

IndyCar Media Conference

Tuesday February 12, 2019

Helio Castroneves Simon Pagenaud Will Power Josef Newgarden Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by three members of Team Penske who have been all out on track this morning. Helio, we will start with you. Your thoughts on the day?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: It was great. I have to be honest, a bit of a quick reaction first time out there, especially in the place I have no idea. The first time I'm driving. Kind of like it was very rush.

But towards the end of the day, it was a little bit better. Still getting the timing right. Great to be back in the NTT IndyCar Series. Great to feel the horsepower, the quickness of the car, as well. It's just like you feel the wind on the visor because normally you have the windshield, a year running with the sports car. Quite a lot of fun.

Hopefully, I can help my guys, my teammates here, testing some things that they might not think it's necessary. Somebody always got to take the short stick, and I think I will be the one.

It's been so far so good.

THE MODERATOR: Is that how you see your role here at this test, is providing an extra car of data for the team? Also, you'll be competing on a permanent road course in May at the Grand Prix of Indianapolis. Does any of this help you out there?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Absolutely. Right now it's getting everyone, especially myself, but also the team. The team is incredible. We have some guys from the sports car program straight into Indy car racing. They're ready to go. We just want to make sure that everyone is in sync.

Plus, if I can obviously add, as I said, Simon referred to me as a mule, if I can try something that nobody wants to do it, why not? Every time you have more data live, it's always beneficial to the team.

Hopefully, that helps me get used to, and when it comes back to the Indy Grand Prix, we're ready to go.

THE MODERATOR: We are also joined by our reigning Indianapolis 500 champion, Will Power.

Will, a new track for the NTT IndyCar Series, one you've been excited to get some laps on. How did that go for you?

WILL POWER: The track is phenomenal. I love it, love it, love it. Very technical. Obviously a lot of complexes. There is a place where the fans can see the whole track like there's a cool tower. Not that you can fit 100,000 people up there, but it's actually a good track. Great facilities. All the drivers are stoked to be here. Thoroughly enjoying it.

THE MODERATOR: Simon, we'll move on to you, driver of the No. 22 Chevrolet for Team Penske. Starting off the season in true form, trying to become an NTT IndyCar Series champion once again. How are you feeling about the start of this season and your prospects heading into 2019?

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's been really good. We've done a fantastic job, the whole team gathering right after Sonoma to try to attack the winner. We understand the program we needed to face to improve the cars and improve ourselves. It's phenomenal.

Team Penske, they're the best of the best. They still always try to turn every stone they can to be better. It's impressive. It's such an honor to be part of this organization. We've looked at everything.

I have to say I can feel a big improvement already. It's about putting everything together now. It's a bit like a recipe when you cook: it's about finding the right ingredients. We're putting all the pieces together.

At the moment we're really just exploring. It's still early stage. But the feeling is good. It's good to be back at a track, especially a track like this one. I love Indy car racing, I love racing these cars. I have to say it's awesome to start a new season.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What have you learned about this track, what you experienced today, that you found most challenging and most fun?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, it's got corners from other tracks. I know Silverstone, that first sector. I think

it's starting in Turn 3 is an amazing complex of corners, very technical. I mean, it's a really fun track.

I'd actually tested here before. It's become a little bit more bumpy, which adds some character to the track. Yeah, I don't know if there's anything else really to add.

SIMON PAGENAUD: It's an interesting track because it's got a lot of low-speed corners, elevation changes, then all of a sudden you throw yourself into those fast S's. It requires different things from the car to handle right.

You have to find the compromise to be the fastest around the whole racetrack. With driving, with techniques, you can adjust to turn around the bends.

It's tough. There's 20 corners, so it's a long track. There's a lot of little details to work on.

WILL POWER: A good idea is a good idea forever.

SIMON PAGENAUD: That's a quote. Go write it down (laughter).

Q. Are you happy to have Helio here?

WILL POWER: He's just a pest, a pain.

SIMON PAGENAUD: He's totally unnecessary (laughter).

WILL POWER: That's what dad used to call us kids when we were young, You're a pest, get out of here.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's nice, like when your grandparents come to visit (laughter).

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Just like a fly.

WILL POWER: Actually it's great having him here.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: The feeling is mutual, by the way.

WILL POWER: Great to have Helio. Helio and I get along well, always joking around. At dinner, he had some great stories last night, great stories. I'd like to share them with you, but we haven't got time (laughter).

Yeah, love it. I hope he comes back full-time. Throwing that out there.

SIMON PAGENAUD: You just did.

Yeah, it's awesome to have him. I have him on the sports car side, too. I don't get to miss him much. I love having him around because the biggest thing is his joy. It's great to have someone with such joy of life. He's still a kid when he gets in his racecar. It's great to see and inspiring. I love having him on the team.

THE MODERATOR: We'll let the original crew go, and Josef, you can stay.

THE MODERATOR: Josef finished third fastest in this morning's session in the No. 2 Penske Chevrolet. We were talking with your teammates on their outlook on 2019.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I thought it was fun to get a look. Obviously, it's new for us. It was interesting to see. It's a very nice facility. You can tell the track is quite high quality. There's definitely some surface shifting. They were telling me about the soil. You can tell it's old farmland for sure because it's got quite a bit of waviness on the backstretch. There's some high bumps in a couple places. Other than that, it's a really cool racetrack, fun to drive.

I like that it's long and flowing. It's not short. You have to put a whole lap together here. Yeah, we'll see how we get on in the afternoon. We weren't super strong in the morning. Got a little bit better on the second set of tires. I still think we're a little out of the window, which is okay.

It's a brand-new circuit. Didn't know 100% where to be to start. I think we have a better idea now. We'll see what we do in the afternoon.

THE MODERATOR: What about weather conditions? Here in Austin, Texas, you would think maybe we'd be a little warmer than we are today. Maybe in March, it is quite warmer. Will that information gathered from today still be applicable to a different sort of weather climate?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think so. The temperature goes up 20, 30 degrees, it will change things. The general characteristics of the track you're learning today. The wind looks like it's kicking up. I think that's going to be a very big deal here. The wind could probably play more of an effect than the temperature. We're learning about that today.

When the temperature does or doesn't change, we'll learn about that, too, later on. I think the bulk of the information we're going to pick up will be very useful for the race weekend.

THE MODERATOR: What are some key goals for you heading into the season? A year ago today coming into the season as the reigning series champion. What would you like to put together to repeat that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's the same goals. We firstly want to win the Indianapolis 500. That's obviously goal number one for our group. The championship follows that.

I think for the championship side, we just need to be more consistent than we were last year. That's where

we were lacking, in my opinion. We had great performances. We had some really solid weekends. From a consistency standpoint, we didn't put a whole year together very well. That's the big thing from that.

Obviously going back to the 500, we just got to execute on race day, give ourselves an opportunity. Hopefully, it works out.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Josef.

Q. You're at 149 today. How much time do you think is still left out on the track for you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Hard to say. I think we'll get in the 47s probably by the time we're done. The test, these two days, I'd be surprised if we don't get into the 47s.

How much quicker we go than that, I'm not sure. We can go down to 45s with reds on, race weekend, full rubber. High 45s maybe. That's my guess, my best guess of what we're going to do. Maybe low 46s. I think that's probably what is in us at the moment.

Q. (Question about degradation.)

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: The surface itself, if you look at the actual material, it's very polished. From that standpoint, there's not a lot of abrasion. But that doesn't necessarily equate to keeping the tires underneath you the whole time.

Yeah, I don't know yet how bad the tire deg is going to be. The first set of tires, they definitely were degrading. They wear out. Tire life is not going to be easy here. I guess you really notice a new set of tires is what I'm getting to.

They're going to last just fine. Firestone, we always have good durability. That's one of the traits of the tire, it's durable and reliable. I don't think we'll have problems with that.

Figuring out the nuances of how much they're going to degrade, we don't 100% know yet. I don't at least, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.