ever seen I think anywhere in an IndyCar. We've never pulled G's like we pulled here. Part of that is the IndyCar, the technology that's been put in through the aero kits and all the work Chevrolet has done, but then also a lot of it is the surface and just the nature of this track. It's a very fast track already, and the surface they put on made it unbelievably fast. I don't think it hurt the racing at all. If anything I thought the racing was amazing today. All around, it was a big bonus for the track with everything they've done over the last year.

Q. Josef, how are you feeling with your result today going into Sonoma?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I'll be honest with you, I didn't think we were going to be on the podium today. Not to sound like I was pessimistic going into it, but we just didn't have a smooth weekend. I came into the weekend thinking we could win here after we had our test. We were very fast at the test, felt really good about things with the whole team. The weekend started going along, and on Friday we were kind of around sixth, seventh, eighth. We were just in that top-10 region, and it just wasn't enough. Scott clearly had a pretty big edge on anyone this weekend for the most part.

Then we kind of progressed through qualifying, and we lived through that, and we didn't have a great qualifying result with 12th. I think it's one of the worst we've had this year. So going into the race, it was like, man, we've got a lot of work, so we did a lot this morning on the setup of the car in the warmup to try to make it better, and I was really surprised. I think we had a great car in the race. Wasn't as good as Scott's; I think he was just clearly ahead of everyone this weekend, but I really think we were a solid top-five car, not considering how the yellows fell or anything like that. I think we had a very strong car pace-wise and we executed well. We could save fuel just as good as anyone, and that's what got us second place ultimately,

so I feel great about it. It was a great result for us. Now that we can go try and win the race in Sonoma, we'll see where we end up in the end.

Q. Josef, you mentioned earlier it was a tough weekend, you had the accident or wrecked the car. I suppose it was repaired. Was the car the same like before, or did it behave a little bit different?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No, I think we started losing our way more as the second day progressed, and really in qualifying we lost our way, so the wreck didn't affect that. I think it actually wasn't too bad. When I first hit and I was looking at all the body work, the rear end, basically the rear wing exploded, so it just looked terrible. Everyone was like, wow, it was a huge hit, but we got it back and it actually wasn't that bad. I think we only bent one toe link from the suspension, so that's pretty minor for a hit around Watkins Glen.

We fixed it pretty easily, to answer your question, and the car wasn't different after that. We were just kind of struggling to figure out what we needed from a race pace standpoint.

I think we just lost our way more so in qualifying and then tried to recover this morning.

Q. Helio, you mentioned earlier, if I understood it correctly, your dashboard was frozen and you couldn't control the fuel consumption?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That is correct.

Q. Did you panic when this happened?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: No, I just noticed that the number wasn't changing, and I realized that something was froze. But the good news is, like I said, we were in not saving fuel mode, and we didn't have to go for it.

As long as they were able to tell me when to pit, there was no issue. But it was just, I tried to change pace to see if it would come back, but unfortunately it didn't, but that was not an issue for us.

Q. Helio, Josef talked about this a little bit earlier, but there was a lot more action than anybody expected, I think, in the race. Going into it I think a lot of people thought no one would pass. There was thankfully a lot of passing. What would you attribute that to?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, a lot of grip, different strategies, patience. How many yellows did we have, four, three? Three, eh? So basically that was probably the average that we were thinking about, and every time Brian -- in fact, it was even mentioned in the drivers' meeting, every yellow, another yellow comes to follow it.

But because there was so much grip, so people were able to take advantage of that, and when you have a full tank of fuel, the car does behave sometimes a little bit different, even if you were running in the morning but temperatures were a little bit higher, some people running different type of downforce, a lot of people running I think what I saw low downforce -- I think him and I were similar, more high downforce.

You know, when you have that kind of a difference, probably that's what happened, and the Push-to-Pass, a lot of passing back and forth, and that's what happened.

Q. Helio, on the restart it looked like you had -- Kanaan got in the way a little bit when Scott passed you. I wonder if you could talk about what happened there.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That's correct. I did not understand what's going on because all of a sudden he's turning in and kind of like slowing down. I didn't know if it was going green or not, and then I saw him coming in, but it was too late, and I think Scott also hang back, so he got a very good run in Turn 11. I'm not sure if they were communicating or if it was just coincidental in that kind of specific timing. Obviously it caught me as a big surprise, so I didn't have much reaction to do with Scott. I wasn't even in the Push-to-Pass to be honest because it did throw me off a little bit, but I don't think it was malicious intention, it just was kind of like very sudden, very -- I was not expecting that, let's put it this way.

Q. When someone locks in at a track like Scott has here, is it feel? Is it just growing confidence? Is it great engineering, maybe some combination of both? Why has this guy been so good here, especially when you look at the amount of times since the series has been here?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, obviously Scott is no one that -- not a guy that doesn't have any experience and a guy that knows what he's doing, and I do believe also the fact that some of the type of this track probably suits his driving style, as well. And the team obviously, Ganassi won many championships before. It's a combination. So when you put all those ingredients together, it just sparks on.

I have to say, and he even said on the podium, people start catching up during the weekend because even that he has something in the car, we were still able to kind of like look and see what kind of downforce those guys are running. Unfortunately you can't see under the hood, let's put it this way, but I feel that it's a combination of all the details, and obviously Scott is a very good driver. When you put those things together, that's the result.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, my sense would be I think it goes in cycles to be honest with you. I was watching the 2010 race and it actually looked like the Penske boys were the ones that had everything hooked up that weekend. That was the last car version, so that wasn't the DW12. This is the first time back with the DW12. Maybe they figured something out in the first cycle of the year here. When you come back next year, that might not be the case again; maybe everyone catches back up.

Sometimes you see that, a team will lock in on something quickly at a circuit, and they'll be ahead for a year and then it takes people a while to catch up. Sometimes it happens the opposite way. Penske does it sometimes where they figure something out. I think if you look at us, we were locked on something at Iowa. To me that's just a cycle thing. You're going to see that through a lot of different groups, and I think really any team is capable of it actually in the IndyCar Series now, so you're going to see that kind of cycle in and out, and I think they just hit it right this year and it was kind of hard to catch up, like Helio said.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I think that's a great point, as well, because it was not only him. It was all four cars very fast from Ganassi, Tony was fast, Chilton was fast, 83 was fast. And I think Elkhart Lake was very similar, and that's when you start looking. They figured out something that benefited them, and obviously they seem to -- they like this type of circuit.

Q. Josef, when you think of everything that's happened since June 5th, your injury, then you come back with that dominant win at Iowa, you're driving well, the season is almost over, and your name is in the news practically every day as a driver that's in demand. How do you approach the next couple of weeks?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Wow, I don't know. I think for me, it's been nice just being able to run the last couple IndyCar races and try and be somewhat in the title fight. You know, honestly we're not in it now. It's going to be between Will and Simon. I don't know how the points shook out. But there's no one really close enough to challenge those two guys. I guess what I meant by that is we're in the top 5. We're kind of challenging for the top group, so for me, I've just been focusing on that. I've been working with the team. We were excited to come here. It was really a bummer to miss Texas. I think we would have had a very strong car there. I think Ed proved that in the race. He looked very good, and I think we would have been just as good, too, so that's an opportunity missed for us. So I'm just kind of enjoying the last couple events of this season because we've been so good with the Fuzzy's

Vodka ECR team and then can kind of just think about the future after that.

I think the nice thing about IndyCar now is you don't really have to think about that stuff until October. It's not like you're really pressing to do something until October, right, so I think we're going to try and finish off the year super strong, and fortunately that's where my thoughts can remain.

Q. Let's look forward to Sonoma, another high downforce -- it's going to be a pretty grueling track similar to this. Can you give us a little bit of a preview?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think you're going to see a great race again at Sonoma. I don't know what it is, but when the kits originally came out, everyone was very concerned about the racing, and there's been I guess a progression of how the racing has been on road courses, and I don't think you could really have asked for much better racing this year on road courses. It's the same thing today. Everyone is like, wow, there was way more passing than we thought would be possible, particularly with the pavement. They thought that was going to make the passing hard with how much grip was around this place. You've just seen amazing racing.

I think part of it is the drag of the car. I do think they toe pretty well, and when you get the different combinations of aerodynamic setups like Helio talked about, you have people on high and low downforce that creates a lot of opportunity for movement.

So going to Sonoma, I think you're going to see a great race. As far as what's going to happen at the front, I don't know. I think there's a lot of pressure for sure on Will and Simon, and that's going to be up to them how they manage that. And really for guys like Tony, Scott, Helio or me, it's kind of a battle for the best of the rest.

We can kind of just have the fun of going out, having a really attack-style weekend and see where we land because at the end of the day, we want to finish as high up in the championship as we can, but we don't have the pressure necessarily of fighting for the title, so I think it makes it a little bit more of a relaxed approach and being able to attack and really enjoy the weekend there.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, absolutely. We're going to try to finish this championship as a good style sponsor for Team Penske. Like I said, I think the two spots now are locked in, first and second, but we want to -- we have four cars. Unfortunately with Juan Pablo, so many incidents that he had this year, he wasn't able to bring it back.

But for sure, trying to put all three cars up there would be phenomenal. We don't know yet about Sonoma. We're going to be testing. I think a lot of people this Thursday. It will be extremely crucial for us that we are battling for third place in the championship, and I'm sure obviously for the two guys battling for the championship.

At this point, we're going to do everything we can to finish one, two, three in this championship.