

IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday July 14, 2018

Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome in our pole winner Josef Newgarden driving the No. 1 Hitachi Team Penske Chevrolet, defending series champion, also the defending rain winner, a two-time winner here on the streets of Toronto and a new best career start here on the streets of Toronto and his first pole here, fourth pole of this 2018 season. Josef, we've seen you have speed throughout these practice sessions yesterday. Did you expect that you had enough speed to win pole today?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think we actually felt really confident from this morning. We had a bobble at the very last lap of practice where I kind of slid into Robert. We were just spaced about the perfect incorrect distance from each other when he went in, and I didn't see him around a blind corner. But up to that point I think we were pacing for a P1 lap. So our feeling was really good about it. I think we had a fast car today.

Yesterday I was more than concerned. Actually yesterday I didn't think we had the speed to compete with Scott or some of the top 5, and then overnight we made great changes, and then the Hitachi car just came to life. Today was fantastic in the morning. So the only thing was when it started raining, you go, man, I think we have a P1 car, and now I don't know what we're going to get. You never know what you're going to get in these type of conditions. You make a mistake, throw it off into the wall, you could not have a good car in the wet, you could do a bad job yourself, you just don't know what you're going to get. Fortunately we made the right decisions, car was still fast, and we get pole. So that's good. That's a great start. Doesn't mean anything for tomorrow, but it's a great start for tomorrow's race.

THE MODERATOR: Can you point towards anything that -- you say yesterday you were a little worried, and today it seems like something was found that let to such a good result today. Is there anything in particular that you can share that you feel really made a difference?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Nothing in particular, but I'll just tell you we didn't have any natural pace yesterday. We were scrapping to get into the top seven, and we finally did in that second session. I felt like we kind of came alive a bit, but it wasn't nearly enough to be ultra competitive. We were scraping just to make it happen,

and we needed something to bring natural pace to the car, and we made some changes, and they were more dramatic than I thought they'd be. Looking at the changes, I didn't think we would have as dramatic of a jump in performance, and this morning I just thought we had natural speed. It was easy to be in the top three. It just wasn't hard anymore.

Some of that's attributed to the team side with the setup. I think some of it's down to Team Chevy and the work that they're doing. It was a big team effort, and we were all working together, me, Will and Simon, and then you could see we all kind of were rewarded for that. We all got in the top six, which was a big deal for our team, so I think we've got a good start now for tomorrow.

Q. Yesterday the Hondas seemed to dominate in practice, but today it seemed to be rather even in qualifying. Do you think that was a result of the conditions, or do you think that was something different?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it's definitely more that we found pace. I think Team Chevy worked really hard overnight. We found some things to give us performance, and from the team side, we definitely found stuff. I think we took a jump as a race team forward, all three of us, because regardless of the rain -- I actually would have probably asked for no rain. I felt like we had a car that was capable of being on pole in dry conditions. Now when you throw the rain in, you go, well, we maybe can still get the pole, but you don't know because it's so jumbled up, maybe red flags, so you don't know what's going to happen. Yeah, I don't think it was the conditions, I think it was a jump that we took overnight that helped us the most.

Q. Can you take us through that final push to get the top spot in the Fast Six there?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I was on the limit. I thought I had made -- I actually made the call in the Fast Six, which I don't like doing. Normally I leave it to Tim and the team. I say, hey, you guys make the high-level decision on what you want to do as far as when you go out, what tires you run, and I think there was some concern of not going out early immediately because it was spitting rain and we didn't know if that was going to intensify or if it was going to get better.

To me I thought we already got the Fast Six. We're already up front, so I thought we might as well take a risk, and I think for us to get the pole, especially with

Scott having new tires still, the only way we were going to do that is if we had the minimum amount of laps on our tires, and essentially we just needed to go out two laps later and just run at the end. I thought the track was going to get quicker. Halfway through the Fast Six, I regretted that decision immediately because it was raining. It was actually starting to come down then, and I'm like, oh, man, we made a bad call, we should have been out here early, and in those final two laps it just started cleaning up, and you could just see the braking was getting better, the concrete was getting better, and in that final lap it was really coming alive, and I thought, okay, this is the lap we have to push on, and I pushed as hard as I could in that final lap. I braked as deep as I could in Turn 3, and we kept it clean, and it was enough for pole. It was very thrilling from my side. It was a fun session to try and do something like that.

I was sweating in the car, like this is amazing. I don't know how it's going to turn out, but it was fun to drive, very, very fun to drive.

Q. Josef, for us watching the drivers, especially watching their steering wheel action, it looks like from time to time like it's really violent out there, and for qualifying that's probably when everybody is on the limit. I don't think it's quite like that during the race, but what's it like for a driver on this course going over the bumps at the speeds that you do? Do you feel it's kind of violent, as well?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it's a fairly violent track itself. It's much smoother now. There's sections that are so much easier. I think Turn 1 is the biggest area you can point to. We all have seen the repavement there, and it used to be really violent under the braking just because it was all pretty much just -- it was rooted up from the winners here. Everything was uneven, and you had all these dips and peaks. So it was very difficult to get your braking. You're just like bouncing across the brake zone into Turn 1. Now it's smooth, you can brake as deep as possible. But the rest of the track, you're always going over some big curbs. I think T5, T8 you've got some big curbs you hit, and it's generally quite violent through 9, 10 and 11 onto the front stretch. It's a violent track, but the thing about Toronto is this place grips up more than any other street course we go to. That's why our lap times have been so quick. Some of that's the repaved sections, but also just the grip of the track has been immense. I can't believe how much grip has been around this place.

So if it was dry, I think we would have probably gotten into the 57s, which is really quick. I mean, we did a -- what did we do, a 58.5, 58.6 Scott did, and that's just kind of cleaning the track up. If it was like clean and green, yeah, you'd have done a high 57, no problem, so that just speaks to the grip level of the racetrack, which is pretty cool. It's fun to drive, but it beats you up

because they're so gripped up and you're over these curbs, it's a very violent track to drive.

Q. You entered the season with two poles career, now you've doubled that to four. What's next, Will Power's 52 coming up quick here for you, but how did you get so much better this year on winning poles?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I don't know the best -- to me I actually thought we should have had more poles last year. Not trying to be greedy about it, I just know there's weekends where it just didn't work out. I think we were in the Fast Six and I thought we had what it took to get a pole. I could probably point to three or four weekends -- not like we should have had 10 poles, but I think last year we should have had three or four poles that they didn't work out. We finally got one there in Sonoma at the end of the season, which was really gratifying. But I think we're doing the same stuff, and it's just sort of flowing our way a little bit more this year, even Toronto. You could say today flowed our way. It could have bit me 100 percent. If it kept raining I would not be on pole. It's really easy to sway your way or swing the other way, you just never know. Sometimes we've been bit by circumstances and just not had new tires on in the Fast Six because we were on the wrong group at the wrong time. But I don't think we're doing anything different, just for whatever reason it's working out right now.

Q. You mentioned to me yesterday about how you keeping a cool head here in Toronto; my question to you is there were similar conditions to pole today in 2017 to when you won it here. Tomorrow is supposed to be drier conditions. What are your thoughts strategy-wise?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, thankfully it's more straightforward tomorrow. We're not going to have to deal with this, from what I've seen. I don't know the latest weather, but it looked like tomorrow was going to be good, and if that's the case, then you just try and -- I think you try and minimize the risk of the yellows. I mean, that's -- historically that's what can bite you around Toronto. You can always make a mistake. It's a circuit that's to me easy to make a mistake on.

It's not difficult that you can throw it into the wall pretty quick. But other than that, it's about getting the yellows right, and I've benefitted from them here before. Both victories that I've had here, I've had a little bit of help. We've got fast cars, but you've got to have some help sometimes. I think we just need to make sure we're looking at that and putting ourselves in the best position to not be bit by an unfortunate yellow, something like that. So that's probably what we're going to look at tonight, and then play the fuel game, attack. I think Scott is going to be attacking, everyone is going to be attacking behind us, so we've got to attack the whole race, and if we keep it clean, then we should be just fine.

Q. Take me through Turn 5; a couple guys crashed there today in the Lights race. You've crashed there previously. Is it a high risk-reward corner? It seems like the guys really push it hard through there and wind up hitting the wall.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it's a deceptive corner. I almost crashed in the Fast Six to be honest with you because when I went out, it was raining, and that concrete slab in the center, it for whatever reason becomes the most slick out of all the concrete slabs. 3 is probably behind right that. But yeah, I went out, I almost wrecked on my first lap in the Fast Six, almost pushed right into the wall because I had no grip. I think you can get caught out, and watching the Indy Lights race it looked like a couple guys got caught out under wet conditions, and for me it's easy to see how that happened.

You know, it's like I said, really easy to make a mistake around this place, and I've seen a lot of high-profile guys do the same thing. You just try and not let that happen, and if it does happen to you, you put it in the memory bank and say, hey, this is the corner that can bite you, and that's really all you can do, so yeah, it's one of those corners you've got to look out for.

Q. You said in Thursday's opening press conference that your No. 1 goal after Iowa was to beat Hinchcliffe in Toronto.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I was mildly joking, but yeah.

Q. Take us through this being Phase I of that plan.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yes, exactly. It's all coming together. I mean, yeah, James -- they looked like they did a good job. It didn't flow for them how they needed to, but Hinch and Wickens are relatively up there, so they're not in a bad spot. They could very much capitalize on a good race and win, no doubt, so it's going to be tough to beat them. But yeah, it would be awesome to have another victory here, I think. For sure to give Hinch a little elbow after Iowa and what he did to me at the end of that race. He did a great job, but it's always nice to get him back. But I think more importantly for the championship it's good for us to have a solid run here. So it would be -- it would be satisfying on more than one level for sure if we could get a victory here.

Q. Going back to Iowa, you had such a dominant car there. At one point I think you might have lapped the field a couple times, but then towards the end, I don't know if you made changes during your pit stops, but it seemed like your car wasn't as fast. Did that just happen naturally during your race or did changes that were made to the car result in you not being as dominant?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it was more a result of us not getting the whole race correct. You make your best judgment on what you need from a setup standpoint for the entire distance. Look, if that race was 250 laps, we'd have won, but we didn't have the

setup stamina to last the last 57 laps, and a lot of that's just down to track evolution. I think Hinch got better and they capitalized on it, and we got worse. Right from the green flag we were slowly getting worse the entire race. The good thing about it was we started from such a dominant position, so it took us a while to get down to his level, but he got better as the track progressed, and they just beat us, and that's really all there is to it. Now when you look at it in hindsight, you say, okay, I know how we can fix that for next year if we have the exact same conditions, but every year you're always looking at it trying to make the best judgment on setup, and we were very close, but we missed it by just a little bit.