

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday June 24, 2018

Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by the race winner, Josef Newgarden, driving the No. 1 Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet. His first win here at Road America. His third win of the season. His 10th career win.

Josef, after a few difficult weekends for you, how great does it feel to come in here and have a pretty much dominant weekend?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It feels really good to get this day over with, the race for sure, not because you want the weekend to be over, it's been an amazing weekend, great fan turnout, incredible atmosphere. I took my time on the cool-down lap because of how packed the place was. I wanted to kind of enjoy it because it was just an amazing atmosphere.

It was a difficult one. Hard to keep Ryan behind us the whole race. I knew Dixon was right behind him. We had our work cut out for us today. Ryan had really good pace. We had to be perfect. We had to be perfect on our fuel mileage, on our pit stints as far as the pit stops themselves, they had to be perfect.

I think the team did a great job. Team Penske had a great strategy. I think our Team Chevy engine made a big difference today. I had good power, good reliability, certainly had the fuel mileage that we needed. You had to have all those factors today I think to beat the competition.

It's a big day. Glad to have Verizon on the car, running fast. I'm happy we sealed it off after yesterday.

THE MODERATOR: It seemed from far away to look like a fairly effortless win. We all know that's not the case, especially with Ryan Hunter-Reay in your mirrors most of the race. What were your thoughts running into all the laps where you had Ryan basically right behind you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was really tough. I was working hard. The beginning of the race was really difficult. We needed to keep to our strategy and save fuel. But Ryan was so quick that it was tough to just stay in front of him and try to work on my race. He was really pressuring me. Finally got a little bit of breathing room. But that breathing room wasn't very much. It was like half a second, you know, three quarters of a second. It wasn't much at all.

Just working really hard today to try to get that gap built. Finally I felt like those last two stints we were starting to get to where we needed to. Felt really good on the reds today, from Firestone tires. That's the tire I preferred to have at the end. Seven or eight to go is when I started feeling comfy. I felt like we had the gap to finish it off.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Josef.

Q. You came here last year not on a rough streak, but after Texas, were able to bounce back, take off on the championship. You won today. Do you feel like you can put that same streak together like you did last year to make a run at the championship?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think we just take it one race at a time. It's a long way to go. I don't know if we need that streak. We need to be more consistent than what we have the last four races. It's just a rough patch that didn't help us in the points.

I thought Texas was going to be a good weekend for us. It was looking really good until a quarter of the way through the race, then it sort of unraveled. I think we need to keep doing what we've been doing, take it one weekend at a time. That's what Roger told me to do, take it one weekend at a time and we'll be here in the end.

I don't know that we need necessarily the exact same sort of stretch as last year. But a good, consistent five or six races, that will put us up nicely to challenge in Sonoma.

Q. What kind of outlook did you have coming to Road America when your last five races have had three double-digit finishes?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No concern. Just ready to go win. That's what I thought. I mean, I was ready to win in Texas. Our outlook didn't really change. We were ready to get back on the board, try to seal off a race weekend. We struggled to seal it off.

The 500 wasn't a disaster for us, but it wasn't great. You would say an eighth is pretty good at the 500. For us, where we thought we could be, that wasn't great.

We just came here trying to get back on track. I think we had pace right from the beginning, which really helped. Then it was just a matter of managing it, making it a normal weekend. We sealed it off nicely at

the end.

No reservations coming in, just ready to go ahead it going again.

Q. (Question the track fitting his driving.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think our road course cars have been really good. With Team Penske we've had really solid road course cars. We've had positives and negatives. 500, good car there. Short oval cars have been okay. Our street courses probably need the most work.

I think from a team standpoint, this has been a strong track for us. I think Team Chevy did a great job, made a big difference for us today with the work they put in for the fuel mileage and the power. That kind of carried us to some success today.

Looking forward, yeah, just excited to try and work on our weak points, then hopefully capitalize on our strong points with some of the road courses coming up. This is a great track. I took my time on the way in just because of how packed the place was. It was special to see just the energy.

Q. How special is this place? How impressed were you that it's risen so far in the IndyCar schedule in stature?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know if I'm surprised that it's turned into what it has. I don't think many are, because it's Road America. This is an IndyCar track. You got IndyCar fans up here. You talk to anyone, they know what's going on in the series, they're excited to be here, they like this type of race weekend. You even have fans that aren't diehard IndyCar fans, they're casual fans, like to camp, have a great weekend at Road America. Whether you're a hardcore race fan or enjoy a camping weekend with good weather, this is your track.

Really sad it wasn't on the schedule when I first got into the IndyCar Series. Now that it's back, I don't think anyone could imagine it going away again. I don't think that's a surprise to anybody.

Q. You looked like you were having some fun on the podium with the champagne. Any story behind that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: On the podium? No. I wish we had bigger champagne bottles, to be honest with you. That's my only gripe, is we need more. We need to somehow lengthen that. It was good to celebrate with Ryan and Scott. It's pretty fun talking to them.

Someone took the bottle and started spraying me, too. That happens. You just got to expect the unexpected in Victory Lane is what I would say.

Q. Talking to Tim and Roger, they all use the word 'flawless' today. In your mind was this a flawless

race for you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know if you can have a flawless race, but it was pretty close to it. We didn't make any mistakes. I tried to not make many in the car. I had little moments here and there, but there were very few, which I needed to not make mistakes because Ryan was on me the whole time.

We had no mistakes in the pits. Guys were perfect. Strategy was perfect. Fuel mileage was just perfect. Chevy engine was just perfect. Yeah, for the most part pretty well-executed today. I think if we had one bobble, we lose that race. Ryan was there to pounce when he needed to. We needed to be perfect to stay out front.

Q. In turn one at the Josef Newgarden garden, do they need to rename it the Josef Newgarden victory garden?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I like the setup. I went to see those folks last night at the campground. These people had a professional setup with little baby Josefs growing. It was kind of cool. I'm actually very disappointed they didn't win the whole camp crown competition. The judges were there. I tried to slip them the 50. They weren't having it.

But I think just on execution, those guys killed it. They had my vote. I wish they would have won. Either way, really cool to see. That's what Road America brings. It brings those kind of fun things. Hopefully those guys come again next year and do the same thing.

Q. After qualifying to the warmup, did you make any changes or the identical car into the race?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We went pretty much with our car we worked on on Friday. Different weekend because we didn't have a warmup. We actually prioritized more race running on Friday because I was so happy with the car right out of the box. Seemed like it had natural speed. We went straight to work on the racecar because you didn't have a warmup today.

Yeah, just pretty much bolted on what we learned on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, rolled with that. It seemed to work out okay. I think there's some things we can improve on for next year, but that's always the case whenever you finish a race. You always feel like you learn something. I think a pretty good job doing what we needed to do today for the most part.

Q. How frequently in your career have you had a race this close to perfect?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know. I'd have to think about it. This was a pretty sorted out day. I think Barber was similar earlier in the year. We started from pole, didn't have any real misses, a couple close ones, but no mistakes really. Yeah, probably Barber would be the next closest.

You always hope when you start on pole that you can sort of finish things off. You feel more pressure I think when you start on the pole. You almost feel a little bit more at ease when you're fourth or fifth because you get in attack mode, I just got to go forward, get past people, figure it out. When you're on pole, you feel like you have more to lose than to gain. I think it's a little bit more pressure from that standpoint.

But, yeah, I don't know how many times we had a day like this, but I think Barber is the next closest.

Q. You mentioned a couple of small moments today. Do you recall any of them?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I just noticed I was very good in the Carrousel, at least my perception was we were better than Ryan in the Carrousel. I think he was better to start the lap. With the way I was saving fuel, he was good in one and three. He closed the gap in five with the draft. Once we got into the sixth through the Carrousel section, I thought I was good through the Carrousel. I was really pushing the issue, sideways half the time, nearly wrecking three or four times through there just to make up time.

A couple of those scary moments, but I think you got to push, attack in these cars if you want to stay focused. As soon as you kind of take it easy, that's when mistakes happen. I stayed on it all race. You can get sideways as heck. Actually I had one that was worse in turn one. I was, like, full opposite lock, way out past the rumble strips. It could have been bad. It was okay. Probably lost a couple 10ths, but you can do that with this thing.

You don't want to push your luck too far because eventually it will bite you, but you can get away with a lot in this racecar because it talks to you so much than the last one did.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, thank you very much.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Thank you.