

IndyCar Media

Conference

Sunday August 20, 2017

Josef Newgarden

Alexander Rossi

Post-Race Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our Verizon IndyCar Series post-race press conference. We're joined now by the second- and third-place finishers of the ABC Supply 500 at Pocono Raceway, Josef Newgarden and Alexander Rossi.

Josef, we'll start with you. Certainly a difficult -- maybe not difficult but trickier start yesterday than you probably planned for starting 14th but able to make your way up to second and increase your points lead to 18 over, I believe, Scott Dixon. Take us through your day and how you were able to move up through the field.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it was a good day for points. Tough when you have an opportunity to potentially win a race at the end of it, but I don't think we had enough for Will to be honest with you. I did everything I could to try and get by him, and I just felt like he was a touch quicker than us. That was difficult for me to overcome.

I'm happy for him. I'm happy for Team Penske. It's a one-two at the end of the day, so keeping it in the family. When one car wins, we kind of all win. That's the way we view it.

And certainly for the 2 car, it's a points extension day, so we can't be disappointed in it. Like it's a good effort, especially, like you said, from where we started. We didn't have a good start to the weekend. We tried to go off on our own mission and it didn't really work, so we came back in qualifying and copied and pasted the other guys and took it from there, and I felt like we were decent enough, definitely a top-5 contender I would say.

THE MODERATOR: Alexander Rossi finished third in today's race, his second podium this season. You started sixth in this afternoon's race. It seemed like Andretti Autosport was really plugged in throughout the weekend. What went right for you today and honestly throughout the entire weekend?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, a lot went right for us today. I think the Military to Motorsports car was strong from the off week, got right to the front from the beginning, which was positive, and really it was our race to control at that point from a fuel standpoint, and

our crew did a good job in the pits all day, so that was another plus for us. The difficult thing was our fuel trim knob came off part of the way through, so we were stuck in the mix and it certainly wasn't optimum, and it made restarts challenging, and definitely at the end when the two guys in front of me were pushing quite hard. We didn't have all of our full on the power, which is usually quite strong around here. It was a bit unfortunate, but like I said, I mean, everybody else was really strong from the weekend, so being on pole and being on the podium backs up kind of the form we know we have on superspeedways, and it's good momentum going into the last few races.

Q. Josef, given the way this weekend went, it started very poorly for you yesterday, as you said. As disappointed as you are to finish second and miss out on another one, are you still satisfied to come home second after a rough start to the weekend? Even a rough race today, you really weren't with the leaders much of the day until the end.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, we were earlier until we got shuffled back to the back. I mean, even when we pitted there, we pitted from the lead, and when the yellow came out, we went to the back. So I think we had speed at first in the race, so I'm not disappointed with that. There was definitely a couple stints where we weren't good, but I think there were other stints where I thought we were very strong, and that's why we were able to get back to the front.

You know, I'm not disappointed at all. Whenever you're extending the points lead and you're keeping the car off the wall and the team is getting a victory, I think it's a great day, so I'm happy about that.

And then with regards to starting the weekend rough, I'm used to doing that. Sometimes, particularly in the last five years when I've been racing IndyCars, we'd always go on like a seeking mission trying to find something new, and we'd normally start the weekend off rough and find our way back. It makes it easier at Team Penske because you have three guys to lean on so you can do that and find your way back pretty quick, so I wasn't too panicky after the first session.

Q. Alex, not having the fuel mixture and the setting you wanted, was that ultimately what cost you the race?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, I don't think it helped, but I don't want to take away from what Team Penske did

and Will and Josef. They were very strong at the end, and I don't think we could have trimmed as much as they were. We just didn't have the balance to take that. But it certainly wasn't helping. It was putting me in pretty precarious situations in restarts, and I was having to fight my way back through pretty aggressively.

Like I said, at the end of the day, it was a strong showing for Andretti Autosport. We validated what we're capable of on the superspeedways. But it's difficult to beat these guys, so we're going to keep working at it and hopefully get it done the next few races.

Q. Josef, on the last lap, you swung left, as well, to follow Will's kind of peculiar line. Was that to unsettle him and move around in his mirrors to see what he might do?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Sort of, yeah. I was doing everything I could. I just didn't have enough for him, and I kind of knew that. I still gave him my best effort. I was going to try and beat him. I wasn't going to just try and finish second. But I kind of knew he was just better than me. He had more speed was the thing, so I couldn't quite get a run where I was going to complete a pass. With his move to block, it was really impossible, I think, for me to try and outside pass because I didn't have the speed to clear him on the outside, and it would have been just very risky. Yeah, at the end there I tried to do something to rattle him or at least move him or make him think about something or doing something or mess up, but he's pretty strong, as you know, so he doesn't make many mistakes, and it didn't help me at the end of the day.

Q. Alex, if the Penskes were not slowing each other up enough while they were battling, do you think you could have made a move on Josef?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I was trying, but like Josef didn't have the speed for Will, I didn't really have the speed for Josef. I thought we were pretty strong in Turn 3 at times, but I didn't have enough to really pull alongside, and I think that was truly down to the mixture. But it's racing. That's the way it goes. Like I said before, those two cars were pretty strong, and it was easy to make a mistake behind them, and I knew I had to push really hard to stay in their tire tracks. That's part of what makes IndyCar racing so great. To win here, you have to be perfect for an entire race, and Will did that today.

Q. Josef, the first seven races of the season you led a total of 16 laps, but now you've led laps in all of the following races since then. I just want to know if you feel like momentum is on your side, and has it really kind of sunk in that you're leading this championship, and what are you feeling now?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You know, we're just taking it one race at a time. You know, I felt like we were very good at the beginning of the year, but there's certainly

been points where we just needed to learn together. We haven't been as strong as we could have been at some places because we didn't have the experience together, and I feel like the longer we have together, the more time, the more races, the better we get.

But then on the other side, every race is so individualized now in IndyCar. I mean, you have to be good at every track from a history standpoint. You've got to know what you need for each specific track. Even though we're getting better with time together, we still have to go through each specific race I feel like before we're going to be really good. I'm hoping next year we can capitalize more, but like I said, we've just got to take it one race at a time. Maybe we'll suck next year, I have no idea, but I'm hoping we're going to be better.

But you know, like I said, we've got to take it one race at a time and keep trying to be consistent, and I really think if we could have been more consistent in the beginning of the year and not had as many issues or problems we could have been leading earlier because we've had good performance. But this championship going to be very difficult to win because there's not a lot of guys messing up. Pagenaud is consistently in the top 5, so he doesn't make mistakes. Will is very strong, Helio, Scott. It's not going to be easy. I think it'll come down to Sonoma regardless of whatever happens the next few races.

Q. Of the three races remaining, which track do you think is best suited for you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's difficult to say. I don't know. I don't know. I don't really know. I would think Sonoma would be good for me because we've been strong at points there in the past. Gateway is an unknown, but I think we're going to be strong there with team Chevy and Team Penske. Watkins, we only had one race there and we weren't particularly strong there last year, but we finished second. I've got to think Sonoma, but I have no idea. Maybe we'll be stronger at Gateway or Watkins. It's up in the air.

Q. Josef, concerning fuel consumption, I think Team Penske is an open book; you share all the information among each other. Were you informed when Will pitted a little bit earlier for the last fuel stop and you were on lap 80 or 81, pitted earlier than you, and that includes on your pit stop?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think there was a couple variables going on there. I think with Will, he had a lead, and he just wanted to try and continue to open his gap. He had the speed to run away from everybody by himself, so I think for him, pitting earlier made sense. It gives you less risk for a yellow, so if a yellow does fall there at the end, you've already pitted so you'll keep the lead.

You know, for us, we just tried to go a little bit longer but then it seemed like we were going to get into some

traffic and I had to pass Conor Daly, so we decided to pit pretty soon after that, so we didn't stay out too long. Really the yellow is what causes that because I think the longer you go, the more at risk you are if a yellow comes out.

Are you talking in stint? In a stint, I don't know, it could have been 30, 32, depends on how much you want to save.

Q. Josef, while you're out there racing, you probably didn't see how many pit stops Will Power made, but he had a new front wing --

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Did he put on a rear wing?

Q. Yeah, that was later in the race.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I was behind him when it happened. I thought he did.

Q. He thought he might have a front tire going down and then he thought his wing might have been broken, and I think he went to last when that happened, and I think probably that was after the second pit stop. And then later, somebody -- I don't know if it was Hinch, hit the back of the pod and damaged the rear wing. He had some contact with someone, and he came in, and it seemed that under caution -- I don't know the time he pitted but he probably spent the most time of every racer out there, and yet he wins. I mean, is that just a factor of being able to catch up to the field before the pace car laps him?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I mean, I think you've got to give credit to Will and his crew. I think they were fast. They were able to go from the back to the front. We had a little similar deal. We were back there with them actually with 60 or something to go, and we were kind of staying together but he was leaving me a little bit.

And so that's the beauty of the 500-milers. You can go to the back with 60 to go and go to the front again, especially if you're on a little different fuel strategy and you're fast. You can get right back to the front. I think a lot of it is credit to Will and his team, but I also think that's the way 500 miles race. If you're fast, you can go from the back to the front. It doesn't matter. That's how Juan Pablo won his Indy 500 in 2016, went right from the back to the front. If you have a good race car, a 500-mile race is good for you if you run into trouble.

We're all pretty similar. We like different things. Really all four of us like little differences, but for the most part we're globally in a similar place, so yeah, I think we like each other's stuff for the most part.

Q. Alex, that one little sequence there when Tony and Graham were trading the lead back and forth, I think you were in third place for a good portion of that. Can you talk to me a little bit about what that was like watching those guys duel back and forth a

little bit?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It was frustrating for me because when you're behind one car through Turn 3 it's pretty easy, but when two cars are racing each other and you're the third one through, it's hard to get a run. That ended up costing me a lot of spots. I think I fell back to seventh or eighth at that point because I was trying to be too aggressive and it bit me. That wasn't a fun part of the race for me by any means. That was fun for them. They were keeping their speed up and not slowing each other down and were able to kind of save fuel and stay in the front during that, so credit to them.

Q. Comment a little bit on the job that your teammate Ryan Hunter-Reay did coming back today after the hit he took in qualifying yesterday.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's vintage Ryan Hunter-Reay. We've seen him do it time and time again. In my opinion he's one of the best drivers on the grid. It was no surprise to me. 40 laps in, to see him behind me, I was like, damn, here we go again. But it's to be expected. It really shouldn't be a shock for anyone. That's what he's capable of. That's what his team is capable of. He should have been probably on the front row yesterday had that accident not happened. We definitely knew that he had a good car this week.

Q. Alex, how much fun was it when you did get up to the lead? You guys were trading passes pretty much every other lap there. How much fun is that as a race driver?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's a lot of fun. It's more fun than trading 12th all the time. Yeah, I mean, I had a smile on my face the whole race. It's rare that you don't driving IndyCars, especially at a track as awesome as this. I had fun for the entire race, and any time you're leading, there's some satisfaction that goes with it. It's also a double-edged sword around here because you're not making very good fuel numbers, so you want a lead just because it makes you happy, but then your crew is like, you shouldn't be doing this. There's a balance to that, like everything.

Q. Josef, talking about what all Will's team had to go through, sometimes when you have a bad moment early in a 500-mile race, does that almost kind of cast you into the winning strategy, and it ended up with them because they could go four miles an hour faster than everyone else by the way they were pitting out of sequence?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I think the speed difference was just down to Will and the 12 car. They were just faster. I don't know if it was because they were off sequence. When I was in the back with him, he was that quick, too, when he was behind cars. They were just fast. I don't think it had anything to do with the sequence. But I do think the sequence helped us. I think it helped me at the end of the day because we ended up going longer. I was on the same sort of strategy as Will. We got off the strategy with these guys because, I don't know, we were like fourth or

something, and then we were first and then the yellow came out, and we were like one of the only guys that hadn't pitted, so we went straight to the back, and that put me on the same strategy as Will, we just kept re-pitting and trying to take fuel under that really long yellow. So now we've got, whatever, 10 more laps of fuel in the car and 10 more laps that we can go longer, and I think that just made it easier. We had fresher tires, had more fuel, and it just made it easier for the end of the race for those last couple stints where we would just go longer than everybody and make up ground really. We were off sequence and it helped, but I think Will's speed was Will's speed.

Q. After the last pit stop, Will was 4.4 seconds ahead and you guys had to run him down. Did you burn off your tires doing that, or did the tires really hold in there for you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't think we burned them off. I mean, when you're in the tow there and you're only catching one car, you're not really burning them off. When you're in the pack 12, 15 deep and you're pushing really hard, then you can burn the tires off for sure, but with just one running him down, I --

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, not at all, and I think we were looking to get it because me in the gap with six, I wasn't trying to race him too hard. I wanted to catch him first and then go race.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Alex was actually really good about that. Some of the guys weren't. They just wanted to keep racing each other, but I think Alex saw that I was pretty quick, not as quick as Will, but we were catching him when I was in front, so he just stayed behind catch up and try and fight him. But it ended up being the same at the end of the day.