

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Post-Race Press Conference

Josef Newgarden

Team Penske



THE MODERATOR: We're in the media center with fifth-place finisher Josef Newgarden of Team Penske. Josef, fifth place, not on the podium, not a victory, but my sense is since you gained points on the rest of your championship contenders, this might feel like a victory.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, I would have liked more points, but at the end of the day, it's not a bad result for us. You know, we kind of -- I made our bed for us yesterday in qualifying. You start 13th you kind of put yourself in a hole already, and we just tried to climb out of it today as best as possible, and I don't think we can be mad about where we climbed to. It was pretty decent.

You know, what could have happened if we started up front more? Maybe we could have done more damage and won the race or finished second or third and would have been a little better off. But I think, for the most part, fifth is pretty pleasing on the day. We just missed all that chaos. It happened right in front of me in Turn 1, so I was in the mess. But fortunately we didn't touch anything, it was just right in front of us. I stopped and then went around it, and we got going again.

But yeah, a relatively good day, I guess, for the most part. We just need to have a better weekend in Laguna. Obviously, it's still going to be quite tough with the double points. If it wasn't double points I think it would be a lot easier, but double points is going to make it difficult.

THE MODERATOR: Given how close you were to the two cars that made contact, was it a real challenge to get stopped there?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I flat-spotted my right front just a little bit. It was a really low speed so it wasn't terrible, but I was just trying to stop. I had nowhere to go because it was right in front of me. And the decision-making process, I couldn't really go right because Rahal was coming right at that moment, and then once they hit, they were kind of flowing to the left, and then I was just kind of stuck right in the middle. So I just waited for it all to stop and then went around it. I was kind of lucky in a way.

THE MODERATOR: Did you say anything to yourself because the first thing I thought of was Scott Dixon last year. He basically didn't hit anything, either.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, his (first lap) was even worse. That was bad. No, I was just trying to stop, stay out of the way. I was like, man, it's lap 1, last thing you want is to get into a wreck, so I just tried to stop and went around, and it was all good after that.

Q. Did the contact on lap 1 change the strategy for the rest of the day?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think it just took so long for that yellow. I mean, it was really perplexing actually why it took so long, and the more the laps ticked off, the more you go, well, this is a no-brainer two-stop, like you said. Why would you do a three-stop? A three-stop is going to be more of a gamble at that point than a two-stop. The guys who didn't want to gamble, it was a pretty easy decision to go to two.

Q. You talked about this track a little bit, how much you enjoy this track, and then Hinchcliffe sort of made a comment about it, he's been out on the first lap in the first two, and he said that corner is just so difficult for people. Of course, he's probably a little frustrated. But what do you think of that corner?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I mean, I was all right with it. It is a tough corner. It can sneak up on you. But it looked to me like just one person. I don't know. I shouldn't comment because I have not seen the replays. But it sounds like one person caused the whole issue here. Maybe I'm wrong. It was just Rahal, right? Rahal missed the braking point. That's all it takes. It takes just one person.

But you know, you can get that anywhere. I don't know if that's a Portland thing necessarily. For sure there's more history here of Turn 1 incidents, maybe more so than other places, but I like it here. I think it's a great track. We've got a great fan base up here, which is really important for us. It's a track where you can't have -- there's not much margin. You can't make a lot of mistakes here. Same thing in qualifying. That's what happened to us. I just made a small mistake, and it's just so tight that it shoves me just out of transferring, and that's just the nature of this place. If you make a small mistake, it really penalizes you, so I think from a driver's standpoint it's a lot of fun. It's very fun to drive, great atmosphere like I said, so I'm a big fan of it.

Q. As you alluded to, Dixon avoided serious trouble last year, finished fifth, and went on to win the championship. You avoided trouble here, you

finished fifth, I thought you'd be more comfortable with the larger points lead, but your buddy Mr. Cindric says, well, we were kinda hoping to be 50 or more?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, 60 would have been better. Well, really 70. 70 would have been nice. Heck, 90. 90 would have been lovely. No, it's honestly not enough with double points. It's just not. I don't think we're very comfortable. Yeah, maybe we've got Scott's mojo from last -- it was like Scott could do no wrong last year. Nothing ever bad happened to him, and this year he's had a couple of small things hit him here right at the end, the radiator and now the battery deal. I don't know what it was, but it sounded like that's what it was. It's like he's got the complete opposite of what he had last year.

That's IndyCar. Sometimes this cycles around. You'll get the good years, you'll get the bad. Hopefully, we continue to have a good year in Laguna and then kind of finish it off because you never know when you're going to have a bad year again. It's far from over, but I for sure would rather be in the position we are in instead of second or third.

Q. You just said earlier with the double points situation, it makes the final round at Laguna a little bit more difficult. Is it maybe not an advantage for you or can it not be an advantage for you, that number one, IndyCar never has driven for such a long time in Laguna, and second, that Penske has driven so many races in Laguna, okay, with different cars, but has collected a lot of data about what to do and what not to do?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I think because we have test days there coming up before the race weekend, it kind of equals out for everybody. I don't think anyone has an advantage. With it being new, I don't know that that helps us. It brings more unknown. I think it's more of a variable that it's a brand new circuit essentially because it's been so long since we've been there. New car, new tires, it's all different from last time.

It's essentially a new circuit. We don't really know what it's going to bring, and that's just more of a variable. I don't think that helps us; I think it's a wild card if anything.

Q. By the time you navigated Turn 1 and Turn 2 and you went through the little chicane, was that relief or was that frustration that you're 18th? At least that's how you exited.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: More relief. I was just thankful that no one plowed into me. That's what you're waiting for is someone to hit you or just something bad to happen, and it almost did, but we just, fortunately, avoided it. I really wasn't worried about where we came out just because it was lap 1, and it was like, that doesn't matter. As long as we can get through the start, then we can get going. So I was more happy about that, that we got through it with a car that was still in

one piece.

Q. Did you know Pagenaud got hit behind you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I had heard he may have had a suspension issue.

Q. Chilton ran into the back of him.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Wow. See, he wasn't so lucky. He wasn't as lucky as me with that.

Q. So the next two weeks, no race. Is this can't wait to get started and run the race, or are you happy to have a break?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it would be nice to just go do it next weekend, but we'll take the time. Take the time and try as be as ready as we can be.

Q. Following up on what he was just asking, I mean, it's not like you're just jumping right into another race. It's a long layoff for such a big race coming up. How do you deal with that mentally? How do you process that? Do you try to push the pressure part of it aside? Do you just focus on it more? How do you deal with that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think you just treat it like any other race, and we have breaks in the schedule that are a couple weeks in between, so it's not abnormal for us. We've done it before, so it's not abnormal. Yeah, so we'll just take all the time we can to get better and talk about it and research it and just try and be prepared for when we show up.

The Thursday helps a lot. We've got a full test day there before the weekend. That kind of gives you a lot of time to get in the mode that you need to be for the finale.

Q. You had a lot of Push-to-Pass left after the restart. You had about a minute and a half. Was there ever a thought to really go all out to try to get up to third or second after the restart?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, I saw Colton struggling a bit. I think maybe we could have forced the issue if we needed to, but it just wasn't a need. We avoided a big mess at this beginning. We climbed as much as we could, and once we got to that fourth or fifth place, that's just where we were. It was going to be forcing the issue to do anything else. You know, we just had that to really protect, and that's all we were planning to do with it. Just weren't able to make much more happen. I think our kind of destiny was set at that point. We were just trying to bring it home.