

IndyCar Media

Conference

Sunday August 27, 2017

Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have a saying in the newspaper business: You don't bury the lead. The lead says you won the race. The second part says it was interesting how it happened. Tell us about that.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it was a great night. We had first off an awesome crowd. It was amazing actually what was out here tonight. I felt like the energy for this event, it really spurred everyone on. You should have seen all the drivers. I felt like everyone was a little extra nervous tonight because of the energy in this place. A lot of that is down to St. Louis, all the promoters here, Ed Gateway, everything at the track, the sponsors at the track have done to try to get people out here and come back to this race. It's fun to see it back here.

I remember watching this race when I was younger. They stopped coming here, I think 2003 was the last race. It's fun to have it back in 2017, see it so well supported for the first year. It was a great night to go racing.

I felt like we had a good car. We had four good cars at Team Penske. Happy to get the win on the 2 car side because I felt like we had the car to beat. I didn't want us to be denied tonight for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Simon came here, wasn't very pleased. Talk about going into turn one, obviously had a good car. You saw an opening and went for it.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, Simon gave me a lane to work with. I had a good tow on him, put my car inside in the opening, got about halfway alongside of him. One thing I didn't want to do was touch him too hard. I think if I would have stayed too far left, I would have jumped the curb and that would have taken both of us out.

I tried to get Simon to move over a little when we were coming to the opening of the corner. We both had to slow up. Fortunately worked out well for us on the 2 car side. Pagenaud, didn't get up into the wall or anything like that, so I would say it worked out okay for him, too.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. How was the fuel consumption? You had reserves to keep Dixon under control?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, for sure. Think we had plenty of fuel. The only point where the gap kind of grew with the lead was Helio there, he pitted a little sooner when he was in the lead. I think he was burning more fuel and on a different strategy. We were saving fuel at that point. As far as at the end, yeah, we had no problem with fuel. Not at all.

Q. What would you attribute the issues of the track at the start, kind of the odd delay to get the race going?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, I don't know. I haven't seen the Tony deal. I heard about it. I mean, it felt slippery in the beginning. I got to think that's down to some of the Mazda Road to Indy rubber from the junior series, I think that contributed to the track being slick to start. I don't know if that's what caught out Will, too. Seemed like he got loose on the bottom as well.

I just got to think the track was a little loose from the junior rubber. It seemed to work itself in. The balance was shifting all night as the track cooled off. Seemed to get more neutral as the night went on.

THE MODERATOR: Five straight Penske wins. You've taken a firm grasp of the championship with two to go.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know if it's firm. It's never firm with Sonoma, with the amount of points you got there. It's going to be difficult. I think we're -- regardless of how Watkins Glen goes, I think it's going to come down to Sonoma and who does the best job there. It's just the way this championship works with the way the format is right now.

But we certainly have a good position, I would say for us. We feel good about our position. You know, you really can't (indiscernible) about it. I think we have a good lead. That's always better in my opinion than chasing. We got to make sure we look after everything in Watkins Glen, then we really got to prioritize Sonoma and have a phenomenal race there.

Q. Helio's spotter said the nature of this track leads to not an act of desperation, but that's the only chance you have to make a pass. Is that how you saw it?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Are you speaking of the legendary Rick Mears? No one knows that's Helio's spotter.

Yeah, I didn't really talk to Rick much about it before

the race, just 'cause the weekend was such a tight schedule. But for sure if you looked at practice last night, there was no clearing people here. You're not going to pass 'em and clear 'em before the corner. You're going to get halfway, three quarters alongside someone, that's how you're going to pass 'em.

For me, I think what allowed the pass to happen was Simon left me a lane. I took the lane. That's about as far as I was going to get up on him. We ran hard into the corner. Had to check up and both got through there.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I did see a replay and we did touch. I moved over on him one time. But that was right as the corner was closing. I didn't want to jump the curb because if I would have stayed full left, I think I would have jumped the curb. I kind of was hoping he would open the door a little more when I was alongside of him. He didn't open it any further. I feel like if I didn't move him just a touch, if I jump the curb, we both would have been in the wall. If anything, that was a good thing.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know where I got it. It was kind of just in the moment. I honestly thought Simon was going to lift and move over once I was there. And he didn't. So then it was a matter of trying to sort it out when we were getting into the corner.

THE MODERATOR: I remember two other trying moments in the race. Helio got you in the pit stop for the lead. You and Kanaan had dicing going on on the backstretch. Do you remember that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Not with Kanaan, no. I don't remember that. Definitely I think the key ones were Will at the start, how we raced into turn one. Pit stops were a big deal. Our box was a little bit tight tonight. I had a lot of wheel spin for sure. I probably didn't help our case trying to have fast stops. Those were always kind of an issue for us.

Then, you know, if anything, it was just managing lap traffic. I feel like when Helio was behind me trying to get past Chilton and Marco and some of the other guys at times a deciding moment was if we're not going to be good in traffic, we're not going to be able to keep Helio behind us.

THE MODERATOR: Three-wide on the parade lap.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I felt like I heard the crowd reacting to it, to be honest, in the car going by. That's a tribute to what we do at Indianapolis during the month of May for the 500. So I think it was cool the track wanted to do that. It's obviously a very close market to Indianapolis. I felt like we had a lot of Indianapolis fans out here. It was fun to do that, kind of show our roots

from the Indy 500. Spread the love a little bit here in Gateway, too.

Q. Do you think the finish saved the show? Before that, it was looking like a Penske parade.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think people like seeing passes for the lead, especially when it comes down to the end of the race. I got to think they enjoyed that. The rest of the race, I didn't see it from inside the car. I hope it was a good show. There was some fuel saving going on, which never helps. But I felt like we were able to pass somewhat and get by lap traffic. I hope that put on somewhat of a show for people.

Q. Simon was saying before when he was asked about that move, he said he lost trust in his teammate there. He said he lost trust and respect. How do you approach him when you see him next because he is frustrated?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'll approach him the same. He knows we're racing. He knows we're going to race in the future. We're going to race for many years. This isn't the first time we'll battle, I'm sure. Hopefully he knows next time it's getting a little tight in the corner, give me a little more room.

But I think he's one of the world class drivers that you race against. That's what made that work. I can trust him to not lose the racecar and hold his own into the corner. That's really what made the move work. Any other guy, he might not have had the ability to make it work. Simon has that and even more. So he's one of the best drivers in the world to go head-to-head with.

Q. What does Roger think of something like that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: For sure. That's the great thing about Team Penske, they let us race. They want to make sure we secure a victory for the team with one of the cars. I think he was able happy we were able to win the race with one of our cars. If it's not me it needs to be Simon, Helio or Will. He was just happy we had a team victory tonight. Certainly Simon and Helio were not far behind. They were a couple spots behind. He seemed pretty happy. I think it was a pretty good day for points.

Q. In that situation where you did pass Simon, you have the long straightaway, do you think he knew you were coming? Can you actually see that? Happened so fast that the spotter can't really tell him. Maybe he wasn't expecting it?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think if you look at his car positioning, he was definitely expecting it. I would be surprised if he was putting his car there not expecting me. Yeah, he for sure saw me and was expecting it. He knew I was having runs at him lap after lap, setting it up. He was prepared for it.

If anything, I was surprised he left me a lane. If you leave me a lane, I'm going to take it. Especially in the situation where we were leading most of the laps, we

were in position to win the race, we lose out on a pit stop exchange. He's got to know I'm going to try to get back by him. That's not the way we want to lose the race.

Yes, for sure. I'm sure he knew I was coming.

Q. Back to the start of the race, you drove it in pretty deep on the high lane. Were you trying to get the lead early on?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I felt like I was in a better position. Will was pinched down to the bottom. I left him the bottom lane, I took the second lane. At the start you can do that. You have more of an advantage to take the second lane at the start. Marbles, even when they sweep, it's a lot dirtier and difficult to do. I tried to stay on the second lane, keep as much throttle as I could. Seemed to be enough to clear him.

I don't know if it was premeditated, but it was just sort of my strategy.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks a lot, Josef. See you next week in Watkins Glen.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Thank you, guys.