

IndyCar Media Conference

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Josef Newgarden Alexander Rossi

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome in Josef Newgarden, driving the No. 1 Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet, second fastest overall on the time sheets this morning and afternoon. I know you didn't get any practice time, actually, in practice 1 today. It seems like you guys were able to work past that issue and actually set a pretty fast lap in practice 2.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think we were okay. We tested here last week, so we were pretty ready to go. It was difficult this afternoon to be honest. When I first went out I wasn't very happy the first run, and then we made really good progress the second run, and seemed pretty decent compared to last week. We were happy with our cars when we tested here last Thursday, so we felt optimistic coming into the weekend, and now we're just trying to go through the motions and make the right steps all the way up through the end of Sunday. That's kind of what you do on a race weekend. You try and make the right decisions every day.

So it was a pretty decent start. Now we've just got to put it together tomorrow and Sunday on race day.

THE MODERATOR: Joined also by Alexander Rossi, driving the No. 27 NAPA Auto Parts Honda for Andretti Autosport, 11th fastest on the overall time sheets this afternoon. Alex, I know that you probably wished you were a little higher up on the speed charts, but are you happy with what you're seeing from the car so far and heading into qualifying tomorrow?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: No, but the whole combined thing is weird because they overtake in the morning, so I don't really pay attention to that. I think this afternoon is the representation. I think we made a step forward this afternoon from this morning, and we had the test yesterday, which I thought was really good for us, but this place changes so quickly, and so often that what you have one day doesn't necessarily transfer completely to the next day. We definitely have some work to do overnight and need to put our heads together. It's not the first time we've had a bad Friday, so I have a lot of confidence in the 27 NAPA team that come tomorrow afternoon we'll be all right.

Q. Alex, you say the place changes so much. Do you learn anything or do you need to test seven

times to have seven different conditions to try and chase it back and forth?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Probably, yeah. I mean, the wind makes a big difference to the car balance. Obviously with there being dust on the edge of all the track surfaces, I mean, that contributes. Yeah, the temperature obviously at every track we go to makes a difference. Yeah, the test is very important because you definitely cross things off your list. But in terms of your setup options, I think here it's a pretty wide range, which is honestly kind of similar to Portland, I think, so it's strange that we've had two races like that sort of back-to-back, but we have four cars to kind of lean off of and pick apart the good things, so that's a positive of being on a big team, and we'll get it done tonight and tomorrow.

Q. What about the wind? Do you almost need a meteorologist here because that changes this racetrack considerably?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think compared to other tracks, it's a big variable here with just the wind direction. It really changes the balance of the car here dramatically compared to other racetracks. You're always watching it. It normally flips on you halfway through the race, and then sometimes in qualifying it does that, too, so you need to pay attention because it can catch you out if you don't catch it when it does change, it can cause a problem for you. So you're always watching it. The team is trying to keep you up to date on it, too, just to make sure you get it right.

Q. Josef, what was the problem this morning?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Some sort of fueling issue. I don't know specifically, but we weren't able to get our fueling sorted out. We didn't even realize it because we were going to run pretty late, so we didn't have a lot of time to work on it I think was the big deal. I think when we were going to run there was 20 minutes to go, and then we realized we had a problem. Not a huge setback in my opinion just because we were able to test, and that makes a world of a difference. You sort of already know what you have and what you want to do. So I felt like getting back on it this afternoon wasn't really a big deal.

Q. I also heard you're ill. Those two events of you not starting --

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's funny, so I had food poisoning last night for sure and have been up all night, and my girlfriend texted me as soon as the end of the first session, she goes -- because she thought I was

too ill to drive, and I go, it's just a coincidence, like it just looks funny. But no, it wasn't because of the sickness, it was more because of a car problem. Just a coincidence, yeah.

Q. Alexander, we always talk about the degradation of the tires. Less downforce, is that good or bad for tire wear?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Very bad. Terrible for tire wear. Yeah, it's something that we're all thinking about, we're all concerned about. Fortunately it's the same for everyone, right? So it's just about kind of finding a way to hopefully make the tires last. It's difficult without a warmup for sure so you're kind of going through practice sessions trying to do both things, work on the qualifying car and the race car at the same time. But no, it's definitely going to be a challenge on Sunday for sure.

Q. Alex, the importance of qualifying, winning the pole, this is a tough track to pass on; how important is it to really start up front?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I mean, I think qualifying is important at every track that we go to aside from probably Texas or Iowa. So I think that it doesn't really change. I mean, you try very hard and you lay it all on the line to get a pole in Portland, Toronto, Long Beach, here. It doesn't really change.

There's a lot more options that you have available to you when you start up front, so regardless whether or not it's hard to pass here, so you want to be on the front row and prefer to be on pole.