

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday June 25, 2017

Scott Dixon Josef Newgarden

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our Verizon IndyCar Series post race press conference. Pleased to be joined by our second-place finisher, Josef Newgarden, driving the No. 2 DeVilbiss Team Penske Chevrolet.

Josef, congratulations on a podium finish, your first here at Road America. Take us through your race. Especially those last few laps, you were closing in on Scott. Not quite enough today, but a good finish for you, and also for Team Penske.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it was a good day. It stings a little bit coming home second when you feel like you have a winning car. Scott was great today. So was Ganassi Racing. Those guys did a great job. Certainly very deserving of the win.

But that's tough coming up a little bit short. I felt like when the caution came out and we were on the primary tires, Helio and Scott had the alternates, I thought this is probably not going to be very good on the restart. It was hard to get temperature in them to get up to speed for the restart.

I don't know if it sealed our fate, but once the race was over, I was like, That's what sealed our fate. It was an ill-timed caution. If that didn't come out, we would have gotten 10 laps or so on the tires, we would have been okay.

Once we shuffled back to third, it was about trying to get back by those guys. At that point we were on the same strategy pretty much the last stint. So it was hard to do anything with Scott. Felt we were a touch quicker than him, but couldn't do anything on that final stint.

Tough coming up short, but a great weekend for us at Team Penske. We were strong all weekend. Just didn't get it done when it counted in the race, so that's going to sting.

THE MODERATOR: Your second IndyCar start here at Road America. Now that we've been back for the second year after such a long absence, your thoughts on the track, the atmosphere here at Road America?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's great. You can ask any



IndyCar driver, any driver in general, they will tell you this is one of their favorite places, if not their favorite place, to race. It's obviously a great road course for North America. To me, I think it's one of the best road courses in the world.

It's the longest course we go to I think all year long, about four miles. It's beautiful. It'll great to drive. Our average speed is around 145 miles per hour. That gives you an idea of how fast you're moving around this place at a constant rate.

Yeah, it's one of my favorites. I absolutely love running here. The atmosphere is electric. There's always a great community of people that come up here. The weather, you know, it's a beautiful time of the year to come up here. I don't know about the winter. I don't want to come up here during the winter necessarily. But during the summer it's absolutely beautiful, the landscape. It's got pretty much everything for an IndyCar race in summer.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Josef.

Q. When you do have a strategy race, how confident are you when you have Cindric at your disposal making the right call?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Man, Tim gives me a lot of confidence. He's so cool on the radio, so experienced. You know, I can ask him anything. I feel like I'm very prepared with Tim on the box. He makes sure I know everything I need to know. Something that I don't know, I know he's going to know it.

Things like today, where the yellow came out, you can't predict those type of deals. We made the right strategy for us with the way the race was unfolding. We had a good lead. If you asked me what tires I wanted to go out on in that third stint, I would have said the primary tires. I thought we made the right call.

The caution didn't fall our way. You can't predict that stuff. It hurts when it comes at the wrong time. That's pretty much what happened today. With Tim, I feel confident with all our decisions, everything those guys do on the pit box.

Things just didn't fall our way today.

Q. The restart where Scott was able to go to the outside to pass you, it was a pretty bold move on his part. How did you feel? Were you pretty

impressed that he was able to pull it off?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No, because he had red tires on (laughter). I thought, He better get me if he has red tires on.

It's a second quicker. It was a good pass. I tried to race him as clean as I could. I went as deep as I could with him on the black tires. That's as hard as I could go without running into him, into the side. I tried to give him some racing room. Kind of similar to Helio and me, the way we ran together into turn one.

It was a good move. I got chewed up by him in turn one, and I got chewed up out of T3 by Helio. He stabilized in front of Simon, because he had the same tires as us.

It was tough. I knew it was going to be like that going to the restart. It was tough coming to the green like that.

Q. If I understand correctly, you said earlier the tires didn't warm up enough at the first caution.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, well, they don't. The primaries are very difficult to bring up to temperature like the reds. The reds were up to much more temperature than the primaries were.

Q. In principle, can you not adjust it with tire pressure?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Not necessarily, no. It's a reflection of the compound of the tire, the construction of the tire. It's an engineering reason. The reds are easier to bring up to temperature. You can't do anything to really bypass that, you know. You try and put as much heat into the red as you can, you try to put as much heat into the primaries.

The red is always going to come up quicker generally. It does change track to track. But at this track, it's more difficult to bring up the primaries. It's the nature of the tire. It's what we deal with, pretty much.

Q. A year after you raced here injured, what was it like this year?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, certainly no distractions. Last year there was probably a little more distraction from trying to deal with comfort inside the cockpit. But from a performance standpoint, I don't think it was much different.

I wouldn't blame the injuries last year for any performance deficit. I thought we were actually very good in the race last year. We had a top 10. I made a mistake in qualifying, which I think if we didn't do that, we probably could have had a top five last year. If anything, it was nice not having any distractions personally.

From a performance standpoint, I think it was similar to last year. I felt optimistic knowing what we had in the

race last year.

Q. You seemed to be having a lot of fun coming into this race, knew your cars were strong. Any other tracks you can look forward feeling that confident going into the race weekend?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's hard to tell. I feel like you could say, you know, a couple different places we should be strong at. If you look at where Penske was good last year, like Mid-Ohio, they were very good last year. With IndyCar, you just can never tell. There's always little differences every year. Sometimes it sways your way, sometimes it doesn't.

I think we're going to be pretty good at most tracks we go to this year. Are we going to be as good as this year, I'm not 100% sure, to be honest with you.

Q. The last restart, the guy you're behind is Scott Dixon. If it's somebody else, are you maybe a little more confident that you have a shot at him? He doesn't seem to make a lot of mistakes.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, Scott's one of the hardest to pass. It was funny, because it was kind of a reverse Barber situation. At Barber this year, you had Scott behind me at the end with a little more overtake, then it was me behind Scott this time with a little more overtake. You kind of had a similar result almost.

I think it doesn't necessarily matter who it is. For sure, you know, you give Scott a lot of credit, he's going to be tough. He's not going to make a lot of mistakes. You really got to push the issue with him.

But I think I was concerned about getting by him, just his race pace. We were quicker than him, but we weren't quick enough to overtake him. We were probably only 2, 3/10ths quicker than him outright speed, which wasn't enough to do much with him.

Once we were up to temperature, we were all running full, we both had red tires on, they were new tires for both of us, it was kind of hard to do anything once we got up to speed. I couldn't make anything happen. As soon as I did something with overtake, he would do it. We were just kind of tit for tat till the end. He's obviously one of the toughest to race against.

I think if the situation were reversed, we would have been okay, as well, to win the race. So it's just tough strategy today.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, congratulations.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We are pleased to be joined by the race winner of this afternoon's race, Scott Dixon, driving the No. 9 NTT Data Honda for Chip Ganassi Racing team.

Scott, your 41st career win. One more and you will tie Michael Andretti for third on the all-time wins list. Also your 13th consecutive season with a win.

After the struggles that you had this morning, just the uncertainty of not knowing if your car was going to be able to go, how rewarding is this win?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think it's a big deal. I think even if you look at the last two or three weeks, what we've been through as far as the team, we definitely had some signs of good strength, but not being able to capitalize on it.

Today, you know, or yesterday I should say, I didn't really think we would be in this situation. But huge credit to Honda. The engine's very strong. They don't really have to turn it down for the race, which definitely performs very well for us. To get the fuel mileage, as well, is always very difficult when you're making so much power.

First time for me with NTT Data in Victory Lane, which is fantastic, too. Glad T.K. is okay. Looked like that was a hell of a crash.

Yeah, this year has been good speed and good consistency for us, outside of a couple races. But, you know, I think we should have probably won a couple races earlier on in the season that didn't work out our way.

Just happy for the team, everybody at Honda, everybody at NTT, excited to be in winner's circle finally in 2017.

THE MODERATOR: Not only is it your first win with NTT Data, but your first win at the track. We had Helio in yesterday with his first pole at the track. What does it mean to you to know the veterans of the series are still improving and hitting these new milestones as they go on?

SCOTT DIXON: I think that plays true to why they're still racing cars. They still get results. Penske has been extremely strong this weekend. It was nice to definitely get on top of them as far as the result this afternoon. They had the first four spots locked out in qualifying.

There's a lot of talent in this field. The depth is, you know, extremely deep right now. There's no real small teams any more. All the smaller teams of the past are well equipped now with great engineering groups. There's not a whole lot you can actually do to the car.

Yeah, it's fun to see Helio, his 50th career pole, which that's phenomenal. So to get that amount of poles throughout his career, I'm sure he's going to continue to build on that.

Yeah, for us to grab the 41st win means a lot. Hopefully we, too, can continue to build on that and hopefully grab a couple more this year.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Scott.

Q. You came in here as the points leader. But considering the 500 and considering how some of the races were lost earlier this year, did you feel like maybe you still didn't have the momentum coming into this race?

SCOTT DIXON: I was hoping it was our turn to get a little bit of luck go our way. I think with Texas, you know, one of the craziest finishes I've seen there, just how it turned out. And obviously Indianapolis, you know, very thankful for the safety and being able to continue on this season with such a big crash. Even with an injured ankle, it's been definitely a bit of a struggle through the last few events.

As I sort of said earlier, we've had some great speed this year. I think we could have won Barber. We could have won Long Beach. We could have won St. Pete. Texas, how it had been playing out, I think we would have either finished first or second.

It's hard because you look at it one way. Yes, we've had good speed, we've had some good results. But then we've let two or three or four races get away, as well. Then the massive loss of points at Indianapolis with almost finishing last on double points.

You know, these championships are never easy to win. They're always extremely tough. The competition is through the roof. You just got to keep knocking on the door and hopefully it's going to open.

Q. Do you attach any added significance with this coming on Mike Hull's anniversary weekend, too?

SCOTT DIXON: I was just joking with Mike that we need to have another 25th anniversary celebration in Iowa. It's cool, you know, to have the significance of that on this weekend, to top it off with a win. To be at any team for 25 years is pretty amazing. We were all joking to do that with Chip is even more amazing.

It's cool to see his commitment and what he's achieved through his career. It's always great to work with him. I think this is my 14th season with him, we've worked together on the same team, the same stand. It's cool to see him reach that milestone. Nice to top it off with the victory here today.

Q. The restart where you got the lead, how bold of a move was that? How confident were you that you would be able to get around Josef?

SCOTT DIXON: It was worth a shot. You know, I think strategy-wise we definitely played it right with going to the red tires at that point. The blacks, you know, definitely take a lap or two, a bit longer, to come up, to

get the grip that you need. They seem to last a little bit longer, especially on the last three or four laps of a stint, they were pretty fast. But the reds are pretty good out of the box.

Some guys you can do that with obviously, and some you can't. Josef gave me the room. He obviously had a moment which made it pretty close and pretty tight with the way his car slid. But obviously we both got through there. With other people, you probably wouldn't have pulled that off. It was nice to race clean with Josef today.

Q. At the end you're racing him but sort of on equal ground. How confident were you that you would be able to hang on?

SCOTT DIXON: Not super confident. You know, I thought we had pretty decent speed. They were able to turn up to similar performance, I think, when they need to earlier in the race. We don't have to de-tune as much as they do. At the start of the race, I was kind of shocked how fast we were. Had a pretty big run on Will a couple of times, then Helio. Honda have done a fantastic job to maintain that performance.

Towards the end I knew it was a straight-up battle. It was going to be tough. He had more OT, 20 or 30 seconds more than what we had, to do quite a bit especially on the long straights you have here. I was trying to maintain and use my OT in areas that were significant enough to keep him behind. I knew once it plateaued after four or five laps, we were looking okay.

Q. Could you go over some of the fuel problems you had before the race, how you solved them.

SCOTT DIXON: I did not fix it, which is a good thing, because we probably wouldn't have started the race (laughter).

We had some issues last night with a couple of pieces in the fuel cell. We tried to repair those. Then it was for a different reason, but this morning we just couldn't get fuel pressure. The difficult part was that you can't replicate it inside the pits. It was third, fourth or fifth gear, where it was causing the starvation.

I don't know if anybody heard, but we were trying to run the car at high rpm while dragging the brakes in the pits before the race to try to rectify the issue. It wasn't until the warmup lap we could really figure out they fixed the issue. Honda were confident that everything on their end was satisfactory.

But, yeah, everybody on the 9 car crew got stuck in and changed pretty much the whole fuel cell, everything that delivers fuel to the engine. Pretty stressful for them obviously with the early start today. It makes it pretty compressed, trying to achieve something like that.

Q. Back to talking about Mike Hull. Elaborate on

the sort of impact he's had on career. Obviously it's pretty impressive.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, for me, it's only been a few seasons that I haven't been with him. My first season in IndyCar, 2003, the first victory at Homestead, the first victory I ever had, was with Mike. I think '04 and '05, we worked with Manning and Briscoe at some point. He moved to another stand to help the transition there.

You know, he's a calm person. I can get pretty worked up at some points throughout the races. It's nice to have that sort of level-head person on the stand to extract the most out of everybody that's on there.

His knowledge and experience that he's had, you know, in racing, I don't know how long he's been in racing, it's got to be a long time if he's been at one team for 25 years, we win and lose as a team. All but one race victory has been with this team. Mike's a very large instrumental piece of, you know, Chip's team and the success that they've had.

Q. Not to say I don't believe you, but can you define 'worked up' in your world.

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know, man. Have you not listened to my radio? Today was probably not so bad. Yeah, I have a bit of a potty mouth. It's neat to have Mike to calm me down.

Q. The pass that you made on the restart with Josef when you got the great run, nailing him on the outside of turn one, were you making Tarzan calls when you pulled that off? That looked like a great move.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I wasn't really sure how it was going to go. You have expectations and visions of how it should happen. A lot of the time it's very different from reality.

I think what attributed to that was the torque of the engine. Obviously in these lower gears out of the last corner, you know, that enabled us to get close to Josef, obviously get in the draft, get beside him.

We kind of petered out towards the end. You can't use overtake on the restarts. We weren't able to clear the 2 car. But I knew it was going to get interesting. I knew out of most of the guys that you can race with, he's a guy that you can race with cleanly. It was one of those situations where we both gave each other room. I think being on the red tires definitely helped a lot.

Q. Once you made that move, did you think that was the move that was going to win you the race?

SCOTT DIXON: It was going to be an instrumental piece for us. I think we had really good pace. It's a tough track for us with the aero configuration on the Honda kit. We're down a lot. We're down a lot of downforce. It's hard to make that up. When you're in traffic, or when you're following one of those cars, too,

that makes it only worse.

I knew any chance we were going to get, we needed to get some clean air and try to look after the tires and make that stint one of the better ones.

Q. Early on did you use your 'push to pass'? Seemed like you used it smart early on to make sure the Penske guys didn't get away from you.

SCOTT DIXON: I tried a couple times on Will, then with Helio, too. We clearly I think had more pace than them. They were I think having to save pretty hard fuel to get the number with their engine. So I think that definitely helped us on that side of things. They couldn't run, you know, flat out like we could in some of the scenarios.

I think we straight up had more pace than they did at that part of the race, especially at the start and on that second stint. We were able to stay very close.

But, yeah, had a couple opportunities there, but nothing that I could pull off. Helio is always very tough to pass. The same with Will.

Q. After qualifying, you weren't the happiest guy in the world. Discrepancy in your tires. You said Simmons is going to have to come up with something overnight. How big of a push did it take?

SCOTT DIXON: I don't think he took too much of a swing. He did his typical thing where he likes to trim the car out, and doesn't really tell me too much about it. That makes it pretty interesting for the first few laps.

He's been in the industry long enough, won a ton of races, especially with Dario throughout those years. I have a huge amount of confidence with him, what he gives me.

I think the hardest thing for us, you know, we didn't know what the mixtures were going to do. We didn't have the warmup to understand what trim level we needed to be. There was a little bit of, you know, not guesswork, but taking a bit of a leap of faith on some of the changes he did make for the race. They're always pretty educated. They made the right ones.

Q. On a weekend when it was Penske 1-2-3-4 in practice and qualifying, how gratifying is it to come away with a win?

SCOTT DIXON: Very gratifying. They looked pretty disappointed. It was nice to get a victory. As far as road courses go, this was going to be one of the more difficult ones for us because of the long straights and the drag that we have.

They're always the team you've got to beat. Championship fights, they're the ones that are going to come down to it. Especially with their lineup right now, four very strong cars, as you can see with qualifying,

makes it very difficult to get one out.

We raced as hard as we could. We had a little bit of luck go our way. We had good strategy. The pit stops were fantastic. These are the days you have to capitalize on trying to beat them. We did as a group. Yeah, it feels good when you can achieve that.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, congratulations. We'll see you in Iowa.

SCOTT DIXON: Thank you.