

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Friday August 23, 2019

Press Conference

Santino Ferrucci

Dale Coyne Racing

Marcus Ericsson

Arrow Schmidt Peterson Motorsports

Josef Newgarden

Team Penske

THE MODERATOR: We have NTT IndyCar Series rookie Santino Ferrucci, who is driving like anything but a rookie. You've had a great success rate this season. Fourth place, tied your season best last week at Pocono. I would think you feel pretty good about this practice session.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, it's all about momentum. I feel like we've been doing a really good job, especially on the ovals lately. Makes a difference, especially coming down to the end of the championship for us to win the rookie title, obviously coming into the top 10 in points.

Just keep staying on our game, staying consistent, doing what we can do.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Team Penske's Josef Newgarden, the series points leader. Best first pitcher we've seen all week. Good throw last night.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, thank goodness. Why don't they let you warm up? Kind of cruel actually. Hey, you get to do this really cool thing, but you got to wing it right off the start.

No, it was great. We had a really fun time. Actually got to stay for most of the game. It was an interesting game. There was a guy that ran on the field, there was a fight, a couple home runs. It was like a really good ballgame, good night for baseball.

Yeah, we had fun. A great cross promotion. I thought there were a lot of fans there that came up and said they were excited about the race here. It's great to see sports cross over. You got guys that love baseball and motorsports. Hopefully get a lot of people out tomorrow night.

Everyone here at Worldwide Technology Raceway has done a good job of promoting this event. I think everyone looks forward to it. Really has a good reputation, which is what you want when you come to racetracks, feel positive about what the event is, the



track itself, being excited to drive it.

It's been a great addition to our calendar the last few years.

THE MODERATOR: We're joined also by Marcus Ericsson, a first timer at this racetrack, Arrow Schmidt Peterson Motorsports.

Did you expect to be second out of the box?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I don't know what I expected. A couple months ago coming here doing a test, every track I been to prior to an event, we've been right up there. I was expecting to be competitive, but still only practice once. We'll see in qualifying where we really stand.

For sure the car was really good to drive. I thought the driving was really good as well. The Arrow guys have done well so far.

THE MODERATOR: You've been pretty strong yourself, Marcus. Have the ovals been surprising how strong it's been?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Yeah, I mean, I went into the season with no experience on ovals. Didn't know what to expect. But I felt really comfortable straightaway. The guys again have really helped me to get up to speed, get comfortable, given me a very nice car to drive.

Unfortunately there have been a couple of mistakes from my side when we had some really good runs, like the 500 and Iowa, which if you only look at the results our oval record is maybe not that great. I think the actual pace we've shown has been really, really strong.

I've been saying, hopefully we can put a whole weekend together, really get a good result out of it. I think that would be nice. I think we have the possibility this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, you won here in 2017. This has to be a place where you think in this championship stretch that you've got circled pretty highlighted place of the three left.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I hope they're all three good. They need to be. If we're just good here, so-so everywhere else, I think it's going to be tough,

especially with double points at Laguna. Can't just be here.

We've got to be on it for the last three races. Just the way this championship is run, you can't get comfortable. I think it's hard to points race, at least completely points race. You got to kind of do your thing still, keep trying to maximize the results every weekend.

I do feel positive about here. Last year we had a bit of a bobble with the new aero kit introduction. We didn't roll off great. It was kind of a fight to get where we were last year. Then you throw in the rain with a lack of time, I just don't think we hit it perfectly off the box.

Today the car was stellar right out of the pits. I'm happier with this. A lot more like 2017. I think we've got it in a really good window. Now we'll fine-tune it. See what race running brings this evening. I think that will be another challenge. I think for qualifying we'll have a good car to go up and challenge everybody.

Yeah, I feel confident. I think we've got something to fight for this weekend with PPG and Chevrolet.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it for questions.

Q. Josef, in spite of what you just said about you've got to be good here, everywhere, from here till the end, don't you think you kind of put your championship competitors in a situation where they kind of have to win out in order to catch you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, they definitely don't have to win out, no. Not necessarily. If I finish 15th and Rossi finishes third, you do that a couple races in a row, we're pretty much like neck-and-neck going into Laguna. Laguna, you could have a 60-point lead going in there and you still have to have a pretty good day. You can't walk the thing. Probably have to finish 11th or 10th, which is still hard. It's not easy to show up and finish in that spot.

To me it's still wide open, mainly because of double points. I don't love it because it's tough that it puts that much emphasis on a season finale. We all know the score going into the season. We know how the game works. I think you got to play to how the championship is laid out.

Unless you have a hundred-point lead, you're not going to be comfy going into the finale.

Q. And it's new track for everyone.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's an oddball. We don't know what that's going to bring. We could be terrible there. If we are scrapping to finish 10th, we have a 40, 50-point lead, that's not enough. It's funny this points discussion. It is super close, in my opinion, still, amongst everybody.

THE MODERATOR: The top eight in this session, .16 separation. Very close.

Q. Santino, shortly before the practice was over, you said to the interviewer that the team gave you a stable car. Does it mean there's not major changes for qualifying?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I think being a rookie, Marcus would probably agree, the worst thing you want to have is a car you have to consistently work and fight. For someone like Josef it's probably a lot less of a task, he knows the tracks, what's going to happen.

For us to learn and build confidence, you have to have something where the rear is really secure, you have the ability to push in the corners.

Obviously going into qualifying, you take a little bit more risk, you change the aero balance a touch. We're not going to sit here and make a string change now or a rocker change, nothing major. You're looking at half a turn of front wing at the most, go in and qualify the car, see where we end up.

Q. Marcus, when you made the switch from Formula 1 to IndyCar, you know ovals are part of the racing calendar. How did you prepare for the season when you've never been on ovals before?

MARCUS ERICSSON: Watched a lot of videos, spoke to a lot of drivers, mainly my teammates in James and Robby and Jack. That was very helpful.

But in the end of the day I think ovals being so different from anything else, you just have to get out there and drive. Every oval, every test, every race just been a learning process. I feel more and more comfortable.

But to be honest, I really like it from the start. I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know if I would hate it or love it, whatever. I really enjoy it. I have so much fun out on every oval we've been to so far.

The racing is amazing. To be in them speeds, fight, you need to calculate with the pit streams and everything with the timing. It's a different type of racing which I find very, very fun. Also to watch the races after, it's a lot of action going on.

I really find it fun, a lot of fun.

Q. Santino, after what happened at Pocono, the Rookie of the Year battle has been cut down. What is your mindset going into that as far as what it will take to take down Felix?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, I think Felix is kind of in a similar situation as me at Ganassi. Has a really experienced teammate in Scott, as I have with Sebastien. Knows it's going to come down to consistency and being on your game.

For us finishing in the top 10 is good as a rookie. Tough

to fight for top fives, wins. Not really something you expect out of your first season. I keep going off of the completing laps. I'm not really looking forward into Portland or Laguna. I know the car is going to be somewhat decent if not really good. I just want to take one race at a time and focus on what's at hand and go from there.

Q. Marcus, given the recent developments with the team, do you expect to still either be with the current team or still in IndyCar next year full-time?

MARCUS ERICSSON: I don't know, to be honest. I think these final races are very important for me. As far as I know the team has not made any decisions on the driver lineup. It's all very important now for me to really show what I can do on the track. Every chance I get to go out there on the track, it's an opportunity for me to show what I can do.

Yeah, that's all I know. But for me, my goal and my desire is to be in IndyCar next year 100%. I love the series. I love the racing. I want to be here for a long time. That's my goal.

For sure, these last three races are going to be very, very important for me.

Q. Santino, your tenure in Europe, when you first came here in IndyCar, do you feel you were under the microscope where people are waiting for you to slip up? Do you feel pressure that would not give them ammo to turn on you basically?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: No. I mean, I'm comfortable here. This is my home basically as much as I've raced in Europe. I know Josef and obviously Marcus raced in Europe for most of their career. Coming back, it's more of a personal challenge more than anything to show that, you know, you can drive a racecar, you can drive it fast.

I've also just been enjoying myself. I've been more myself, more open, had a lot more fun being back stateside than I ever had in Europe. Quite frankly, the reason I got into motorsports, racing. I've loved everything this year, everything that's happened.

Q. Some of the criticism isn't about your driving. People know you can drive. You're validating that expectation that you can contend for wins. A lot of the criticism has been behavioral stuff. Do you feel like you owe anyone an apology? Do you regret anything that happened while in Europe?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Nope. I mean, obviously you're in a different place mentally. Nothing you can do about it. You're under a super high stress microscope from Formula 1, which is obviously a pinnacle of motorsport. You come here, get to be yourself.

I don't feel any of that pressure. Quite frankly, this is like a family to me. These guys have been great to me all year long. I don't feel like anyone's really judged me

coming back home and racing IndyCars. I feel like we've had a really strong year and can continue to capitalize on that.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you.