

IndyCar Media Conference

Friday August 24, 2018

Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with our press conferences this afternoon. Joined now by Josef Newgarden, driving the No. 1 Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet for Team Penske, who will be starting third in tomorrow night's race, also the defending race winner here at Gateway Motorsports Park, and the defending series champion for the Verizon IndyCar Series.

First of all, an interesting day for everybody, but hopefully you get some extended track time tonight. What are your thoughts on the performance of your car so far, what you've been able to feel out in this limited time on track so far?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's not been a lot, that's for sure. I mean, it's a similar boat for everybody. I wish we were going to qualify, to be honest. That's the big thing for me. It sounds like we're going to get more practice time, which is good, but not qualifying is a little bit tough, just because that will obviously benefit the top two guys and you lose that opportunity to get a point. That's a little bit tough, but we will get more practice time, so we get to work on our cars. I think we need a little bit more time. We didn't seem to have a full handle on it immediately, but at the same point, we only ran a handful of laps. I think we only had 20 minutes of green flag time, so not a lot of running certainly. Compared to the guys that tested here, I don't think we have a full handle on it yet. But I'm optimistic, as always. I think we've got a great team working on it.

We got a little bit of insight into the race cars with that 20 minutes of track time. I think it's trying to figure out the conditions. It's very cool right now. The track temp is low, which is a good thing. It will simulate night running, and I think the practice later will do that even further.

But yeah, it's tough to get a handle on it right away. You always hope the car is perfect right off the truck, and a lot of time it is at Team Penske, but I think here we needed a little bit of tuning. Yeah, just another hour and a half hopefully to figure out our Verizon car, and then hopefully we'll be in it with a shot.

THE MODERATOR: Clearly last year's race worked out well for you in the end, but with the new 2018 aero kit coming into this year's race, how much of that information can you translate over?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, we try to use as much as we can. Obviously last year was our first year back. It was a new track surface. It hasn't changed much, which is good. The track is not that different from a ride characteristic or really a grip standpoint. It seems similar to last year. It's just the aero kit change that's vastly different. So we're trying to figure that out. I think we've drawn the most parallels from Phoenix. Phoenix is probably the most similar place that we can look to to try to make our race setup, but even from there it seems like we need something totally different. So yeah, we're trying to -- we sort of had an okay base to start, but we definitely need some more tuning work to get it just perfect. So we've got some good ideas. The guys have been working really hard, and I think we'll have a good game plan for this night session coming up.

Q. You'll know more after tonight, but will this race be closer to a Phoenix race or to an Iowa race?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, like you said, we'll know more tonight. I have no idea at the moment to be honest. I didn't run with anybody. I was just trying to get some laps underneath myself. I have no idea at the moment. I'll know better tonight.

Q. You just said you did a handful of laps. Nevertheless, with the new aero kit, is the car easier to drive compared to last year or more difficult?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It seems the same case like we've sort of seen everywhere, where it's -- the car -- it's harder to be flat, it's moving a lot more than last year, but it's also more predictable, more -- gives you more ability to catch the car when it does slide. To me, it's the same traits that we've seen everywhere, which is kind of funny. It's harder to drive the car, but at the same time it's also easier. It's just kind of funny. The car moves a lot more, has a lot less downforce, but it gives you a lot more warning when it is going to move.

Q. It seems that the three Penske drivers are just right in the middle in terms of your speed from that first short practice. Have you actually tried to get all the speed out of the car? Were you working on your qualifying setup? What did you get accomplished?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it was hard to accomplish anything. We were sitting in the pits more than we were running on track. Every time we tried to make a change or get in a rhythm, we'd pretty much go yellow or red flag. We didn't really get to do much, but

yeah, we're just trying to figure out what we need for the race car for race running now. I think we were trying to figure out both in that session and probably didn't get a ton accomplished for either qualifying or the race, but now we'll just focus on the race knowing that qualifying is canceled.

Q. Do you ever miss going home? Do you get to go back to Tennessee any, or are you on the road constantly? Do you get back to see friends and family?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, not often. I was actually just there a couple weeks ago. I finally got to see some family for three or four days in Nashville, which was great. Yeah, whenever I get to go to Nashville, it's a great time. It's obviously where I grew up and still a place that I love to go to. A lot of people love going there now. It's become a very popular city. But yeah, not super often, probably three, four times a year. But I always enjoy it when I get to go to Nashville.