

# IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday September 1, 2018

## Will Power

Josef Newgarden

Alexander Rossi

Sebastien Bourdais

Ryan Hunter-Reay

Zach Veach

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin our Verizon IndyCar Series post qualifying press conference. Joined by Josef Newgarden, starting second in tomorrow's Grand Prix of Portland.

Josef, when we spoke to you a little bit earlier today, it seems you guys had found some speed in the car, but you weren't quite sure what to expect going into qualifying. Did you feel you got most out of the car?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think for the most part. I thought we would be top five. I felt like we had that speed. So did Will, for sure. I didn't know if we would have enough for the pole. I hoped so. We had been there, flirting with that top spot.

It was just difficult to read the time sheets with how many yellows we've had, how many checkups we've had. I don't think anyone has posted the best time in practice.

We expected to be up there close, at least challenge for it in the Fast Six. We just had a better car on black tires to be honest with you. Seems like the red tires, we weren't tuned well enough for. This whole weekend we built ourselves into a box of a better racecar. I think our racecar is going to be pretty good for tomorrow, but not as strong qualifying on red compound tires.

That was our downfall. Missed a 10th or two in five, six, seven corners from Will. That's where he had a little bit of speed on us.

1-2 for the team, can't be disappointed.

THE MODERATOR: We also talked a little bit about traffic on a shorter road course. How did that play out in qualifying?



JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was no problem in qualifying. Gets cut in half. No issues, really nice compared to practice.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Josef.

**Q. You said you didn't maximize things on the red tires. Is that a factor of having practice on Thursday?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, not really. I mean, I think Will, where he's developed his setup for the weekend, has naturally been better for the reds. We've probably been naturally a little bit better on the black compound tires.

Just depends where you go. You get some tradeoffs. I like this setup style we've got. Didn't seem to work as well on reds. Not necessarily that we've been on black tires more often. It's just the setup that we built was not as suited to the red compound probably.

**Q. Is there any problem with the Firestones with the rubber?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Only for the first group. The first group kind of clears everything off from the Mazda Road to Indy. The second group in round one is fine.

I normally like that group because people struggle on that stuff. It's really bad for about four or five minutes, then it's cleared off. The rest of qualifying there's no issues with it.

**Q. What went through your mind when you locked up your tires?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Ended that run, that's for sure. I had to pit, immediately get the other sets on. Luckily we have two sets. You just got to switch over.

I knew that lap was pretty much done. That tired smoke, literally. No pun intended. You know pretty quickly you've ended that tire's life.

**Q. How do you assess the way tomorrow will go, side-by-side, fierce battle?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'm not sure, to be honest with you. I think we'll have a good race just like Mid-Ohio. People used to say about Mid-Ohio you never have a good race there. We had one of the best ones a couple weeks back. I wouldn't be surprised to see some side-by-side racing here. It does get narrow in parts of this track, then also wide. T7 is a very wide corner that can create a lot of chaos. Some sections

where you get bottled up. That kind of mixup can create a good race. You never know with IndyCar, you're always kind of surprised when you get in the race to see what you get.

**Q. Two-thirds of Team Penske seemed like they hit it out of the park this weekend. The others are struggling. How close are you on setups?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: To be honest, we're all on three completely different setups. I don't think we've ever been like this. I don't know if that's the trait of this track. Andretti may be the same way. You can probably run any setup on this racetrack right now. Kind of what it seems like.

We're on three totally different islands. It's really interesting to look at. Normally we're very close. There's some minor changes between us. There's some preferences. We're honestly in three different planets right now. We're just trying to find what works.

I think Pagenaud has some things he dislikes, that he's trying to find. We've all had that at some point this year. I've been places where I am looking for something I need, so is Will. We all go through that at some point or another.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, thank you very much.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome two of our Andretti Autosport drivers, Alexander Rossi, starting third, and Zach Veach.

Alex, we'll start with you. You were 23rd at the end of practice two yesterday afternoon. Obviously found some speed overnight. What are some things you and the team worked on?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Clear traffic definitely helped. I think we had a fast car. Just didn't translate yesterday for not being able to get the lap in. So, yeah, I think all four of the cars have been competitive. Marco really has led the way for a lot of the weekend in terms of Andretti Autosport. We've all worked together.

Similar to Josef, I think we're all kind of on our own independent island in terms of setup, which is very unique for this place, has presented a challenge. We're all very thankful for the test we had on Thursday.

THE MODERATOR: Zach, obviously the last few races of the season you seem to have really becoming together with the team. Your best qualifying effort of 2018 here at Portland. What are some of the things you feel are clicking?

ZACH VEACH: I think it's a little bit of confidence, understanding the car, know where the speed is at. Very lucky to have the teammates I do. Every

weekend they set the bar insanely high, I'm trying to close the gap. Each weekend it gets easier and easier. You see where that level is going to be, that's what you strive to get to.

I'm lucky. The past three places that we ran at, I think lot of it's an experience gap between rookies and guys that have been doing this, lucky to test at Gateway, Pocono, here about a month ago. That really helps you get up to speed a little quicker and have a better understanding how to get towards the top of the charts, I think.

THE MODERATOR: Sebastien Bourdais will be starting fourth in tomorrow's race. Had a little incident in this morning's practice session, but the team was able to get the car prepared for qualifying today.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: You're pretty funny.

Well, I say initially I wasn't so super enthusiastic about the fact we run three cars. I think had we not had three crews, I'm not sure we would have put that thing back together. I think I got to thank Tino for joining us this weekend.

Yeah, overall just an incredible effort from the guys to recover from my mistake. Honestly, when I got out of the car, I really wasn't quite sure how that thing was going to get fixed, yet the team did an awesome job with some time to spare.

Yeah, it was very impressive. The car may have looked like a Frankenstein car, but it was just about as good as it was in the morning. Yeah, I was really pleased with everything. I kind of made a mistake in Q3, that one lap, but nevertheless, good results under the circumstances.

THE MODERATOR: A new career best start here at Portland for Ryan Hunter-Reay, starting fifth in tomorrow's race.

Ryan, take us through the session.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Thanks to the team, teammates, we've been working really well together. We had a good turnaround coming from yesterday. The day before never just really had what we needed from the car. We worked together. Marco has been really quick. Worked with him on a setup for today. He put us on the right track. Thanks to him, as well.

Yeah, it was a pretty good day. We went with kind of a funky strategy for the final Fast Six. Didn't quite pan out for us. We could race from fifth, though. Should be a good race tomorrow. Interesting to see how it all unfolds, what kind of setup is going to be needed to make these Firestones last.

THE MODERATOR: Will Power joining us as our

polesitter for tomorrow's race.

Will, we've seen both and Sebastien atop the speed charts. It's a different track, different car, experience from the past doesn't matter. Might be playing into factor. What are your thoughts on that?

WILL POWER: No, I can't even remember that far back (laughter). I mean, it's a very different track. A lot of grip, the car is different. But it's a lot of fun. Really enjoying it out there. I think it's the most grip we've had all year on a track. Cars are really hooked up.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

**Q. (Question regarding the red tires.)**

ZACH VEACH: I think the big thing coming in is understanding what level the reds go through. You only get to visit that one lap once every set. You're kind of caught between how far do I push not to blow this lap so it's okay, how hard do I have to push to be somewhat competitive. That's been the big thing, is learning the reds, understanding where that line is, how to get there most efficiently.

**Q. Sebastien, two relative newcomers in your team. Are you acting like a coach, helping them?**

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: No, I mean, I don't like to intervene or interfere or whatnot. It's not my role. Obviously if they have questions and whatnot, I'll answer honestly. Obviously these days it's so easy to obviously look at data and look at the video and compare, know where you're efficient, how you can fix it. Everything is in front of you.

Sometimes asking questions, trying to give an honest answer, doesn't even describe it nearly as well as what they have at their disposal.

But yeah, I mean, the spirit is good. I really get along very well with them. It's always tough when you're the veteran, right? They feed off of you and they're ready to slit your throat in qualifying. It's the name of the game. It's been like this for many years now for me since I came back in 2012. Not really any different than any other years.

Yeah, now I guess I got two to deal with.

**Q. Alex, you have a little bit of a head start tomorrow. Talk about that. It's only qualifying, but...**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I wouldn't say that. It's Scott Dixon. As I've always said, he can start wherever, and he can still be in the front. We won't count our chickens before they hatch. I can answer that better tomorrow. There's 105 laps, a lot of things can happen first before we leave here. We also got to beat the two cars in front of us who are very quick.

**Q. (Question for Will about starting on pole.)**

WILL POWER: We'll see tomorrow. You don't know how degradation is, how quick you catch lappers. It's a long race, three stops. There's a lot that can be done strategy-wise.

But, you know, the end of the day we have to win. We have no shot at Sonoma if we don't. We know that. We'll take risks depending on the situation. But unpredictable. We're aware that we have to finish not only ahead of Alex and Scott, but quite ahead. If they're in the top three, it makes it very difficult for us.

**Q. Ryan, how would you assess your season so far this year?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I think the season has been good, but we just have too many DNF's, six or seven DNF's. Can't go championship racing that way, so...

Yeah, that's what it boils down to. Other than that, everywhere we go, we've been competitive, constantly running in the top five. I think one of our worst finishing positions when we have a day where nothing goes wrong is sixth. Just, yeah, it's been a rough season that way with the DNF's. But overall I think our competitiveness has absolutely been good.

We can definitely get creative with it, for sure. Absolutely want to go for wins. That's what I want to do every weekend. That's what we're here today, that's our job. But, yes, with strategy and whatnot we can get pretty creative with it. We'll do that tomorrow.

**Q. Ryan, when you don't finish a race, can you analyze things back at the workshop?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, I think we can. Hindsight is 20/20, right? What sidelined us at Gateway was a fuel pump drive, not the fuel pump itself, but a tiny part this big. We have some ideas of why that might have happened. We're looking into more reasons. A \$5 part sidelines us, we need to figure out why that is. Do our homework from there and make sure it doesn't happen again.

**Q. That is maybe a mistake of the supplying company?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Well, we're looking into that, too, whether it comes back down to a bad patch of metal or something like that. No specific answers for you right now. But, yes, we do look into that. We dig deep, make sure that it doesn't happen again.

**Q. (Question to Will about number of poles.)**

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, obviously to be up with names like Foyt, pretty special, humbling, yeah. I need to catch Mario now. I don't think that will happen, that's a lot of poles. But, yeah, unbelievable. I would never have dreamed of being up there with names like A.J. Foyt.

**Q. Will, did you ever think you would reach this number?**

WILL POWER: No, I didn't. I was always wondering at the end of every year if I'd even be racing the next year. It's been an amazing drive and journey to get to this point, it really has. Very grateful for it.

**Q. Zach, when you look at this year, at what point this year did you think you could make your first Fast Six? Have you been annoyed that other rookies have made it?**

ZACH VEACH: Not really. The other rookie besides the first race was Wickens. He's a hell of a guy. We've been trying to get closer and closer. That's the goal. There were a couple of scenarios where we were close. I think at Mid-Ohio, if it wasn't for the reds, we would have been in there.

To be able to put together a strong weekend, I don't think we've been out of the top 10 yet this weekend. It's getting easier, which is nice. Each weekend, once we go to Sonoma, it's starting from zero all over again. We're trying to pick up as quickly as you can. When you start the weekend without a deficit, it's a lot easier to stay towards the front.

**Q. (Question to Sebastien about getting the car fixed.)**

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, like, I was kind of joking, but not joking entirely. Obviously we have three crews of mechanics here instead of our usual two. It was so extensive that adding those extra guys definitely helped us to fix the car. That's what I meant.

**Q. Sebastien and Will, you were part of the last ones from 11 years ago that raced here. Can you describe how different it is? Is it the car or the surface or just in general?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, it's been resurfaced. That made a huge difference in grip. There used to be patches in the middle of the corners. The turn seven corner, into the backstretch, the hairpin is a much nicer corner now. Probably promotes a little bit of passing, makes the track a little bit more technical. Those are the differences. Yeah, very fun, enjoyable track.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Also the carbine is different. Used to be wider, smoother. Used to be a big mound that you could really climb, used to be really open. Now the line is extremely narrow.

**Q. Alex, why is your car called Baby Girl?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: There's a song, Buy You a Drink, by T-Pain. I sing it a lot. So, yeah. That's where it came from. If you listen to it, you'll understand.

**Q. Did you come up with that?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, someone on my team just started using the hashtag. The mechanics thought it was funny so they put it in the car. It's a lot cooler than naming your car something from the Beatles.

**Q. Will, how much is the pressure is there starting the race up front?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, you can never plan a start. It will be what it will be basically. Just have to be aggressive. We need to be leading out of the first chicane, yeah. And then the pressure, it's good. You have no choice. You're not being conservative. You just know that the only mindset is absolute aggression, taking some risk strategy on the track. That's the only way it's going to work for us. It's not a nice position. I'd rather be way up there in the championship. You know what you got to do simply.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much. Good luck tomorrow.