

# IndyCar Media Conference

Friday March 8, 2019

## Josef Newgarden Simon Pagenaud Will Power

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to our first NTT IndyCar Series press conference of the 2019 season. We're kicking off this season this morning with our three drivers from Team Penske, Will Power, Simon Pagenaud and Josef Newgarden. Will is drinking milk, which is very fitting.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We don't know what that is actually.

THE MODERATOR: Will, our reigning Indianapolis 500 champion. Obviously such an amazing year for you in terms of finally getting that Indy 500 victory. I know a little bit less consistency throughout the full season. What are your goals heading into 2019? How do you look to build a more consistent path for yourself this season?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, obviously that's exactly what we need is more consistency. Definitely was disappointed not to be a legitimate contender at the last race. Obviously still a great year to win the Indy 500, top of everyone's list in (NTT IndyCar Series). You want to be able to fight for that championship.

I think the team has done a lot of development over the off-season. I think we found some really good stuff. Chevrolet has done a really good job with the development, improving the engine, drivability and such. Definitely looking forward to getting out there.

I think testing is never that good of a gauge. I think the first race you get a really good understanding of where everyone stacks up team-wise and manufacturer-wise. Time will tell in the next couple days where we stack up.

THE MODERATOR: Looking at this race specifically, at the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, seven poles on this track, two wins. You get asked this question a lot. You seem to be sort of a qualifying master. What, in your opinion, is it going to take to translate those poles over to more wins?

WILL POWER: It's always something different that can go wrong. Is just the way Indy car racing is. It's very tough to win these days. You got to have the strategy



well. We have the right team around us. I think having Roger on the radio for the second year, we know each other well now, Roger works well with Dave, my engineer on the stand. From that perspective, I think we're going to be more on top of the strategy.

Honestly, last year the inconsistency, they're all different things. A couple of mechanical failures, a couple mistakes by myself, a couple things that were out of our control. Sometimes you have years like that.

THE MODERATOR: Simon, a best finish of second here on the streets of St. Pete. How important is it to start the season off on the right foot as you head into 2019?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, super exciting to be starting a new season. Like Will said, we worked really, really closely, all three of us, all the engineers, this winter to try to have a very precise program going into the off-season, improving the racecars. I have to say it was really awesome, the teamwork that went into it, to see Team Penske being so humble about going forward.

It's pretty amazing for a team of this level, with that many wins and championships, to actually rethink what they're doing and try to go forwards with absolutely no (indiscernible) I would say. That was really cool to be part of that.

Yeah, it's obviously super important to start the season well, in my opinion. Just momentum. Momentum does everything for you when you start a season. If we can have great momentum to start, would be okay. It's always easier to credit these points in the bank at the beginning than doing it in the end.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned Team Penske being a very humble organization. Also, a very sort of family-oriented organization with video series like the Penske Games that ties all the different series within the Penske family. What is it like having an activity like that that heavily promotes the racing teams all across the organization mean to you?

SIMON PAGENAUD: We have fun. I think that's what the marketing team has understood. We have fun personalities. We like to have fun together. I believe there's 16 of us now, 16 drivers at Team Penske, 14. That's a lot of fun to have. So, the marketing team has used that. We've created the Penske Games. Let me

tell you, you guys are going to have so much fun this year just watching it. That was a special edition. We had a great time doing it. Yeah, it's going to be a good time.

Yeah, I think we all share, as well as fun, a common goal, which is extracting the best out of everything. That's what we did.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, last year throughout the season, you had a bit of a target on your back as the reigning series champion. Do you feel more pressure this year, or a little bit less? Everyone is looking at you to perform well because of your history at the racetracks, but do you feel now having that sort of 'defending champion' tag off of you is helpful to your mentality?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I never thought it was that different last year. I mean, it's really nice to carry the No. 1. It's a huge honor, good to look back at what you did the year before. But the pressure always feels the same. Regardless if you've been 20th in the championship the year before, you know you have to come in and perform the next season. I think we all feel that.

It's the same when you look at someone like Scott this year. We know Scott is going to be in the conversation. Just because he won the championship, he's not our only target. We know there's more people we have to target within the groups to be successful this year.

I think that's what makes INDYCAR great, you don't have one person you're generally targeting. The pressure feels the same this year to have to do the job. We feel prepared like we talked about. We've worked very closely, as we always do. I think we actually do a great job of extracting the most out of each other.

Certainly, we feel really prepared with Chevrolet. We've done quite a bit of work with them this off-season to try to push to be better in all areas. They've done a great job with our new engine. We're excited to turn it fully loose. We have to hold back in the off-season, don't get to fully unleash the thing. We're excited to see fully what we've got this weekend. They always do a great job.

On the team side, we've extracted a little bit more out of these cars, particularly on street courses, I think we're going to take a step, which we needed last year. Time will tell. What do we have, another hour and a half to get to see where we're really at. I'm excited to get on the track.

THE MODERATOR: You were recently a guest of NBC INDYCAR's broadcast partner this year on their coverage of NHL hockey. What does it mean to you to have that support of NBC throughout the 2019 season?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's fantastic. I think we're all very excited about the NBC opportunity coming up. Obviously, we've been with NBC for quite a while now on the sports network side. But having the continuity of having them all year, being on network now with NBC for quite a bit of our events, including the Indianapolis 500, I think it's going to be really big.

I was just at the NHL game two nights ago. They put me on the glass with Pierre. That was one of the coolest things I've ever done in my life. Literally you feel like you're playing with the team, which was very scary. They're very, very good at what they do, NHL players. A lot of respect for hockey out there.

But just their approach to kind of tie us into all their sports entities, what they're doing across the board, is going to be big. I think they're going to really push INDYCAR to the next level. We're going to give people great access to the sport. They can see it in prime time television.

Obviously with the Gold Pass that people have heard about, you can watch it at any point, you can pretty much watch any session throughout the year on your mobile device, too. There's a lot of opportunity there. I think we're going to make the most of it.

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

**Q. Will was saying about how this will be a good chance to see where you stack up. Last year, seemed like Chevrolets were better on speedways, Honda had the edge on street and road courses. Important this weekend to see how you are coming out of the box?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, absolutely. Not sure it's going to be a big change, because the engine rules are pretty much frozen right now. There's nothing you can really change except for I think exhaust pipes. But, yeah, we are interested to see here at a street course, because the street courses were where we suffered the most last year.

Definitely we do have a different package with better drivability. I think we found some power. We're really interested to see where we stack up.

**Q. Simon, you were talking about how you changed the cars. Is that what you're angling toward, more street course and road course handling?**

SIMON PAGENAUD: When we go into the off-season, we sat down and tried to pinpoint exactly what we needed to be more competitive and consistent. We had a priority list of how we needed to improve and how much we need to improve on street course, road course, speedways, obviously on speedways, we had less margin for improvement because the cars were really good. We thought the street course was an area we really needed to work on.

The team took on a project and really worked really well. We made good improvement already and we're at the beginning of the program still, there's still more to come. But we think it's a good first step going into the season. We should be in good position.

Certainly, I personally feel a lot more confidence than I was last year at the beginning of the year. That's awesome to feel that way.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We need to be more well-rounded. For our performance for the 500, our performance needs to stay the same there. We had good engines and cars there with Will winning the race. We don't need to drop there, but improve the other area. Street courses, like Simon said, were the biggest area where we were lacking. You categorize them for sure. Just because you make a gain on a street course, it won't necessarily translate to a road course. So, we're targeting all that.

It's not just the engine side, it's the car side, too. We needed to be better as a team overall in some areas. I think street courses were probably number one where we kind of decided we needed to be better. Like Simon said, we got together this off-season very early and categorized some main points on what we needed to improve on.

I think we've made some good steps. Like I was saying, we're going to find out in another hour and a half if that's the case, but I think we've made good progress.

**Q. You have obviously been together now for a couple years. Are there any on-track secrets or tricks that you don't know about each other yet?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Impossible. It is, it's impossible to hide in these cars, right? I don't know. Maybe you guys feel different.

SIMON PAGENAUD: We hide every session. We hide you stuff.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Simon is very good at hiding things. He has a little black book, no one sees it, no one knows what is in that book.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Not digital any more.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Honestly, it's very tough in this series. That's why it's so close because the amount of data that you get off these cars, certainly the way our team integrates everybody, it's a positive and a negative. It's positive for us in that we get everything out of each other. We probably push our team as far as we can because of the way we work together.

At the same time individually, you can't hide anything. Not that you want to, but that's just the way the series

works. You have to be very transparent as teammates trying to push the team forward.

But it's hard. You can't hide. I don't think you can hide much on the racetrack.

SIMON PAGENAUD: We were just talking about it, I don't think there's any margin to hide anything at the moment. Everybody is so competitive, the teams are so great, drivers. We're at a very high level right now. It's something you really need to understand, we're fighting for 500th of a second. Even the moment you shift, it's paddle shifting, we're very focused on where we shift, that kind of stuff.

It's very detail oriented these days. The sport has changed dramatically in the last 10 years. It's definitely down to details now. We can't really hide anything because it won't help the team. That's the kind of things you need to be conscious about and be a professional.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

WILL POWER: We went back and looked at the data and I didn't do anything wrong. I don't know what you're talking about. I didn't do anything.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think he's right, you did it wrong. I think you should elaborate what you did on Helio.

WILL POWER: I've been blamed here on restarts a couple times. In the drivers meeting, we were told you can't start until the pit wall starts or everyone crashes behind me as I maintain speed. Everyone is on Twitter, I got so much abuse for that. I didn't do anything wrong. I did what I was told. I just thought you'd like to know that, so...

**Q. After the two-day test at COTA, all the driver-team combinations participated. Do you think anybody was trying not to show how strong they are? Was everybody giving it 100% in COTA?**

WILL POWER: I hope Colton Herta was because otherwise we're in trouble.

I think so. It's hard to tell with the manufacturers. Chevy doesn't even tell us if they have the engine turned down or not.

I think, yeah, you have a reasonable idea of where everyone is stacked up there. It often is hard on test days. You don't know when people are running tires, how much fuel they're running, all that sort of stuff, yeah.

SIMON PAGENAUD: The other thing I think is everybody has different programs, like we talked about. We've been in development mode. I would say we were not fully, fully focused on max performance. I would say maybe we didn't put everything fully together

around the lap. But that's the case for a lot of people.

Not much to say about that. It's just that testing is testing. There's no points at the end, there's no race wins. It's about working on your car at the time to improve it for the race. It's a short-term look toward the future rather than being in the moment, trying to do the best lap you can. That's how I approach testing.

So I think that's why you see there's always a little different on qualifying day. You see different people at different spots. But I think essentially you see the same faces you usually see up front. There shouldn't be big surprises.

**Q. Because you are under the same roof, I'm sure you're aware that Roger's NASCAR team has won eight of the last 15 races. Are you aware of that coming in here? Feeling any pressure from that? Has Roger mentioned that team is doing really well and expect the same from you?**

WILL POWER: He did mention at dinner last night. He said, Will, you know that the first two races, or the last two races of NASCAR, we have won. He didn't say anything else. I think that may have meant we need to win this weekend.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Then you didn't speak for the rest of the night.

WILL POWER: It was very awkward, I have to say. We didn't say anything after that. We just got up and left. Didn't pay the bill either (laughter). Treat others as you would like to be treated, so...

THE MODERATOR: What percentage of that story that you just told us is true, just to be clear?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Give you one guess (laughter).

WILL POWER: I wasn't at dinner with Roger.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No one was here at dinner last night.

WILL POWER: I did not have dinner with Roger. I did run into him in the lobby. He told me that immediately, he said, Start packing your bags, Power, you're not strong enough.

None of that's true. None of it. Trying to inject humor into the media center.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I thought it was lovely, but we should get them a real answer.

Yes, we are aware of it. It's not just the NASCAR side. If you watch the V8 Super Cars, not that any more, the Super Car side, they've done the same thing. It's just Super Cars, right? But we're aware of the performance.

I actually was talking to Roger a couple days ago on the phone. We talked about the NASCAR guys. He was really pumped up about where they're at. For Roger, his mind just goes to where are we going to be at. If we don't have what we need, we need to get it.

I guess what I'm saying is he's very supportive, he is excited to see the season going, wants to see where we are at. If we are not where we need to be at, then we'll figure it out.

He's just a racer and wants to be good across the board. We know it, but you also feel the support from him at the end of the day.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, good luck this weekend.