

IndyCar Media Conference

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Will Power

Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



always this way in races, but certainly this place, 300 laps in traffic is a much different animal than two laps by yourself.

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's totally different. I mean, the tire dropoff and all that, it's going to create some very interesting strategies because I think you're going to pit before you run out of gas basically because your lap times drop so much and new tires are so good. It's going to be tough. You'll have people take risks and pit early and make a lot of hay whenever they're on fresh tires and everyone is struggling. Makes for good racing. It's really good where the formula is right now, and looking forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: And there's no more dramatic example of new tires than Josef and Hunter-Reay about four years ago; you came the last two or three laps and just passed everybody like a video game.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, this place you can have some fun if you get in a situation like that. Maybe that'll present itself. I think with the way this aero kit and this tire is going to work this weekend, I think most people will take that late yellow, but maybe not. Maybe people will try and take a risk and stay out. But if you have new tires around this place, it could really be a couple magical laps to try and work through the field. Yeah, it's going to be really interesting to watch how people react to coming to pit lane and how they do it. It's really going to be dictated to what your competitors are doing around you. I think that'll be an interesting element to watch for the race, but it's going to be all about taking care of your tires, like we're talking about. I think that's the key around this place is how do you take care of your tires, how do you use other lanes. That's what you've got to be good at.

THE MODERATOR: Will, you've got a trophy here for winning the pole, a grain bin. You had one of those from a year ago. I would assume it's --

WILL POWER: I've actually never seen the one from last year. I didn't even know I was on pole last year. I'll be asking the team where my grain silo is. I've got a lot of the P1 ones, but I want something different, so I'll be asking if I can get this one.

Q. It does seem like the laps click off really quickly here, maybe 18 seconds qualifying but probably a little slower in the race itself. What's that like as a driver to be going that distance that fast? Do you

THE MODERATOR: Welcome the front row qualifiers for tomorrow's Iowa Corn Indy 300, Will Power and Josef Newgarden. I guess it's not a surprise that Team Penske dominates the front row. This is the fourth straight pole for Team Penske here and the seventh overall. Will, some big numbers now continuing along, 52 year poles, now one short of AJ Foyt for second place in the all-time list, and amazingly, I just looked up, top three qualifying positions for you in 10 of the 11 races this season. Just start with the idea that you've qualified consistently well throughout the season.

WILL POWER: Yeah, we've had great speed all year everywhere. Obviously had some misfortune, four DNF's already, which is a lot, but to start on the front -- we're running at the front, so we need to turn it around and start finishing races every week.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, this is maybe a good omen for you; the pole sitter at Iowa Speedway has never won in 11 tries, so starting second may be a good thing.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, those stats can always change, right, so I don't know that that's reflective of what could happen tomorrow. I think we've got great cars. I think it was a great qualifying performance from our team, and Will did a couple great laps. I think we all can be pretty happy. Simon is not too far behind us. We've just got to try and execute now tomorrow. I think this afternoon's session is going to be really vital for us now that we've sort of gotten the short qualifying run out of the way, but it's all about tomorrow now.

THE MODERATOR: Will, you looked like you had two spectacular laps compared to the field, and yet you didn't seem like those were perfect laps. Did you think you had more left?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, it's really difficult to understand the grip level and when you should lift and how you should get back on the throttle and all that, so you never feel like you did the best lap. But that's short-track racing and definitely the formula we run now, it's always difficult. I've definitely had a lot easier qualifying around this place in the past. Yeah, it should be hard. It should never feel good.

THE MODERATOR: And two laps in qualifying, and it's

have any time to rest, and I don't know if it's a physical with the G-forces, if that's an issue, and what about the bumps?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I think this is the most physical track we go to. It's the most constant. I mean, you're never resting. You have a short break on the backstretch for about three seconds, and that's what you get. And it's where you can make some adjustments, but you're always turning. It's very, very physical. At the end of the race, you normally are slammed up into the side of the car, and you feel that --

WILL POWER: Hands numb.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Hands are numb.

WILL POWER: Yeah, in the test, my hands went numb, my foot went numb.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it's a tough track. I'll just answer that, yeah, from a physical standpoint, probably the most difficult, I think.

Q. How many laps before you're ready as a driver to get new tires?

WILL POWER: 30. Yeah, I think about halfway you would be wanting new tires, but that's definitely not the best strategy I don't think. Yeah, after 30 you're starting to feel it.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, we recommend people take them at 30. That's what we --

WILL POWER: Yeah, make it a six-stop race.

Q. Are both of you drivers surprised at the range of emotions from the drivers out there, ranging from yourselves who are quite confident with this package to others who are just already in panic mode?

WILL POWER: That's pretty normal. Yeah, when people struggle they always go in panic mode. I think that's the thing; when people struggle, they want a Band-Aid, and downforce is the Band-Aid to make everything feel real good.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think the car feels great. I mean, I think all of us have been pretty happy with it. We were happy at the test. I don't know, I think it's been really fun to drive. We were actually talking about how much fun it was to drive the car at the test, so I think it's good.

Q. Will, you mentioned tires, but I've seen also a big factor for the race is overlapping drivers, traffic. Is this a big part of the race strategy?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, that's short-track racing, you will be in traffic the whole time, and understanding how to get through it well. So yeah, that's going to be the interesting part is how well you can manage that. There's always two lines here, which helps. I think it

potentially can be three because the third lane in Turn 1 and 2 is really nice. It's just a matter if people go up there and it doesn't get marbled up.

Q. I've noticed that you've now won at 19 different tracks. You won at Milwaukee, but as you went into your career, winning at a place like Iowa you probably would have thought would have been quite an accomplishment?

WILL POWER: Yeah, it's been high up on my list for a long time. I've been close the last couple years, led laps and had a car to do it. Yeah, you start looking at tracks you haven't won on, and you want to get that ticked off. So this is one of them. This is probably the top of the list of tracks I haven't won on.

Q. And Josef, you had a year two years ago where you literally dominated the field. We have seen some examples when a driver gets -- driver and crew and engineer gets things right this season, they can win pretty big.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think it breeds that here a little bit. Iowa you can have some amazing racing, a lot of side by side, multiple lanes, really exciting stuff to watch. And also you can have someone that just gets it so right on that day, and they win by a lot. And so you can get either-or. You always hope to get it so right on a specific day that you crush everybody, but it doesn't always work out. But it breeds that opportunity. I think that's what Iowa brings.

It will be very interesting to see in this new car what kind of show we're going to have. I think you're going to have a great race. I really think it's going to be lane usage, where everyone goes. I think you'll see a lot of side-by-side racing, but maybe someone will get it that much better than the other and have an amazing day.

Q. Firestone said the right side tires have more grip here, and I would guess that that might mean they're a little softer, so maybe they'll wear out a little faster, so since tire management is a key thing, how do you keep your tires fresh if you're constantly in traffic?

WILL POWER: Yeah, you don't. You're definitely not going to keep your tires fresh. That's going to be the whole battle. Yeah, it's the one who can have a car that holds on to them better is the one that's going to make hay and be able to go through traffic and win the race basically.