

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday June 6, 2020

*Press Conference*

### Josef Newgarden

Team Penske

### Scott Dixon

Chip Ganassi Racing

### Ryan Hunter-Reay

Andretti Autosport

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to our post-qualifying press conference for the Genesys 300 at Texas Motor Speedway. We're going to start with Ryan Hunter-Reay of Andretti Autosport who qualified fourth for tonight's race.

Ryan, pretty eventful day for you with the incident in practice, then having to rebound and put in a pretty strong qualifying effort.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, just trying to get all the experience in in one day. It was a pretty good car to start out with in practice. Just brushed the wall, pretty flush actually. Thought I was going to be all right. Then the right rear tow link broke, that put me into the wall.

We had to come back, we had to basically rebuild the right front of the car. The rest of the car was pretty good. Barely made it out in time for qualifying. This 28 DHL team did an awesome job in getting everything exactly right. Put in a great time out there. We had good speed in the car.

Thought we might have had pole there for a bit, but I knew those last few takers were going to be pretty fast. Very happy where we ended up, considering we spent the majority of practice in the garage.

THE MODERATOR: Talk a little bit about the run. What was the track like out there? Track temperatures over 130 degrees.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, it's super hot. You never really know what you're going to get here at Texas because it's always changing with conditions.

This morning everyone was dealing with a very slick racetrack. In qualifying when we were out there alone, it wasn't so bad. You never really know what you have.

When you come into the first green flag lap, you either have to commit to it or pick your lift point and stick with it. If you have to bail on the throttle late coming out of turn two, you're going to ruin your entire qualifying run.



Pretty tricky, but the track was good. I don't know how it's going to race tonight because it's changing. Seems like in traffic it's pretty rough.

THE MODERATOR: With the limited practice time with traffic, did you get an idea of what your car is going to be like in traffic?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No. Just a little bit. A little sample. I think we'll have to make some educated guesses going into the race and go from there.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions for Ryan Hunter-Reay.

**Q. Ryan, seemed like all the incidents today happened around where the traction compound is left over from the NASCAR race last November. Was that a factor, your incident?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, absolutely was. They warned us about it earlier, saying that it's more of a stain at the moment. There is no grip to it. There's nothing there that's going to help you. That's fine. But any time anybody's been on it now, it's been super slick, even in turn three and four.

It's strange. I mean, it's very dark, which usually all my years of racing you see dark, you think that's going to be a quick side, that is going to be rubber, something to help you. Yeah, there's no traction about it right now. It's tricky.

I think you'll see drivers in the race really trying to tiptoe, dip their toes in the water really figuring out what they can get away with out there.

**Q. Drivers in NASCAR say it activates after a while. No way for you to sense if that will happen?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No. Apparently they have to apply it prior to the NASCAR race weekend. This hasn't been applied for, what, eight months or something. It's nonexistent at the moment.

**Q. How hectic of a day has it been? Kind of like you guys have gone from being locked up for months having to go to warp speed. Once you got on track, there's not really any time to relax.**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, it's definitely tough considering the fact we've been sliding around today, especially in the practice session. I think you saw more incidents than usual from everyone, people sliding

around. It's been a bit inconsistent, unpredictable. I think that makes it a little bit tougher.

Other than that, no, we're having a good time. We're all back at work.

**Q. What about the guys, they've been up probably since 4 a.m., flew on a 6 a.m. charter? Long day for them. How are they keeping everything in place?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: They certainly have the toughest job of us all. They've been sweating all day long. They've been sweating since 8 a.m., since they got here, unloading the trailers. They'll be doing it till 10, 11:30 at night. They have the toughest job here. Hopefully, we can keep everybody hydrated, get them home healthy.

**Q. Talk us through your sort of setup with the Aeroscreen, how the cooling is working? Any changes? Is your plug in and play option worked for you, you kept everything the same?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, we pretty much kept everything the same. All the drivers are slowly but surely getting used to it. On a high-speed oval, you know you're missing something. It's awkward. The first four or five laps, it's strange. Your whole career you've been dealing with that 220 miles an hour whatever it is, headwind into your helmet. It's different.

But you get used to it, adjust. The cooling is good. I think everybody at INDYCAR did a great job on this thing. All good so far.

THE MODERATOR: We welcome Josef Newgarden in. Josef is the polesitter for tonight's Genesys 300.

Josef, could you address the run you had right at the end going last, putting the car in P1.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was a great run. Ryan, holy crap, that was good, man. Just get right back on it. That was impressive.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Thanks, man. Appreciate it.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It was good.

Look, I thought our car was super quick right from when we unloaded today. To be honest, I wasn't sure if we had enough for Dixon. He looked a tick quicker in practice. Even looking at the tow charts and everything, I thought he might have a little bit more.

I did everything I could to keep the car flat out. The balance was perfect. I was really quite happy with it. Just needed a couple little tweaks after that final run in practice. That's what Gavin, my engineer, did. Honestly it was perfect. The car was just as it needed to be. They did a great job.

Cool to have XPEL on this weekend, a new partner for

us. Great presence around the world, but certainly here in Texas where they're based. Pretty cool to start off with the pole. See if we can finish things off this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions for Ryan.

**Q. With the added weight of the Aeroscreen, have you had much change between setups from last year to this year?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, definitely. Temperature-wise the tires are reacting differently with the weight, not just having more weight but having the weight forward. It's actually a very big shift for the tires.

I think controlling the temperatures, trying to keep the balance in check in traffic, is going to be probably the biggest difference for us compared to last year. I think that's where we've had the least experience. It will be tough.

I don't know that anyone's car is going to be perfect tonight in the race. We're going to try and make do. There will probably be some guys that are really quick in the middle, really quick at the end of the stint, some who aren't. Hopefully that creates some excitement for the race.

But it's different. It require as different setup, requires you to take care of the tires. Yes, the answer to your question is different setups.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I agree with Josef. It's basically different everywhere we go. There's a bit of an offset and you adjust to that. It's not miles off. The drivers really just have to I think at times adjust their driving style to it.

**Q. Have you had a chance to debrief yet? Been too hectic? Anything you've been able to compare notes with?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I haven't yet. It's been pretty hard for me to communicate with anyone outside of my engineer. I saw Pagenaud and Power out on the pits at the end of the first session just because they were right next to me. That's the only way I was able to talk to them.

We had this all planned out with computers. Whether it's Zoom or team chats, it's really shortened the amount of time. For me, I just ended up talking to the engineer, looking at their notes, but not talking with them face-to-face.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, same. Andretti Autosport, what do we have, seven cars (laughter)? There's a lot of notes to look through. We're all good friends. Kind of in passing we mentioned, Hey, how was it? Okay, good, thanks, see you later. Hasn't been a lot of time.

THE MODERATOR: Ryan, thanks for your time. Good luck in the race tonight. We appreciate you coming in.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Thanks guys. Have a good one.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions for Josef.

**Q. How did you feel the car was reacting in the compound zones in the corners? We heard a lot about that from the broadcast so far today. We've seen some guys spin out in those areas. Something that you were noticeably having to deal with, ease up or drive any differently with that?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I haven't had any issues with it personally. Honestly, I haven't gone up there. I don't really know. I've been very timid to experiment in that second lane where that patch has been run through from a couple months ago.

What I understand, it's not even really there. It's more just a stain from what they've done to prep for the NASCAR race. But it is a different color. If you look at the way it takes temperature, that part of the track during the day is probably hotter. It could be less grip because of that.

I haven't been up there. I've been on lane one. I think most people have. I think the Sato deal, if you look in qualifying, he was just high regardless. He was going to be very high entering the corner where it's dirty. I don't even know that was part of the PJ1 deal. He entered really high in the dirt and dust.

I do think people are going to be timid to get up there, just like last year. Probably poke half a car up, try to get some air, some good runs. Most people are going to be very timid I think to start this race, are going to be pinned to the bottom.

**Q. Ryan told us the track had kind of warned you guys this could be an issue. Anything else they could have done? Would you have liked them to have addressed that? Is there a way to remove it?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I've not really experienced it before. We've seen it at tracks that we've gone to once it's been run in. When we come on the back end of a NASCAR race, we see it run in from those guys. Never been a crazy issue for us.

I don't think that's what's going on here. I think a lot of things that's happening with the wrecks in practice is you have guys that haven't run cars in three months. Literally they have to get their car right in an hour. This place, you take half a day to get up to speed around this place in normal test condition, let alone the first time back.

I think it's more the difficulty of this track, the short

amount of time. I don't think it's so much the compound that's creating an issue.

But, you know, to just elaborate on that more, I think we're always constantly trying to figure out ways how we can create more lanes. For us, what made Texas such a great track is when we could run two- or three-wide. I think everyone wants to do that. We're struggling to find a way to build the grip up in the second and third lane.

I don't think we're going to have a lot of success with bringing that in tonight, but I could be wrong. No idea what is going to happen in this 200-lap race. It's a continuing conversation, what can we do to find a solution for us to help the track race a little bit better. Three years before it was paved, it used to race two- or three-wide. We want to get it back to that.

**Q. You mentioned coming in and running cold turkey. You're starting first. You're starting around Scott Dixon, Ryan Hunter-Reay, Will is up there. Is it comforting to know the guys at the front of this pack are veterans?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think that showed through a little bit here just getting going. The guys that have done this a long time, they sort of know methodically how to come in and approach this thing, get the most out of it.

They're better at calculated risks, right? We're all taking risks to try to get up to speed as quick as possible. The experienced guys are really good at calculating how they apply that risk.

Certainly, in a race situation, you feel really good about going up against a guy like Scott and Power and Pagenaud. They're very experienced and they know we got to get this thing going. We don't need to be tussling with each other too aggressively until we get 50 or 100 laps underneath us.

**Q. You mentioned your car was really good coming off the truck. You're P1 in the first event of the season. What does that say about the work the team has put in over the past couple weeks and months?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: It's early days. It's awesome to get this pole. This is such a small part of the battle for today. The race is what pays the points. We have a lot of work to do before we can call today a successful day I think.

But it is a small victory without a doubt. You come in and you try and win the pole, you try and win the race. We already checked off one box. But it has been an exercise I think in focus, in trying to make sure that through this quarantine period that we're not getting lazy. It was really easy the first couple weeks to kind of feel hopeless, get a little bit lazy, have no real goalposts set in front of you.

I think we tried to think about not just going back racing, but when we go back racing how are we going to be successful, how are we going to continue to get poles like this and win the race. That is what we focused on.

A lot of that comes from Tim Cindric making sure we were focused on that, not just how do we get back to the racetrack, but when we get back to the racetrack, how are we going to be fast just like we were last year.

We have stayed very connected. I think the guys have done a great job to be safe but also prepared. That's definitely showing a bit in this qualifying session, their preparedness.

**Q. How trimmed out are you downforce-wise immediately? You expecting the rest of the field to be trimmed in, come in a bit closer to you?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, look, I tell you what, for the race everyone is going to be maxed out. That means everyone was pretty much maxed out in qualifying here.

I'll say this. Max downforce was a lot harder this year than it was last year. Part of that is the Aeroscreen, it has more weight. Mechanically it's a little more difficult to drive with more weight up higher, higher CG, forward weight distribution. Also the shaping of the Aeroscreen, it does have a very small downforce loss.

I think you're definitely seeing the difficulty of driving with the Aeroscreen a little bit. It's not quite as stuck as it was last year. But everyone is maxed out. You're going to run as much downforce as you can on the car. You're going to be hoping that sun sets as soon as possible and it cools off. The cooler it gets, the more downforce you're going to have.

Yeah, it's going to be a fight for trying to keep the car on the track, even for 35 laps, which is not quite three-quarters of a stint.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, we thank you for your time.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Thank you, everyone.

THE MODERATOR: We've been joined by Scott Dixon.

Scott, congratulations on a good qualifying effort. Can you just take us through your qualifying run at Texas.

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, we rolled off pretty well. All the Ganassi cars I think have been strong. Just missed the pole there. Probably left a little too much on the table. The balance was decent, but we had a bit of understeer definitely in one and two there.

I thought the speed was probably going to be enough, considering how much we jumped the rest of the field. I

didn't really get to see the other two Penske guys run. But good job by them, they did a hell of a job. Congrats to Josef.

I don't know, seems like we're always starting second at the moment. A little frustrated, but that's fine.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions for Scott.

**Q. With the 35-lap tire rule and the fact that anybody that goes over will get a penalty, are you going to do your strategy, count your pit stops going backwards in the race?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think there will be a few different ways you want to do it. You definitely don't want to do it too early.

I think we saw last year, just for reference, we saw Hunter-Reay pit short. He started jumping the field just because he had better tires. He was locked into that. You definitely don't want to be doing that. If a caution comes out and you have to pit, you're going to bounce down two laps. You'll cycle back on one, but still, be a lap down. You have to be careful.

The guys that are around us, try to figure out what is going to be the best situation as you get to the latter part of the race.

It's a little frustrating that we have this rule. I think Firestone have been fantastic partners. We've seen the tires today, amazing. They're like brand-new every time you run them. Would have been nice to be able to go to lap 60 or 65 like we did last year. I think these tires would have done that quite easily.

**Q. How much of a testament is it to have a car this good right out of the box?**

SCOTT DIXON: A lot of hard work. Texas for us in the past has been a pretty good track. We were racing up front last year, got into an altercation there. Won the previous year. We had a good base.

We definitely worked on it in the last two, three weeks on the simulator and tried to cover a lot of areas. I think as a team we worked really well in the first session today to really cover a few items and make sure that we all were in agreement.

Generally, it's what I expect out of Chip Ganassi Racing. The PNC Bank No. 9 was strong the first practice. We're starting on the front row. Not pole but it's still a front row.

**Q. With the 35-lap rule, how do you feel with the compound, lack of grip? Josef was timid about it. How do you feel this will factor in during the race?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think honestly the car has a lot of grip. I think, if anything, these tires and how they are would be more grip than what we had last year.

Obviously, we've got 60 pounds more on the car. It's very high. The CG is affected. That's definitely not good for any kind of racecar.

I think today we've been running in very hot conditions. Track temperature has been almost 140 degrees. I think we were definitely pushing everything to the limit and still no problems. I think we ran well over 40 laps in a set of tires. In practice, you could run as many laps as you wanted on the tires.

It's the rule. We all know we've got to deal with it. I think there was a lot of us that were a little bit frustrated with it initially. You've really got to look at the situation of how lucky we are to be here racing. We got to get this first one out of the way. Hopefully, it doesn't affect anything in the way the race plays out or finishes.

We've got to stand by our partners and make the best of it. It's definitely been an interesting day I think as far as trying to cram as much as we can in, in the situation that we have, plus race a race that's typically different than what you're able to do.

**Q. You mentioned before the weekend that you were a little bit unsure as to whether the shorter stints would turn to pack racing. Has your opinion changed on that? Also with what happened to Sato, a little bit up the racetrack, lost the rear-end of the car, are you expecting guys to be glued to the bottom of the track or will it open up?**

SCOTT DIXON: Kind of hard to know. I haven't ventured up there myself at all. Sato was running pretty high on entry last year, which can expose the rear of the car especially. Just where the track kind of flattens off before you hit the banking can be kind of weird.

Like in the race, you can have many a moment where you'll start to turn in, then you kind of have to turn straight again just because you lose a lot of the support from the banking of the car.

Seems like there's such a spread, which I didn't think we were going to see that. I was surprised how slow the rookie session was. A lot of those guys just didn't get up to speed. For us, sitting there and watching, we were like, Is this the actual pace?

We were a team, one of two, that actually hadn't tested in this configuration yet before we got here. I think if it cools off, even the race has moved up now, I think we're green at 7 or just after 7, a shorter race. I don't think it's even going to get dark.

We'll get the sun behind the grandstands. I think sunset is around 8:30 or 8:35 tonight. We should be finishing around that time. We won't run as long or deep into the night as we typically do where the grip level gets really high.

I think the chances of a pack race are a little bit out the

window.

**Q. How do you think the tires are going to perform in cooler temperatures this evening?**

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. Like even from where we ran in practice, I think we expected to see two hours later in qualifying a bit of a shift in the track temp, and the track temp was the same. I think it maybe started to taper off there towards the end.

Typically you just get a lot more grip. The car is a little easier. The cars that are bad get a little bit better. There's just not as much of a spread throughout.

Honestly, the tire has been amazing. Again, I'm reiterating, I'm not sure why we're doing the 35-lap thing. But it is what's. It's the rule. We'll make the most of it. But Firestone make fantastic products, so it's not something that I think we needed to go to.

I think it will make the race, especially towards the end, if we have some late restarts, it's going to get pretty racy out there, which is what everyone wants to tune in for. Keep those front cars close together, really putting it on the line here for a big one here at Texas.

THE MODERATOR: That will conclude our conference with the top two drivers from qualifying as well as our story of the day driver Ryan Hunter-Reay.

Scott, thanks for joining us. Hopefully, we'll see you later on tonight after the race.

SCOTT DIXON: Cool. See you guys.