

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach News Conference

Josef Newgarden

Team Penske

Scott Dixon

Chip Ganassi Racing

THE MODERATOR: Joined now by Scott Dixon, driver of the No. 9 PNC Bank Honda for Chip Ganassi Racing, who finished third today.

Scott, an eventful finish to the race for you. Overall, despite a little issue in the pits, a very strong finish. How important is that momentum heading into May?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's always good to be on the podium. I think it was definitely, as you said, an eventful day for us. We took a pretty big gamble to start on used reds for the initial part of the race. They were pretty good.

I think I abused them a little too much trying to hold the gap with Rossi. The rears just fell off on me, especially on the last four or five laps. Then the crossover, we knew we were going to be in trouble because it's a bit of a momentum track. If you stay out longer, you're going to jump the people in front. The two Penskes jumped us.

I think we maintained the gap there. Had a pretty good race with Will. He overshot one. We really just tried to hold with Josef there. Then actually I think it was Ed Jones got between us and wouldn't really help us there, so that gap kind of opened up.

After that, we had I think an 18- or 20-second pit stop there which definitely killed us. The car was really strong on the new reds in the last stint. We were able to catch that pack, get Hunter-Reay, then had the fight there with Graham. Ended up on the podium.

THE MODERATOR: Joined also by our second-place finisher, Josef Newgarden, driver of the No. 2 Hitachi Chevrolet for Team Penske.

Josef, you said at the beginning of the season, consistency was really going to be very important for you for this season, that's what you felt might have been lacking last season. You haven't finished outside of the top four yet. How important is that consistency? Are you checking off that check list so far?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, so far. We've had



certainly a lot of good fortune this year compared to last year. We haven't had any yellows go away from us. Seemed like last year every other race towards the end of the season, we couldn't get the strategy right, we couldn't get the breaks when we needed them. This year it seems to be flowing pretty easily. We're not getting odd yellows or mix-ups that put us back those couple places. It's been very solid.

The car has been good. I think we're slowly chipping away at things, trying to find out how to have a good street course car, how to have a good road course car. We're going to find out where we're at next month in the ovals, which is exciting.

I think the guys are doing a great job. Today was really a nice race, really well-executed by the boys. They did a good job. We'll take a P2. Alex was too quick. Him and Andretti did a great job. Congrats to them for the win. Just a little bit short. We'll try to find that performance for the next race.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Scott, have you had a chance to see the blocking penalty that Graham took? Have you seen it on replay?

SCOTT DIXON: Saw it firsthand, yeah.

Q. I'm asking because honestly I'm no expert, here once a year, but the TV guys were saying Graham should be on the podium, he should not have been penalized.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, you're not meant to react. That's exactly what he did. It forced me not to hit him, I had to brake, get off the throttle. I think when you're having to avoid somebody, when they've done a reaction.

I think had he not defended or reacted the way he had done, we would have got the pass easily done. I think it is what it is. We're going to be okay with it. They're not going to be happy with it. That's the way it is. I think Graham has definitely been racing on the edge. Definitely at Barber, some pretty risky kind of situations, too.

It is what it is. We'll just have to move on. Good friends with Graham. There's no hard feelings there. But you still have to give everybody some space.

Q. Josef, going into the month of May, the Indianapolis 500, beforehand is the road course

where you're first to get your first-ever top 10. What do you have to do to improve on that road course that will help you in the championship trail?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Just have a solid race. We probably should have finished second there last year. But I made a mistake last year. Yeah, just don't do that and you'll be fine.

Q. The battle with Will Power there looked pretty fierce for a while before he ended up in the runoff. What was that fight like?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it was interesting. I think our car was definitely very strong on the blacks behind both Josef and Will. It was definitely backing us up a little bit.

We had a pretty good run on Will. Yeah, I don't know. I don't know if Will figured he was at a different corner or what. Man, he was trucking. But had he pulled it off, it was going to be exceptionally good.

Yeah, just one of those things. He's trying to defend, he tried to brake extremely late. Looked like he knocked his reds there, going into the runoff. Will is a lot of fun to race, always very clean.

Q. Looking ahead, I think there's a test April 24th at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. The universal car may not have been exactly what everybody wanted last season at the Indy 500. Do you know what the intention is of INDYCAR in terms of making the car a little more racy, like making passing more possible? Are they going to use this test coming up to determine that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You can probably speak better than I to that.

SCOTT DIXON: I think it's a manufacture test.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it's an open test.

THE MODERATOR: What Mary is referring to is April 24th.

SCOTT DIXON: I think we are going. I don't know. I know we're doing a road course test and an oval.

No, I don't think you can change everything now. Everything is pretty set. We did a lot of testing in the off-season. Firestone did a very good job at bringing a different tire, which I think helped a lot of the issues we had last year as far as trying to complete passes and get close to cars. Then INDYCAR did a good job on the engineering side to create at least some options, packaging if we do see some hot conditions just to give the car a bit more of a window to operate in.

I think we're pretty set. I think it's mostly just, yeah, trying to run some more miles around Indy.

Q. The race is lacking in a little bit of a pizzazz, to be

polite. What could they do to spice things up here a little bit? More tire deg, bigger delta between the blacks and the reds?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: This is honestly a very straightforward race. Maybe it needs a small adjustment. The tires are pretty friendly here. It's a pretty simple two-stop. All that added together, you're not going to get as much action as you get at other tracks. Yeah, maybe there's a little bit of room to think about it.

I think it's just because it is a straightforward race. There's not a lot you can do strategy-wise to mix it up that's effective. I think that's why it produces what it did.

SCOTT DIXON: It almost needs to be a longer race. I think INDYCAR were trying to make it a longer race, but they kind of got turned down on that effect. It is an easy two-stopper for everybody, so it makes it pretty bland. Both tires are good. You see a little more deg on the reds if you use a used set. All in all, they make the 30 laps, if you need to get them, pretty easy.

Q. The two of you both had races where you start on the pole, you can do no wrong, drive away from the field, win the race. That seems to be Alex's agenda, especially here. If he starts on the pole, he has a pretty good chance he's going to win the race. What is it about him that seems to suit this track so well from the pole or does it suit everybody that starts on the pole?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You want me to go?

I don't know. I don't know that I have a good answer for that. I mean, he was quick today. He started on pole. It's a straightforward race. I think that's what it produces.

Yeah, I mean, we've all had those days, like you said. Scott has had those days where he's rapid, starts on pole, kind of walks away. Same with me. So, I don't know.

They've been very strong here. I think Andretti in general have had a very fast car here. Alex certainly knows his way around this place. I mean, it's just good ingredients. Straightforward race. If that's the type of race, you want to start on the pole.

SCOTT DIXON: I agree (laughter).

Q. This was the 21st race for the universal aero kit. How did that impact today? How is it making its impact now that it's over a year old?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: What? Because it's its 21st race on the aero kit, how did that impact today?

Q. You're returning to these tracks a second time with this car.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Pretty similar to last year. I didn't really notice a difference personally.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah. I think the race in general is a little bland just because of the strategy options. Yeah, I don't know. You can catch somebody pretty quickly. Again, I think even what we saw with the manufacturer aero kits, it's still pretty hard to pull off a pass, especially with overtake, if you can use it to defend.

But I think towards the end there with deg, we were able to pick a couple cars off there. It's just it's hard, right? For Firestone, they can probably make a tire that's got a lot of deg, but nobody's really going to like it. Maybe that's what they need to the future here.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much. Congratulations.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Thank you.

SCOTT DIXON: Thanks.