

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Tuesday October 15, 2019

**Press Conference**

**Josef Newgarden**

Team Penske

**Scott Dixon**

Chip Ganassi Racing

**Dennis Bickmeier**

President, Richmond Raceway

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, to today's INDYCAR media conference call. Today the sound of the NTT IndyCar Series cars can be heard around Richmond Raceway as Josef Newgarden and Scott Dixon are testing at "America's Premier Short Track."

We'll kick off the call with Dennis Bickmeier, the president of Richmond Raceway.

Dennis, thanks for joining us today. I know we spoke shortly after INDYCAR announced its return to Richmond last month. How important is a day like today to building the excitement for the event next June?

DENNIS BICKMEIER: Well, it's really exciting to hear the sound of Indy cars going around Richmond Raceway again. A buzz around town, a luncheon is going on here with some of our invited guests, some of our partners, hopefully some of our potential new partners as well that are getting a glimpse of seeing Indy cars back on the track here at Richmond Raceway after a decade.

Great to be able to continue the momentum from our announcement recently, then this. Certainly looking forward to an Open Test here as we've been discussing with the NTT IndyCar Series for hopefully sometime in March.

Each step is important as we build up to the June race here at Richmond. Excited to have these cars on the track. We're happy we're able to spend some time with the media today, and also with some partners that we have out here.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned it's a chance in building the buzz for the event. In the last six weeks, how has the buzz going from the announcement of the return of INDYCAR to today to coming back potentially with a full-field in March, how do you take advantage of events like today?

DENNIS BICKMEIER: Again, it's just another great



opportunity for us to message INDYCAR's return here to Richmond Raceway.

What's great is we put tickets on sale right away right after the announcement. Our ticket director sent a report a week or so ago. We've sold tickets to people from 26 states already. I know our tourism folks like to hear that. And two areas of Canada. We feel great about getting the ticket sales launched.

We're in a renewal period with our ticket buyers that for years have been buying two NASCAR races. We're in a transition right now. Their renewal deadline is November 1st. We have to go through relocations, then we'll start working with our season ticket customers on adding the INDYCAR race into their package.

It was important for us right out of the gate from the time we announced it to have tickets on sale. We do have those tickets on sale. We do have to continue to hold our season ticketholder's seats until we get through this renewal process. All the territory we're making available for the INDYCAR race will then open up. I just wanted to make sure I clarify that point.

Great to know there's buzz from around the country for people that want to see the NTT IndyCar Series here in Richmond.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously you weren't at Richmond the last time the NTT IndyCar Series was at Richmond Raceway. From your perspective, you've seen Indy cars run at bigger tracks such as Auto Club Speedway and Michigan Speedway. Seeing them run around your track at Richmond, what is that experience like?

DENNIS BICKMEIER: It's a great question. It's everything that I've heard from people here in town who came to watch the series when they competed here through the 2000s, early 2000s, it's an adrenaline rush to watch these guys go around.

I've watched from pit road area, inside Turns 3 and 4. I watched from up top. My plan this afternoon is to move around different places in the grandstands so when I'm out talking to fans, I can talk about the experience and the perspective they're going to have in watching these guys blast around here as fast as they do.

Certainly exciting. Much quicker than even I anticipated. Again, given my previous history watching

open cars around two-mile tracks, this is a different experience.

THE MODERATOR: Let's open it up for questions for Dennis Bickmeier.

**Q. Tell me about the process of making the final arrangements to get INDYCAR to come back to Richmond Raceway.**

DENNIS BICKMEIER: For us, it actually was something we started discussing in 2018 about the prospects of INDYCAR coming back. We just continued to work on it with Jay (Frye) and the INDYCAR team.

But really it was about trying to find an opportunity in the schedule. We were open to a lot of different dates. This June date is more along the traditional date where INDYCAR raced here before. We love this date. It works well between our two NASCAR races. For us, it really presents kind of a big cadence to our year as we're promoting all of our racing events here at Richmond Raceway.

Really, it was trying to make everything work with the series and the schedule, then certainly getting that local support and the desire of some people here locally to bring INDYCAR back.

I said this before, I'll say it again: one of the most asked questions I got in the time I've been at Richmond is, When are the Indy cars coming back? I'm happy to say we're able to answer that question now.

It really wasn't that complicated. These guys made it easy, Jay and the team, to discuss the possibilities of having INDYCAR return. I'm just thankful we were able to get it all together.

THE MODERATOR: We will bring in the driver of the No. 9 PNC Bank Honda, Scott Dixon.

Scott, you raced and won at Richmond before, were part of the announcement. Is driving the current Indy car from what you remember driving around Richmond?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it was definitely interesting. I think we've kind of been honing in on a lot of tires. We've been going through 10 or 15 sets of different construction and compounds.

The car does feel a lot different from when even we first ran here in the early 2000s to the last time we ran here, through that race as well.

A lot less downforce, probably a little more power or similar power. It's quite tricky, a lot of fun to drive. Feels fairly low grip at the moment in some situations. It's hard to say, too, from a racing perspective as it's only Josef and me here, and we're mostly doing single runs

at the moment.

THE MODERATOR: I know you're using the Aeroscreen. You used it at Indianapolis Motor Speedway a couple weeks ago. I know they've been working with the airflow to the cockpit today. Have you noticed any differences from the test at Indy?

SCOTT DIXON: We pretty much stayed with the same configuration from Indianapolis. I know the noise box I think has a few more openings on it, which is helping the flow there. There was a device that we tried earlier in the day, but it wasn't secured well enough, that we'll revisit later this afternoon.

I think for the oval stuff, the car's fine. I know there were some different additions they ran at Barber with the other two drivers there. Those I think we'll try maybe later this afternoon as well with some helmet cooling options to prep everybody for the upcoming season.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, we'll welcome you into the call, as well, and ask you your first laps around Richmond Raceway, what is your impression of the oval?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, yeah, I like it. I'm pretty easy to sell on this stuff, though. I'm a big fan of short-track racing, specifically with INDYCAR. That's really the only experience I have with short-track racing. I've always loved it.

To get another one on the calendar has been very cool for me. I used to watch these races at Richmond when I was younger in karts. I always thought they were exciting races here.

I'm excited to be here. Pretty easy morning for the most part just getting going. Like Scott said, we're kind of just running through a big program for Firestone to make sure that we get everything checked off the list for them.

It was my first time with the (Aeroscreen). Just getting a feel for that. It honestly was pretty seamless. Honestly didn't feel that different. Perception-wise it was a little different when I got in. It took maybe 30, 40 laps, after that you're used to it. It feels kind of normal at this point.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned short-track racing. You've done really well at Iowa. For people who are more familiar with INDYCAR for short tracks at Iowa, how would you compare the tracks?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Honestly, they're quite similar. It feels like a smooth Iowa is what it feels like. It's a touch shorter, so you kind of notice the intensity is a little bit higher. Your concentration on getting in and out of the corner in between straights is a little shortened,

so it feels more intense.

Globally it feels very, very similar to Iowa. It's just a lot smoother. Iowa is very, very bumpy, has those characteristics to make you think about the setup. I think here from a compliance standpoint, you can run the car a lot more like a smooth short oval, but still has that styling, what feels like race-ability like Iowa. I'm hoping a second lane comes in. If it does, I could see it racing very similar to that place.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

**Q. For both drivers, you've been talking about the new element for the Indy car, about the aero screen. How is the new element affecting the performance of the car?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think Scott was talking about new elements, right?

SCOTT DIXON: The Aeroscreen.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Are you talking about inside the Aeroscreen or the Aeroscreen itself?

**Q. The Aeroscreen itself, how is that affecting the performance of the car?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, this is Scott's second time with the screen, my first time. It doesn't feel that different, to be honest with you. When I first went out, in my perception of how much grip the car had and how much control I had in the car, was slightly different. But I think that was because it felt foreign. You're not used to having a screen over your head.

But after 20, 30 laps when you got used to it, the car feels very similar as far as the way I drive the car. The way the car feels compared to a place like Iowa or Gateway, it feels very similar.

From a tuning standpoint, did not take much to get the car back into the correct window as far as the balance. I think the balance is still very good, even with the screen on. From that standpoint, I don't think the cars are going to change dramatically going into next year.

**Q. How about you, Scott?**

SCOTT DIXON: No, I think Josef covered it all. I think you may see some differences, maybe, in outright lap time. We did add almost 60 pounds to the car. It may affect the aero a little bit. You'll get some more deg with the higher COG, as well. There are some things that may slow down the performance a little bit.

But honestly, I think it's going to be almost a net zero on that kind of situation with the development in the off-season, people kind of working around it. I think it will be interesting.

We felt some slightly different situations in running with Will at the speedway in traffic. We'll have to see how

that plays out. Again, I think it's more of a tuning thing you'll have to kind of build in for when we are racing in packs, at least in racing conditions.

**Q. You said you can hear the radio and engine better. How is that going to affect your concentration as a driver?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Honestly, I don't think that will change much, I really don't. It's changed the noise level slightly inside the cockpit. For me, it wasn't super dramatic. It's a slight reduction in wind noise. You're not getting the wind directly over your head as dramatically as you would before. All that external noise has just been dimmed.

You can hear the radio a touch better, things like that. But the engine noise is still quite prominent. It's bolted directly behind us, so you still hear quite a bit of what's going on in the car and the engine. I don't think concentration-wise you'll be any different.

THE MODERATOR: It looks like we have no additional questions for our guests. We will thank them for their time and release them back to their teams.