

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday March 24, 2019

Josef Newgarden Ryan Hunter-Reay

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by our second- and third-place finishers, Josef Newgarden and Ryan Hunter-Reay.

Josef, you started seventh in yesterday's qualifying session. You were a little bit frustrated with that start. You were able to make up a few positions today. .

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I'd like to clarify, this is cider. They gave me Colton's drink and gave Colton the real deal. Which is very cool. I love that (laughter).

Yeah, no, we had a pretty good day. I think it's about what we had, to be honest with you. We were a second-, third-place car today. I didn't really do us any favors by qualifying seventh yesterday. We just did what we could to march forward. We got a little bit of a break. If we didn't get that yellow, we most likely would have finished fourth. We would have battled with Colton till the end.

We picked up a couple extra spots on luck, but we'll take it. Last year we didn't get that. We got the opposite end of the deal last year, never got the yellows to fall our way, unlucky.

I'm really happy with today. Guys did a great job. I also just want to say congrats to Colton. He did a phenomenal job today. Drove well. His team did a great job, too. Those guys fully deserved to win.

THE MODERATOR: Ryan, you struggled with the car a little bit today. Take us through your race.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Considering where we were last weekend, I was driving home early from the race. It's nice to get some good points here. Just struggled with the balance of the car a bit. Any time I got some grip in the front, it was loose. Vice versa. Not sure why. We'll try and analyze that, come back better next year.

All in all, a good day on points. As Josef said, congratulations to Harding-Steinbrenner and Colton. Colton did a great job. Been quick ever since he hit the track here in the open test. No surprise he was up there this weekend. It's another thing to go ahead and seal the deal when you're out front. Did a great job.

All in all, it's good points that we'll take away from here.



THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Josef, on the final restart, you had about 120 seconds of 'push to pass', Colton had about 43. What were you thinking?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I knew we had a shot. I was excited. I was like, 'Man, see what we can do.' But it just turned out that we didn't have enough. We just simply weren't fast enough. His Harding-Steinbrenner car was very fast. They were very quick today. We just simply didn't have enough.

I was trying to actually progress through that stint, see how I ended up towards the back end to see if he dropped off the tires. He was just so good on cold tires, which has really kind of been our nemesis, to be honest. We're very good at looking after our tires, we can't get going quite as quick as these guys. That's really what hurt us. He put a big gap on me in that first lap, maintained. I couldn't close up. Just didn't have enough today.

Q. Were you lacking anything else there?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: We did a great job conserving there. We were locked and loaded for a fight at the end. Obviously just couldn't do enough with it.

I don't think we lacked anything other than just getting up to speed quicker on cold tires, we're not as good, just took us a while to get going. I think if the caution didn't fall, and it was more about tire deg in that last stint, I think I would have had a better fight with Colton. There with minimum laps, getting going, I just didn't have the speed, to be honest.

Q. Ryan, you've known Colton's dad for a while. He was part of the team. When did you look at him and think he would be something special?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It's funny, first thought you're like, Man, I wouldn't trust that guy with my Honda Civic. He's very talented. Extremely talented. He's done a great job.

To do that at 18... I put it in perspective. I think back when I was 18, I thought a Barber Dodge Pro Series car was a big deal back then. That was a lot of horsepower. This was the big league. He just won an Indy car race. Pretty amazing stuff. I think that puts it in perspective.

Yeah, he's been hanging around racing for a while.

Bryan told me the stories that Bryan would go away to races, Colton's mom -- Bryan would get the trailer ready, stick it in the driveway with the trailer hooked up, facing out. She never wanted to back it up. She would drive the two kids to the go-kart race while Bryan was off racing Indy car races. Pretty cool story.

It takes a lot, especially when you consider Colton went to Europe just to kind of I guess learn on his own, as Josef did. Colton spent time over there when he was really young. Kid's growing up fast, for sure.

Q. Josef, what did you race when you were that age?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's funny, to Ryan's point, he's done a very similar thing to what I did. A couple years earlier he went over at 16 or so. I was 17, 18. I went over with a Team USA scholarship, different than what Colton did.

My first year in the UK was in the British Formula Ford championship. Colton went over to run was it F4, which is similar to what British Formula Ford4. British Formula Ford kind of went away, it wasn't there anymore. It was either Formula MSA or F4. Very similar series.

That UK training ground is really solid. I think those years that Colton spent there was time well spent. Then he came back to America, straight to Lights, then obviously to (NTT) IndyCar (Series) here. So it was a pretty good path.

Q. Was there something about the COTA track under race conditions that surprised you coming off the practice rounds and qualifying?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: The track was good. I don't think anybody really knew what it was going to come down to. It was tire degradation through a whole stint. Man, every time you get that wheel spin out of a corner, every time you abused the rears, you think, I'm paying the price, it's going to come back and get me later. You just had to keep the tires under you.

Firestone obviously does such a great job with that. No real surprises other than that. Just very challenging with as little downforce as we're running, people don't understand, compared to Formula 1, we're dealing with a lot of less downforce. When we get into dirty air with the car running in front of us, running up front is a big deal for pace, definitely.

Q. This seemed like a no-holds barred race. What did you think about Race Control allowing you to race like that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's a fine line. I mean, I think the positive is there's no interference, right, which is good. I think we like when race control has less interference. The Turn 19 thing, I think we need to look at for next year. Certainly the way I think they policed everything else...

For me, I didn't have a big problem with it. Seemed like it was fair enough. You got a lot of side-by-side, you had a place to go if you got knocked off. You had to know in your mind that's racing ground.

Again, it just takes out that equation where Race Control can get involved. At the end of the day, sometimes that's a good thing. Yeah, fine line, good and bad. Overall I was OK with it.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I agree with Josef. We have to look at it next year. Race Control had its hands tied on this. In the Open Test here, there were hundreds of violations. You don't want to be watching a race, cars start peeling off the track from penalties from race control. Why? He was an inch and a half wide from this corner.

Nothing we can do about it. Just have to come back next year with a better solution. Yeah, I'll be glad not to see Turn 19 again for a few weeks.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Same. I can make up a lot of time here, but I can also throw it off.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Like Rosenqvist did? Same thing?

Q. He got hit by Hinch.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Is that what happened? I just thought he lost it.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Was he coming in the pit when he got hit?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Whoa. That sounds terrible.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Have to see that one.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Hinch won the battle? Clearly.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: You were a foot off online through there. The car would hit and fly. Next time through, perfectly smooth. Feel like you did the same line.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You're kind of rolling the dice a little bit. You could gain a lot of time. If you hit it perfect, the car was stable. Off by an inch here or there, you could have a big moment.

We've all talked about it. We'll try to find a solution for next year.

Q. It was sure exciting.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It was a wild ride through there, for sure. Enough rodeo for me for one day.

Q. Is there something about working with engineer Doug Zister that helps develop young drivers?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, Doug, he's a real Zen master. Doug is a great dude. I forgot about that actually that he worked with Doug.

I don't know. I really don't know if that translates to anything similar between us. He's just a very solid engineer. Different teams. I was with Schmidt back then in Indy Lights. Colton was with Andretti

Doug is a really great engineer. Very calm, very thorough, I think very patient, which is good for a young driver. Those would be positives.

Also, I mean, it would be lax to forget, actually I'm very happy for his current engineer, Nathan O'Rourke. Nathan was my engineer when I was a rookie. We have a lot of similarities between Colton and me. I don't know how we've got the same engineers, same path. He won a race way earlier than me, so that's not good.

I'm really happy for Nathan is what I wanted to say. He's a great engineer. He's been in this series for a long time, worked with a lot of guys. Just very solid. I was very happy for him at the end to see him get a win.

Q. Thursday you talked about the unknown. Did it take a few laps to get through the unknowns?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Definitely. Turn 1 was an unknown. Didn't know what we were going to get there. Try to guess, look at other series, how they raced there. We seemed to get through just fine. I was really happy when we got through just the first turn, first lap. That was pretty pleasing to me. That was the biggest unknown in my opinion. How is this going to go?

There was a lot of racing room. Goes back to no policing. I think that helped us get through there with no contact. Worked out just fine for us.

The race itself, it seemed like a pretty good battle. At the end when you're flat chat, tough to do anything like Ryan said. Front was really the name of the game. Up to that point, I felt like you could kind of make moves with fuel mileage and pitting. Seems like you could have action on track. The Turn 19 thing ended up not being too crazy.

Unknowns, but seemed to be a typical INDYCAR race, too.

Q. Today you benefitted from a timely caution. But somehow it seems someone gets cheated. Is that fair and should INDYCAR implement a virtual safety car.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I don't know. I've been dealing with this same problem for whatever it is, 14 years, driving here. I don't know. It's been the same thing. It's part of it kind of. You stay out there too long, you leave yourself exposed. Virtual safety car? we talked about that. There's some, like, problems with it at some of the street circuits, isn't there?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I can't recollect. We've had conversations about it, without a doubt.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: There was some downside to doing that. When you have a super-ight street circuit, you need to get trucks out, like you had today, you had to have trucks out with that pit entry, right? You get safety trucks out, you have to be careful how you do that.

I forget the points we brought up. Had something to do with vehicles on track.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Believe me, we vetted it a bit. It's not a case of not looking at it. To Ryan's point, it's been a part of the game. It's the same thing with qualifying. It has to be built into your strategy that you know that this is a variable. You either push the risk or you minimize the risk. It's part of the strategy. People pit early to minimize the risk, or you go late, know you're taking more of a gamble.

I guess the positive of it, even though it's terrible, last year for us we got bit by it so many times. I should hate it. Ryan has been bit by it a million times too. We should all hate it. You can also benefit from it, like today.

At the same point, it does add quite a bit to the show. It's not like this processional thing. It can get mixed up really quick. It depends on how you look at it. Some people look at it and say that's not good, mixing it up artificially, or you can say it's great because it adds a lot of excitement. Tough line on that.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: The most unfortunate thing, a casual fan comes to watch it, two cars are leading it for half of it, a yellow comes out, they're P13, 14. Why are they back there? What happened there? It's hard to explain. I have to explain it to some of my friends. A bit tough to explain sometimes.

Q. Is there a problem when you are in dirty air? What does that feel like?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: You just lose overall grip. You rely on downforce for that grip. Once you've gone four or five laps past the tires, even on new tires, you're following a car immediately behind, you just lose it. You lose that overall grip. You're sliding around, the car is moving, eating up more racetrack, can't keep your foot on the throttle as much. It's overall just worse. Doesn't brake as well. And at the same time you're eating the life out of the tires, so it's tough.

It's been a problem for open-wheel cars since I ever first sat in one, but...

Q. What do you remember doing after your first win and what did you do to celebrate?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Mine was Surfers Paradise,

Australia, so I had a good time. What about you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Depends where you are.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: What was your first one?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Birmingham, Alabama. Not a bad place. Beautiful United States of America, it's fine.

I think everybody is different. Like me, when I'm done with the race, I think about food. I would like to eat, preferably well if it's possible. You treat yourself to a nice meal, then you get yourself a nice night of sleep.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Sounds thrilling. You're a real rock star.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Very boring approach. I realize that doesn't work for everybody. It's very individualized.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I think the best thing after a win, the few races after you win, you get to spend time with your team. Oftentimes they fly out. It's cool to spend the time with the guys and the team. That's what I had in Surfers, that was pretty cool, where we went out that night. We ate food. We consumed. We went to bed late. It was good fun.

But whenever you get to celebrate with your team, I think it's best. That's for sure.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, that's a good point. That's probably the best advice for Colton, spend time with his boys there. They put their hearts and souls into it, just like we do in the seat. To celebrate together is always one of the coolest things.

Q. What are your thoughts about the COTA experience and the future of the race?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Great addition to the calendar. Look, we were all pumped to come here. This is an easy sell. Austin, Texas, a lot of people like coming here regardless.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Great market for us to come to.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Big, big market. I think it's an awesome addition. I hope everyone enjoyed the race today. I enjoyed it. The whole weekend, venue itself was great. We look forward to hopefully coming back for more. Hopefully the fans enjoyed it. Seemed like the fans really appreciated all the fan access they had from the INDYCAR side. That's what we do really well, is putting on a good show, giving people great access. We hope people appreciate that and we can continue to do it in the future.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, hopefully we're back for many years. Great venue. Great market. Love Austin. Love the place. The atmosphere here. It's our first race here, so hopefully this is the start of something great.

Q. With Colton's short run speed. Did you think you were in trouble?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I thought it was going to be interesting. Josef and I had a lot more overtake than him. I think had we been -- you're not allowed to overtake the first full lap. The first full lap here is very long. Had we been able to make him use it up, it might have been interesting from there.

It is what's. He had that clean air out front, combined with the fact he did a great job, well-balanced racecar, taking advantage of it. He was able to open up the gap on us, so...

I don't think we felt like we were in trouble. It seemed like an opportunity for us, really, that we weren't able to capitalize on.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, same. I felt the same.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, gentlemen.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Thank you.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Thank you.