

IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday March 23, 2019

Will Power

Josef Newgarden

Simon Pagenaud

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the three drivers of Team Penske, Simon Pagenaud, Will Power, and Josef Newgarden.

Simon, we saw in your post-event quote yesterday that you were experimenting with a lot of different things on the car. Is that because of the new venue or have you felt something you have been working on has needed to change throughout the weekend?

SIMON PAGENAUD: No, we're just experimenting. It's basically a new track. We've been here testing. First session was interesting because it was quite different to the end of the test, less grip on the track. Practice two we had to try something we wanted to try. Wasn't the right timing with the red tires. We were able to revert back and find our ducks in a row again.

I'm very pleased with the car. I think all three of us are pretty happy. But there's 20 corners. You just have to put it all together on that one lap with the red or the black Firestone tires. That's the tricky part but what is fun as well.

THE MODERATOR: Will, we talked to you yesterday, you mentioned tire wear can be important around this track. Can you explain that to us?

WILL POWER: Yeah, sure. The degradation here, it seems pretty big so far. Sometimes that changes once the rubber goes down on the track. We'll see how that plays out.

I'm hoping there is degradation. It helps with the racing and definitely helps people run different strategies and such, creates opportunities. It's good for the fans. Yeah, we'll see how it plays out. Get through qualifying first, see where we're starting.

THE MODERATOR: Josef Newgarden coming off of a race win at the season-opening Grand Prix of St. Petersburg. How important was that for you to kick off the season in the strongest way possible?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was nice, I can tell you that. I've never personally had a great start to the year at St. Pete. I think our best finish before that was seventh,



that was the year prior. It's really nice to get a strong start to the season.

I don't think it's everything. How many times have we seen Dixon have a strong run at the end and win a championship? I think for us, when we won in 2017, we had sort of a soft start, too. It's not make-or-break to start the season strong, but it certainly helps.

If you had a preference, you'd like to have more of a cushion, build a gap, try to maintain through the end of the year. Only one round. There's a lot more to go. That next stop is here. We've got to try to capitalize this weekend and be consistent all throughout the year.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Where have you found this speed? What changes have been made?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's everything really. You have to put it all together. Chevrolet has made some progress for us. They're always looking at how we can be better. I think we've taken a small step on the engine side. On the chassis side, we've continued to evolve and make that better.

It seems like people struggled a little bit more with sort of the quickness of the sessions. At the open test, there was a lot of running, you had a lot of time, you could put a lot of laps together. That's what tightened up the field.

Yesterday was a lot more jumbled up. I think we thrived a little better in the shortness of the sessions, able to quickly get up to speed. Hopefully that carries over to today. People will have done their homework last night.

To answer your question, we made progress on both sides. The chassis is a bit better. We made the car a bit more compliant in areas. The handling is a bit better. Low-speed corners we were looking for and our engine is a bit better.

Q. Simon, anything you can compare to a racetrack in Europe?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I think turn four, five, six complex area is more like Silverstone. There's a lot of similarities to Silverstone, for sure. Then the trick part here is you have those flowing corners but you also have hairpins. That doesn't go together with the mechanical setup of the car. That's what makes it

really tricky but a lot of fun as well.

Q. Last year you went to three cars. Was there an adjustment period in the team? Now this year, are you running on all cylinders, things are really working with just three instead of four?

WILL POWER: Yeah, I don't know. I mean, the more cars you have, the more information you have. Sometimes it actually becomes too much information to digest between sessions. Three cars, a pretty good number. But you always want more, I mean, more information. Obviously getting through all that stuff is tough, but yeah.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I don't think that really had any bearing on how we performed last year, to be honest. Like Will said, we prefer to have more. It's never bad to have more quality information. Helio was very quality. He was a great, great driver. Had always good information. His engineer that we had always had good information. That added to the program.

Reducing that, I don't think we lost anything. I think we struggled more in some areas with the new aero kit, getting the most out of it. Think we're making progress with it. That's what you're seeing to start this year.

Q. Simon, you drove at Sebring this past weekend. How much did that help you prepare for this race?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Not really. There's no advantage, no disadvantage. You just have to readjust to another car, another seating position, different buttons on the steering wheel.

But at the end of a day a car is a car, four wheels, an engine, and a steering wheel. You have to extract the best you can out of it.

For me, being in a car every week is good just for the brain, hand-eye coordination is also improved. For me, it's just good to drive. I love to drive.

Sports cars allow me to just drive in a race situation. That's what I love doing. It was good for those reasons. Some others don't like to have to readjust. It certainly didn't cause any problems.

Q. There's a lot of wide open, flowing corners where the track limits are being pushed. Will mentioned yesterday he wants that. What do the rest of you guys think?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Hot topic. Really hot topic right now. I'm in favor of track limits, as well. The track was designed a certain way. I think there was a reason. It's really a tough corner when you have track limits. When you don't have track limits, running off wide, you're actually facing the guardrail, it's not as safe, not designed that way. It's actually bad on the car as well because you're really bottoming pretty hard.

At the end of the day the rules are the rules. They tell

us where we have to go. We go where they tell us to go. It's the same for everybody at the moment. You got to do the best you can with what you have.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think we're cognizant of IndyCar's position with it, too. They have some difficulties trying to give us what we want. I think for us, all three of us, we want track limits. It makes it easier in some ways when you don't have track limits. It takes away some of the difficulty of having to get that corner right. We don't like that. Certainly there's other aspects that we don't like with it, too, such as safety, the way you pull into pit.

Right now we just don't have a great solution to police it, how we implement that for the way IndyCar puts that on for a race. They don't like being involved too much. They don't want to put penalties out when they don't need to. They don't want to alter a race result if they can get away with it. I understand their position.

Essentially we need to find a position coming back. For now, this is what we've got. We'll try to find a solution going forward.

Q. Josef and Simon, what is it about the way Team Penske can get the most out of the red tires? What is it about your setup on the car that you can make them last?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't know. I think at St. Pete people just weren't brave enough to run the reds. I think they would have been okay. Even my other teammates didn't run them, but I think they would have been okay on them. I think a lot of people actually would have been okay on the reds.

I mean, we've got good cars, without a doubt. Whatever is in our magic setup that allows us to run reds, we're definitely not going to tell you. But, yeah, we look after them okay. Part of our strategy, I guess.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I mean, I guess the team works really hard over the winter to try to understand how the tires work. It's our job basically to extract the best out of the tires. Certainly it seems like we're easier than other teams on the tires. It also means we're not as good on cold tires as they are.

It's a balance. The team is doing a really, really great job out of extracting the best out of the reds. Will is a perfect example of extracting the best out of the reds in qualifying for years - too many, yeah. But, yeah, it's certainly one of the strengths of the team.

The magic recipe, we'll keep it to ourselves.

Q. You and Simon had some fun, Josef, going on last year. Is there something going on where Simon never takes off his driver's suit, a new prank?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Go ahead.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Sadly, no. I mean, the suit situation is entertaining, I like it. I like seeing I but I'm not involved in it.

SIMON PAGENAUD: You like seeing my suit?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I like seeing the suit photos. I think they're great.

SIMON PAGENAUD: You should go back to your hotel with your suit on.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: This could be a new thing. Maybe we start a suit thing, I don't know. We don't have anything up our sleeves yet.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Not yet. We're pretty creative.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: There could be something. Maybe we need to think of something.

You're saying we should create something, so we'll think about it.

SIMON PAGENAUD: We'll think about it. Promise.

Q. Turn 19, with the drivers going so far off the track and back on, if another driver stays on the track, on the limits, when you come back on, is there a blind spot there? Can you see the driver who stayed on the track as you come back onto the track? Might that cause a collision?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You actually get penalized if you stay on the track. You have to make sure to go off. Just kidding. That would be odd.

No, I'll let you take it. I wanted to make the joke.

SIMON PAGENAUD: I don't know actually. I haven't been in that situation. I can only imagine. The only issue would be if someone is going to the pits, actually taking the off-track limits, which there isn't any limits. If you go off track and come back, you're still going to have to slow down more than usual in the corner, and the guy behind you might not know that. That could create some issues.

Again, we don't make the rules. We just drive. That's what we supposed to do.

Q. You mentioned degradation. Is it so bad that we're going to have a lot of marbles? Will that hurt passing during the race?

WILL POWER: No, I don't think so. Like all the passing zones, it's on the inside anyway is where you need to pass. I mean, there will be marbles, no question. But I think most of the passing here, because the entry is so wide in the hairpins, people are going to dive to the inside, all the marbles get swept outside. If you tried to go side-by-side with someone,

you get pushed out, yeah, you would lose a position.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It won't be different than what we've seen at like Road America, for instance. There will be marbles, but you can race with them.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.