

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

Josef Newgarden

Team Penske

Sebastien Bourdais

Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser-Sullivan

THE MODERATOR: We have now in the media center No. 2 qualifier Sebastien Bourdais of Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser-Sullivan. Sebastien, it looked like down there to the end it looked like it was going to be pole No. 35, but it got swiped away from you.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, my teammate (Santino Ferrucci) jinxed it. He just told me before the last one, 'That pole will be yours,' and I told him, 'Man, you just jinxed it.' You know, massive commitment by the team. Obviously we came, tested here last year and felt like we had a really good car. Unfortunately couldn't put it to use at all because we got wiped out qualifying, and I didn't make it past Turn 2 in the race, so that was a very short weekend for us, very disappointing. But we unloaded quick, as we were hoping, and yeah, really worked out very well for us in qualifying for both cars. Santino did a great job and gave me good feedback that we definitely were in the window as far as balance was concerned, and yeah, just kind of went for it, and really happy with the result.

THE MODERATOR: I wouldn't expect a man of your experience and success to have extra motivation after what happened last year in Turn 2, but my sense is there probably is some of that?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: No, not really. It was a very unfortunate set of circumstances. I really don't think we should have started where we did, and then I was a bit kind of bottled up like it usually is here, and I didn't want to take any chances because I felt like the car was actually really good, and yeah, just got caught down low and couldn't really do anything with it, and yeah, Ed Jones went around me, and for whatever reason the car just absolutely turned around instantly and just went on that slow drift, and there was nothing we could do. It's of one of those kind of weird, freaky situations which is always very annoying and really frustrating for the driver and the team because when you have a good car you want to capitalize on the opportunity.

But no, this year we were hoping that things would still be true, and the car would be competitive, and it is, and it's a great feeling.



THE MODERATOR: What do you expect from this race, even though we've just finished qualifying?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I don't know. I mean, last year was obviously very much of a struggle to pass. I think it put a lot of emphasis on qualifying and track position. I don't think it's going to be very, very different. I think the package we have makes it very difficult to be flat on your line in 3 and 4, and therefore once you get some dirty air, it's impossible to be flat. So building the run from out of 1, 2, to back around is just hard. So last year we saw a lot of differing strategies with some fuel saving and things, which definitely mixed things up and opened some opportunities for passing. So hey, if it's a very static race, starting second, I think I'll be all right with that.

THE MODERATOR: We're also joined by Team Penske's Josef Newgarden, who wins his eighth pole of his career. You started on the pole last year at Pocono, but that pole was determined by points. Josef, you came in here this afternoon, and I almost remarked that you looked as relaxed as I've seen you in a while. Do you feel like you've -- you must feel like you've got a good car.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: You're good at playing it.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, inside I'm just dying slowly. Years are just coming off me. You can't see that, but...

I did actually feel a little bit better today because Sebastien knows this, but when you roll off with a car that is just fast and it feels comfortable, you don't have to do too much to make it more comfy, it gives you a lot of confidence, and I can't remember the last time -- probably Iowa, we had a really good car like that, too. And you don't know, because in '17 we had a really good car here, '18 we dropped off with the new aero kit; we just ran out of time and didn't hit it right.

And then we looked at everything, and we came with a completely different philosophy, and right off the truck it was just perfect. I mean, it was like right on. And it's hard to do that. It's really, really hard to do that. You try every weekend to make that happen, and it's like maybe once or twice out of the year you go, okay, we don't have to do much there. The only problem is I don't know how that's going to translate to the race. By myself it was fine, qualifying was fine, but in traffic I kind of hope it's the same thing.

I think we've only come to -- only gone through half the journey this weekend. We need to go through the race simulation and then see where we really end up. But I feel pretty confident that the PPG car is going to be strong, and Chevy has obviously done their homework and given us a great package.

Q. Sebastien, did you make any significant changes from practice to qualifying with the car?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Not really, just a little bit of wing. A little bit of spring and a little bit of wing, but really nothing dramatic.

Q. For both of you, each of the last two years since the race returned here, there's been incidents on the first lap, as you well know. Was there anything similar about those two, and is that something that's in your head at all as the race gets started?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Yeah, I guess it's going to be in my head. Yeah, I mean, I don't know. I think in '17 and '18 as far as I'm concerned, the car was quite free on the start and restarts, so yeah, my guess -- I thought I was protective last year, but I guess I wasn't enough, so I'll definitely pay close attention to it.

Q. If I recall correctly, two years ago, Josef, you were on the hot seat after the race. I don't know what those team meetings were like, but do you anticipate that the winner this year will also have to nudge somebody out of the way to win?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I forgot to pack my crystal ball, so tough to answer. But it's possible. You know, this place could breed it. We've seen it. Maybe it will repeat. I don't know. Hopefully not. Hopefully we're like up the road and nobody has got to worry about that. But you know, this place because the straightaways are just long enough, I think it invites a little bit more of that late move. You saw last year, too, every move is late. You're kind of late into Turn 1, and it's just the style of racing here. So I think everyone kind of knows the drill after a couple runs.

It's really going to be kind of down to is it different than last year as far as lane usage. We were kind of pinned on one lane last year, which hurts the racing, unfortunately. But can we open that up this year, will we get a second lane? That's what we need to figure out tonight. I will say, though, I think there's more grip than last year. I think Firestone has brought a bit grippier package. The left side tire change, it just feels a little easier to drive.

I still don't know in traffic how it's going to translate, but it could be a little different style than what we saw last year. Maybe a little bit more passing. That's our hope. So we'll see. I think we're going to get a lot of answers this evening before we race tomorrow.

Q. Sebastien, there's been a lot of talk about how well your teammate Ferrucci is doing, and I'm just

curious how much mentoring you have done that helps him have confidence. I think he sometimes refers to you affectionately as "dad."

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Those little pranks, you know. (Laughter.) No, he's a good kid. He's obviously young and committed, and no fear whatsoever. Yeah, sometimes I do feel old and daddish, but it's the nature of the beast. You've got to hang it out. When it's that competitive as the NTT IndyCar Series, you've got to just put it out there, and today we did that. It worked out. He kind of helped us a little bit, getting obviously the read on the track condition and what the balance of the car was, so I can definitely thank him for that. And yeah, I wouldn't say I'm mentoring. I've always been a very straightforward and simple guy, and I don't -- if he asks questions, I'll definitely answer to the best of my knowledge.

I think we have a lot of resources. I think the biggest help really is like in-board cameras and the data and just a bit of communication with him and trying to establish the dos and don'ts really. Mostly the don'ts because sometimes you're far better off by knowing what you shouldn't be doing than what you should. Any good driver is going to figure some things out, but sometimes there are like tricky little details that you might be in need of knowing.

And so it's just worked very well this year. He's definitely been fast, and it's great for Dale Coyne Racing.

Q. Josef, in a lot of ways you've kind of been the center of attention here in St. Louis. Does that kind you surprise you to a degree? You count last night, and rolling in today you win the pole? Who knows, you may win tomorrow night. It really seems like you can't really do anything wrong this weekend here.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Give it time. Just give it time. We all can mess up, as everyone has seen from me. But yeah, so far, so good. You know, it's the same drill every weekend. Sometimes you start off hot and you stay hot, sometimes you start off hot and you get cold. We're going to try and stay in the good side of the temperature for this weekend. But we'll just see. I don't know. Like I said, I don't know anything about the car in traffic. That's the biggest unknown for me. I was good by myself. Are we going to be good in race conditions; that's kind of the next thing on our list.

Q. You mentioned temperature. You don't know race conditions yet. But I think it's pretty pleasant here and for the fans. Can you talk about that aspect from a fan perspective what you expect, and how much more is the car going to tighten up do you think when it cools off?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think it's case by case, depending on the team. Last year we didn't change much from daylight to night. I think it depends on the car, but for us we were pretty consistent. Grip comes

up. We got quicker in the race, and you feel a little bit comfier as you get towards the end of it. It was already getting that way in qualifying. I felt like the grip had come up, aside from the Turn 1, Turn 2 quick dry that was down there. That made it a little bit trickier. But once that gets run off, I think you're going to have more grip than we've had. So 3, 4 is very possible we might get flat towards the end of the night. We'll see. But I just don't know. I think temperature-wise it'll be nice for the fans. I was at a ballgame last night and it was beautiful. If it's like that, it's going to be a good night for the fans for sure. But racing-wise we don't know yet.

Hopefully we've got a little bit more ability to pass. That's the goal from everybody. But we just don't have answers. I don't have any answers for anybody on that yet.

Q. There will be some other rubber down from the NASCAR folks and the rest. What do you anticipate will happen from that other than we just don't know yet?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: It always resets the track. You've kind of got to chase everybody else's rubber before you can put your own down. It goes pretty quick when you have 24 cars going around. So I'd say the first stint is always the one where you have the biggest tire deg and your hottest track temp, especially on those kind of night races, and then it just makes a big step when you put the first set of new tires then it kind of increases slowly and steadily. Yeah, the starting point is always a bit dodgy when you've got a lot of other rubbers around.

Q. Sebastien, a little more generic about teammates, is your driving style close enough to Santino's where your engineers can compare notes?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I think on ovals really there is no driving style. You move the wheel so little, whether it's superspeedways or those short ovals. We were actually looking at the camera trying to figure out if that one was a little higher than the other on the approach of 1 and then 3. It's so subtle.

Everybody is going to like the car a little bit more nose-y or a little bit more pushy, but at the end of the day, on ovals in general it's pretty easy. I'd say the biggest difference that you see driver styles and how aggressive you can be on road courses and street courses. He definitely likes the car freer than myself, but yeah, I mean, that's kind of the story of my life.

Q. We've had some evening races this year. This gets to be a night race. Are you excited about that?

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: Are you kidding me? What time did we finish Iowa?

Q. That's true, that was a morning race.

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS: I don't think I ever finished a race past midnight. Yeah, that was interesting.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I'm with you. I actually liked the Iowa deal. I thought it was kind of fun. It did, yeah, it was much better. Yeah, I think it's great. I think IndyCars are more fun and look better under the lights. So the more night races the better.