

# IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday July 7, 2018

## Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joining us in the media center, driver of the Hitachi Team Penske Chevrolet, Josef Newgarden, winner of the past two poles of the Verizon IndyCar Series and the winner of the race at ISM Raceway, probably the track most similar to this one, although comparisons are probably not exactly appropriate, but you're off to a good start. You've had some momentum here. You won the last race at Road America; probably feel about as good as you could ask for at this point.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think us testing here is a benefit. You would think testing is automatically always a benefit, but I think it's more important this year just because it's a new car, and Iowa is its own animal. Even having been to Phoenix and other short ovals, I don't think a lot of that really applies here because Iowa is just crazy unique. It's a lot bumpier, very different from a lane usage standpoint. The banking is different, the shaping, the whole thing. So Iowa needs its own thing, and I think testing helped us a lot, so our car seems pretty fast to start. Pretty happy with the Hitachi car.

It seems tight. I think the team Chevy package has been working well. It worked well at the test. Didn't have any major issues, and I think we're off to a good start, so excited about that. Mainly we're working on qualifying, just trying to get that right to start out. I think most people were trying to do that that tested here, and then we'll roll into race running this afternoon.

THE MODERATOR: We saw a lot of busy hands on the in-car footage. I would assume this is a place where it's active and a lot to do in the cockpit.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's a ton of fun. This new car has been a blast to drive. I think you can get -- you can get a little bit more violent with it, in a good way, in that if the car starts reacting aggressively, you're sliding all over the place, you can save it. It gives you a lot of opportunity to save it, and I also think it invites you to drive the car a lot more sideways, which is fun for us as drivers, and I think visually it looks better, so hopefully that translates and you see a little bit on the on-board cameras, and I hope that translates to the race.

THE MODERATOR: Looks like we saw what should shape up as the story of the weekend, Penske and Andretti and got a little Carpenter mixed in; should be a competitive field at the top.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think Andretti looked pretty good at the test. I'd be surprised if we're not racing against them. I think we feel strong. I think our cars were good at the test, so we feel like we're going to be in the mix.

The ECR cars have always been historically good here, so they'll be in there. But you can't count anyone else out. I think Schmidt looks quietly good, and you never know about Ganassi. They weren't here, so that's the first session to kind of get their feet under them, and we'll see where they kind of end up this afternoon. But I think there's plenty of competition to try and win this weekend, but I think Andretti looks very strong.

**Q. The announcers in the NBC booth commented that Penske is running less downforce, and I don't know exactly how they're judging that, probably from a camera, but I guess they are looking at the rear wing. Do you know, does that make a difference when you say the car slides around, do you think that's because your team is doing something a little different?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No, I think everyone is going to be sliding. I'll be surprised if the entire field isn't on the max available downforce configuration. We have a limit that IndyCar has set, and if anyone trimmed, I would be quite shocked. I wouldn't recommend it myself.

You know, never say never. If you think trimming is the right thing to do, then give it a whirl. But I think with this package we have and the temperature that we're dealing with this weekend, I think you're going to run as much downforce as you can on the car.

**Q. How good does it feel to actually have to lift going into the corners compared to previous years, and do you feel like it's easier to lose control of the car than with more downforce in the past?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's a new challenge. You're used to -- '16 back, you were used to just being flat out and having baby lifts as the tires degrade, but really used to being flat on the throttle. And now right with new tires, you're having to lift pretty early in the corner to try and make sure the front is going to be stuck, make sure you have enough rear grip underneath you.

I wouldn't say it's easier to lose the car. I actually think the car is a lot easier to save now. If the car gets

sideways, it gives you way more warning. The way this car works, if you think of a string, it's an old analogy that people have talked about with racing cars, and this car just has -- you have way more room on that string before it snaps. The old car you'd stretch the string and it would snap immediately all of a sudden. This thing you can stretch it way out and it gives you a lot more warning when it's starting to get out there. It's really easy, I think, to drive this car sideways compared to the old one, but that also -- that makes you busier. If you're not a driver that's comfortable doing that, then yes, it can be a more uncomfortable car to drive. But if you like the car being sideways, I think it gives you a lot more warning with what it's doing.

**Q. Did you experiment with a lot of lines going through Turn 1 because it seemed like people were taking what looked to be the ideal racing line, but it seemed to be hitting a bump and the cars were shimmying through there. Is it something that you experiment with over the course of a stint to kind of --**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think everyone is going to have their preferred lane. Some guys are going to like being up high, some are going to like being low. I'm not sure -- I think the majority of the field is going to work up. That's generally what's happened in the past; when you had high tire degradation, people have worked up the track that can't hold the bottom. But I think if you can hold the bottom, you're going to have a good race car if it can hold the bottom for longer. But yeah, I was kind of looking at everything, seeing how high you can get up there, and I think two and a half lanes is very reasonable. I think you'll have lane 1 and lane 2. Maybe not a full lane 3, but I think you'll have half a lane more than last year, depending on the marble situation because we do have more marbles with this car.

If you look at our races, because there's a little higher tire degradation, less downforce, it seems to be spraying more and more marbles, so you've got to watch out for that. I don't think it's a problem, it's just something you have to account for in the race. But yeah, I think you're going to have tons of lane usage, which is the great thing about Iowa. You can go multiple spots.

**Q. Do you think this has the potential to be the best race so far with this car this season?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know. That's a tough question. I think we've had some really good races. You know, to me, it should be much better because I thought Phoenix was much improved. Was it perfect? No, but was it a better race this year. Yeah, absolutely it was a much better race. So I think Iowa has a chance to be a fantastic race. Will it be the best of the year? I don't know yet, but I think we're going to have a great show here for sure.

**Q. Also at the beginning of the year a lot of people**

**seemed to think that the pendulum had shifted toward the younger drivers that were going to battle it out for the championship, but you kept saying, don't overlook Scott Dixon. Do you think this is exactly what you were talking about at the beginning of the year, what he's doing so far this season?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, you can never -- I think it would be very silly to count out Scott. He's been in it for a long time, and he's proven every year that he'll be in the hunt, and it would be no different this year. I wouldn't count him out ever. But yeah, the young guys I think have had a great run this year. I think this car and this package has opened up a great opportunity, not just for young drivers but smaller teams, and so you're seeing a ton of competition from rookies this season. But guys like Scott that's a veteran, that's been in it forever, and a guy like Hunter-Reay, I think you're always going to have those guys up at the top towards the end. They know how to put a season together, and they're a threat all the way through to the finish.

**Q. Did you test here, and if so, what was the most important part of testing you learned for the race?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, we did test here, and just having five or six hours of track time was invaluable. It is so beneficial for us to be able to work through the car. Because it's a new package this year, not just from a car standpoint but an aerodynamic standpoint, the aero package is very different. We were able to work on qualifying, racing, just general philosophy of how we set up the car. We've worked on everything. I think all of it was a benefit. It gives us a kick-starter for a weekend like this. If you didn't test here, it's pretty tough to get it right. You have an hour in the morning and then you've got to qualify and then you have an hour in the afternoon and then you've got to go race, so it's a tight turnaround for people that didn't test.

**Q. Being a holiday weekend and a weekend off, anything interesting to share, anything happening?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: For me, no. I think I was like everyone else; it was nice to get a weekend off. For the crew guys it's a big deal because they've been running so flat out since May. No, my sister came and visited, so pretty low key, and Davidson, North Carolina, for me, but it's always a welcome to have a weekend off in the summer after May and June.