

# IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday July 8, 2017

## Will Power

## Josef Newgarden

## Simon Pagenaud

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our Verizon IndyCar Series post-practice press conference. Joined now by three members of Team Penske, Will Power, Josef Newgarden and Simon Pagenaud. Will, second fastest in practice today. Your best finish here at Iowa Speedway is second, but you do have a pole here. With qualifying coming up, what did you learn from practice that might help you in this afternoon's session?

WILL POWER: Yeah, we definitely tried a lot of things during practice, but yeah, felt pretty good in qualifying sim. Going last I think helps. Should be some good rubber down. Yeah, so we'll see. We'll see. There's not much. Short session. Pretty much did everything we could, and the car feels good.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, you are the only one of your teammates that has won here at Iowa Speedway, and it seems like you've kind of picked up right back where you left off, first in this morning's session. How did things go for you, and do you feel like having that win will help your team overall in general knowing that you share so much data?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Probably a little bit. You know, I think I'm as surprised as everybody that Team Penske hasn't won a race here. It's not like they haven't been strong. Even last year they were very strong; Simon was strong at the beginning, Will was very strong at the end. They've got great equipment. They've got good knowledge around here, but coupled with what I learned last year I think is going to help a little bit, and hopefully that's enough to at least get one of us to Victory Lane and hopefully it's the 2 car with Fitzgerald and the glider kits that we have this weekend. They're such an awesome sponsor for us. They're the sponsor that I had on the car for my first Penske win, so it's fun to have them back this weekend and excited to have them in town in Iowa.

THE MODERATOR: Simon Pagenaud was third fastest in today's morning practice session, also our reigning pole winner here at Iowa Speedway. Simon, knowing that and knowing that qualifying is coming up this afternoon and knowing how strong you were last year, do you feel like you have a really good shot at pole this

afternoon?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I don't know. I'm starting first. I'm first in line, so I'm going to be the guinea pig for everybody. Anyway, but that's the luck of the draw. But the car, car felt great at the end of the session. We made a lot of changes, as well, experimenting, a lot of things that Josef has been experimenting, as well, and Will, so it was a good session. Just a pretty good car for us since last year, and Firestone brought a new left side tire, so it takes a little bit of adjustment to understand it and which way it's going to go on long runs and short runs. That was the job today. I think we have a chance. It will be tough with Will right at the end, but I think it's going to be an exciting qualifying for sure.

#### **Q. Is it more of a challenge to set up the car for a short oval like Iowa or a bigger oval like Indianapolis?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's always challenging for your organization, different challenges. Obviously you're running quite fast, not quite as fast as Indy, but the track is so much shorter, you're in the corners constantly, you have a lot more downforce. It's a lot more physical, and the stints are very long. You know, we can do 60 laps on tires. That degradation is going to come into effect at some point when you get in traffic. It's also a racetrack where you're constantly in traffic. It's going to be more like sports car racing than at the speedway when you're leading the pack or something like that. So very different challenges, but that's the beauty of IndyCar racing. Racing all these different tracks we go to, I think it shows different skills, and it's challenging every weekend, I'll tell you that.

#### **Q. How much of an impact has the reduced downforce levels on the car had, and it seems like less downforce from last year --**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's the same. Same configuration.

#### **Q. Do you guys feel -- all of you feel like the downforce levels should be reduced around here?**

WILL POWER: Yeah. Big time. It should be, yeah.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I'd like to brake and downshift. And another 400 horsepower, too, please. It should be.

#### **Q. I guess this is a question for all of you. This is typically the point of year that we normally see**

**Scott Dixon get really hot. What do you guys think you need to do in order to close the gap and/or keep him from getting too far away?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Sounds like we need to put out that fire. Too corny? Get it?

WILL POWER: Yeah, we'll see. I mean, obviously his greatness shone through there at Road America. But I mean, yeah, it ebbs and flows, good and bad runs. He's had a bad run this year when you look at it; it's amazing he's leading the championship when you think about a couple of the crashes he's had. But as always, he's strong. We've got to make sure that we beat him.

**Q. If you follow along the idea of the less downforce, would that mean maybe running the superspeedway wings here, and then the idea is you would brake? With the less downforce you'd have to actually downshift and maybe brake into the turns? Is that right?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: Well, it's a bit more. It's a longer topic than that's just that. It's just a wish for a driver. You asked me a question, I answered what would be my wish. I'd like to have more downforce and more power to just power slide on the exit of the corners and have more fun and also have more differentiation between each other as we pass, a little bit less of a -- how do you call it, an emergency pass. A little bit more of a gamble, a desperate move. So that's really what I'm looking for. Now, it's only me. I don't know what they want, I don't know what everybody wants, but that would be my wish. I'm just a driver, and the series can do what they think is the right thing to do with the majority in place. It's just my Christmas list basically.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think we agree for the most part. I always would preach for more horsepower and less downforce, too. Anything you can do to put the car more into the driver's hands, they're going to be for it. I don't think it's too crazy here. You get degradation here. You have to manage the tires or you can go off, so it's not terrible, it's not like everyone is packed up here. You could go more into a direction with higher horsepower, maybe touching the brakes in the corner. I'd be for that, too. I'm similar to Simon on it.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I agree. I've always said it should be about driving, not -- I feel like you should never be flat around an oval. Yeah.

**Q. Josef, you finished second here twice and you won last year. How as a driver did you make your car last, and how do you keep the tires alive, your strategy to make it to the end, and when you have a new tire that Firestone brought, can you really put it under the stress of race conditions by just putting 60 laps out there on it in practice?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, it's always hard to simulate the exact race condition, but I think we'll have more of a read on that in the second practice, once you get everyone packed up you get a lot more turbulence

further in the pack, you have a better idea of what you need out of the car in those type of conditions. Yeah, I do think, yes, we're going to get accurate read on what the tire needs. I don't think tire difference is that big, to be honest. It's subtle, if anything. It is probably slightly different than last year, but I don't think it's something that we struggled to get on top of too aggressively. You know, generally it's just a balance shift for the most part. I think from a degradation standpoint, it's quite similar to last year. I don't think the degradation is going to be massively different one way or the other to last year. I think you'll have a similar type of race. It's going to be about managing the tires. As far as how you do that, well, we can't tell you that. That's the secret. Hopefully we've done our job and all four of us are going to be fast this weekend.

**Q. What do you guys each think of the repaving that was done at Gateway, how that's going to improve that surface, because I know when you tested there in early April you couldn't run that many laps without cutting a tire.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, it's obviously great. It needed to be done, and I think it shows Gateway's commitment to IndyCar and what they've laid out that they want to do with the series going forward. If anything it's huge kudos to Gateway for doing that. Everyone involved in that practice, everyone in St. Louis, I think they've put a lot into making sure that the race is going to happen, and they needed to repave it to make it work. They've done a great job doing that. Obviously we'll have a short test in a month's time from now and hopefully everything is good, but it sounds like they're taking all the steps they need to to make sure we have a good, safe and productive race with IndyCar, and hopefully we have a long future there. So just happy that they've taken the steps needed.

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's always tough to speak after Josef. He's American and all that. He speaks English, you know?

But yeah, it's a great track, honestly. I think it's going to create great racing with long straights for a short track, so I really like how it looks, how it feels to drive on it. We think with the new surface it might have a lot more grip, so it could be quite a bit different. But certainly IndyCar linked with Gateway did a fantastic job attacking the problem. I think it's going to be ready for the race, so it's fantastic.

**Q. It's a short track, this is a short track, but these two tracks probably couldn't be any different than they are. How different are they?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, they're completely different. Gateway -- I guess Gateway resurfaced will be kind of like a bigger Phoenix. You've got a pretty tight 1 and 2 and a very open -- much more open than Phoenix, but yeah, I think Gateway will create pretty good racing, just for the fact that you'll be easy flat through 3 and 4, which will create good paths into 1 and 2, but yeah,

these two are totally different tracks.

**Q. Josef, new engineer, new team. Is it essentially an all clean slate for you as far as a new feel for the car or are there some things you could take from last year and build on for this year?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it's kind of a collaboration. Like I said, I think Penske was really strong last year. It's not like they didn't have good cars. We all have an understanding of what we want from a feel out of the car, every driver, all four of us. I tried to put my interpretation on what I like about the car and what I've experienced in the past and what I've learned over the last couple years here, so I think we take the good from each side and try and make it better, and hopefully that's going to make me strong in the 2 car and hopefully it's going to help all of us as a team just be better from last year, and if that's the case, I think we should be set pretty well. It's still going to be tough. I know those guys very well after working closely with them, and they've got a great shop, great people, great race cars. They're going to be difficult, but I think we've got the necessary means to do a better job than them. We've got a lot of strong drivers over here and a lot of strong people at Team Penske. I feel confident putting both philosophies together is going to work out for us.

**Q. Road America you locked out qualifying, you locked out practice, but in the race you ended up finishing 2 through 5. Coming here and doing 1 to 3, depending on how qualifying goes, how important is it to capitalize this weekend with what happened at Road America?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, we definitely need to capitalize if we have an advantage here. We didn't -- yeah, I mean, obviously Dixon was very strong in the race there, and circumstances kind of played out, which helped him win. But you know, it's a long season. One race doesn't make or break it.

**Q. The racing surface gets talked about a lot every time you come here. Has there been a noticeable difference last year to this year either in patches they put on there or the way the surface has weathered?**

WILL POWER: No, it's pretty much the same, yeah. I mean, there was some bumps last year, and it's very similar.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'd say last year was a bigger difference when they laid all the patches. I'd say this year is very close to what we had last year.

**Q. And with that, here compared to other places, how much does the surface change in the course of a run, in the course of a race, when the track takes rubber and things like that?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, me personally, I think you have more effect by guys that are running ARCA. They have such a different tire compound that you'll

notice that I think in qualifying you'll notice it a little bit in the front of the line, and for the start of the race tomorrow, I think we'll notice some of that difference in rubber that'll be on the track, but once that cleans up, you know, this track generally comes into a very stable condition. I don't think it changes much throughout the race. You know, especially tomorrow it's -- I think from what I've experienced, it stays quite stable with the temperature. The temperature doesn't drop too much from our start time. So you're not going to see much different, I think, over the condition of the race.

Now, when we run at night or at twilight, when you start in the day and then you go tonight, you notice a bigger difference in the track temp drop, so that's a whole different story.

**Q. As far as getting a bit more passing going on here, how do you feel about -- Jay Frye has been talking about the possibility of having Push-to-Pass on some ovals. Do you think that would be a benefit at all?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, just my view, I think I'm more interested in the kit that's coming out. I think the kit will be more of a benefit to helping the raceability of the cars, the way the car interacts behind another car, the way that it progresses over a stint, but really just the way the car's attitude is behind other cars I think will change more dramatically with the kit, and I think that's more important than Push-to-Pass on an oval in my opinion.

I've never run Push-to-Pass on an oval, so I don't have a lot of insight on that, so maybe these guys, especially will, can talk more to that.

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think exactly what Josef said. Around here, maybe less downforce, so we're lifting, and then a car that follows better in the wake because with all the wing that's on the car it just stirs the car so much, and the more downforce you've got, the more you lose. Yeah, I think more than Push-to-Pass, all that will make a huge difference next year.

**Q. How much tow do you actually get around here because the straights are so short? Do you lose more behind another car or gain more?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's all about coming off the corner. All the passes happen -- like rarely do you get a run enough, unless you're beside the guy. You almost work on him lap after lap, different lanes, what makes good racing here. Yeah, that's why Push-to-Pass, be more about just having a faster car, better handling car, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Simon, we know that you'll be in LA next week for the ESPYs and you are encouraging fans to vote for you online. I hear there's something happening in the autograph session this afternoon. Can you tell us what's going on there?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah. I guess my dog Norman is going to be there, I guess. People love him, so I guess we use him, and he's getting very, very busy these days. Actually he had more PR stuff than me to do yesterday, so we flew in just on time for his PR, not for mine, so yeah, it's great. He doesn't mind it as long as he gets a treat. But he's going to be at the autograph session. We're going to give away some stickers, signed stickers for everybody that's showing up on time, I guess, and that's voting. So please, I hope you guys vote. It would be fantastic for IndyCar. I think more so than anything else, it would be really great to represent IndyCar at the top of the chart there. But I've got a nice suit. You guys are really going to be impressed. I've got a really nice suit. I got dressed up this week, took me two days, and yeah, I think it's going to be cool. I'm excited to go. There's lots of celebrities and athletes that I want to meet, so hopefully we'll have a good time.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much. Good luck this afternoon.