

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Press Conference

Scott Dixon

Chip Ganassi Racing

Simon Pagenaud

Team Penske

Josef Newgarden

Team Penske

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to our Genesys 300 post-race news conference. We're pleased to be joined by two of the three podium finishers right now from the race: third-place finisher Josef Newgarden from Team Penske, and the winner of the race, Scott Dixon. Congratulations.

A few notes:

This is Scott's 47th win of his INDYCAR career. He's five wins shy of Mario Andretti for second on the all-time list. It's the 16th consecutive season that he's won at least one INDYCAR race. He ties A.J. Foyt for the record for most seasons with at least one victory, with 18 seasons. It's Scott's fourth win at Texas Motor Speedway. He last won in 2018. Fun fact, the eventual series champion, which are the two guys here, won the last two races at Texas Motor Speedway.

Scott, a great performance tonight, led the most laps, dominated the race. Talk about tonight's victory.

SCOTT DIXON: Actually, the whole day was good. The car rolled off really well. I know we'd be working extremely hard on just trying to fix some of the issues we had last year. We had some new people, plus a ton coming back over from the GT program. The engineering depth and everything got a lot stronger, so development was good through the winter.

The DIL, the simulator with Honda that we've been using for the last three weeks in preparation for Texas, has been really good. Lots of things we didn't think we would try or have the time to try on track, we were able to kind of do that. Gave us some ideas. We were able to sort of verify them once we got here.

The PNC Bank No. 9 was strong all night. We had a couple little issues in the pit stop there. I don't know if I went long. We had a bit of a bauble and I went from first back to third. The car just had some really good speed. It was just nice to drive in traffic. Never really had to push too hard. Just trying to make sure we could stay ahead of the rest of them.



Not often you get a car like that. Just very thankful to have that. The team gave me an amazing car. It was a fun night for us on the No. 9. It's great to be back in the car after such a long break, to do it like that.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, you started on the pole, led some laps early, then it seems you struggled with a bit of some tire vibrations, keeping the tires under the car. Still to finish on the podium in a strong start to the season, has to be something you can take away and make you at least a little satisfied.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, for sure. I mean, honestly tonight feels like a victory to me. We were not very good. Congrats to Scott. They were amazing tonight. I mean, they were just a cut above. They are very deserving winners.

Honestly we did everything we could to fight to stay up front. Early on I was doing everything I could to keep Scott behind. He was way quicker. Once I got a little deeper into the pack, it was even harder to hang onto that front area.

It was a tough night. I think we had good speed in the car. Team Chevy did a great job for us. We just did not have a perfect handle on what we needed over a full stint. We'll be working hard to come back and make sure we understand why that was. We'll be hunting for a win soon. It was a good night to finish third. Great to have XPEL on as a new partner. We want more than that. We want to come into the next race and try to fight for the victory.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, I mentioned a bunch of accomplishments for you. You say you won't look at the records until you're done racing. To hear your name mentioned with Andretti, Foyt, have all these accomplishments tonight, to do it to start the season, what does that make you feel?

SCOTT DIXON: It feels amazing, don't get me wrong. I think we're all in this business to win. With how tough the competition is, they come around a lot fewer than they used to.

I think when you can pull it off, especially just how dominant the car was tonight, it's always nice. To me, or for me, to even be kind of listed with those names is amazing. It doesn't ever really sink in to be honest.

I feel very lucky and privileged to do what I do, to get to race with the best in the world. To still have A.J. and Mario come to the track, I think that's the coolest thing. And the Unsers, a lot of legends of the sport.

I don't know. I just feel lucky and very privileged to be with this team, able to come here and try to win races.

THE MODERATOR: Before the second to last restart, did Felix (Rosenqvist) have you worried at all?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I knew the cars were very similar. I knew he was going to be tough. I know Felix has been kind of sneaking up on the ovals a little bit more than the road courses and things like that, street courses, where he just naturally feels a lot more comfortable.

But I knew these days would come where he's going to be knocking on the door pretty hard. I feel bad for him. I don't know exactly what happened there. I think he tried to pass around the outside, got caught up, got high, washed out into the wall.

It's a big NTT race for us here. I am sure they loved seeing the show he was putting on. He's a great kid, a huge talent, is going to go a long way. Occasionally these things happen.

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

Q. Scott, why was your car able to make the outside work when a lot of drivers couldn't do that?

SCOTT DIXON: We worked pretty hard on trying to calm the entry and exits, especially of one and two, from last year. That's what got really tricky. I think Herta actually last year was really good. He was able to sit a little bit high, arc that corner a lot more than we were able to. We worked on that a lot in the simulator. We kind of found some things that kind of seemed to work. You never know if that's going to work in real life.

As we rolled off, it did straightaway. So the car felt really secure. Some of those areas going into one later on older tires, definitely for me I couldn't do it. The car was still very loose. Seeing that some others were pretty strong there when we were getting to race pretty tight. When the tires were fairly new, outside moves, it was a lot of fun.

Q. How were you able to adapt to everything today? Did it make it easier being a veteran and having that experience?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think for a lot of us, Josef would probably agree, for a lot of us, we've been here many a time. When I saw the rookie session, I'm like, Oh, my God, how bad is this track? They were struggling to get over 205. I didn't know. We hadn't tested here. The Aeroscreen was new. Hadn't run the tires. A lot of big changes going on.

You really had to go in with an open mind and kind of make sure that all the work you'd done really worked out. The track and everything actually felt great from the get-go.

Got to give a big shout out to Firestone, too. I know everybody was a little bit worried coming here on a tire that was a bit unknown. The thing was fantastic. I think we could have gone 65 laps. They just kept on producing. I could still at the end of a stint run 210s, 211s. Thanks to them. Obviously, it's been a strange situation for them coming back to the Texas, the way we all have.

Really hard on the rookies, a lot of people that haven't been here before. For the veterans, I think it was definitely an advantage.

Q. Josef, do you remember lap 91 when Scott passed you on the outside? Can you talk about that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, Scott, look, he was way better than me tonight. It's as simple as that. He had a good run, was able to stay pretty tight fresh on tires, like he talked about. Honestly, tonight for me was a night of hanging on. I was doing everything I could just to try to stay up front.

When he came up alongside me on the front straightaway there, it was not really much I could fight. He was coming with a head of steam. It would have been foolish for me to try to bury the car into turn one and fight him. I think he was far enough ahead, he was going to pass me either way.

It's one of those nights you just got to kind of swallow your pride. We knew we just weren't good enough tonight. Look, I just tried to finish as high as possible. That was what we did. The team really put me in a position to do that. We had amazing stops. We kept fighting and trying to create a strategy to keep me up front even though I wasn't very good throughout a tire stint.

Like I said earlier, third place for us feels almost like a win tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Simon Pagenaud has joined us. Second-place finish tonight, matching your best finish at Texas Motor Speedway. Second to Scott Dixon in 2018.

Simon, tell us a little bit about your race.

SIMON PAGENAUD: It was great to be back on the track. Just one word, just awesome to be back here. It was awesome to get into racing again. The false start in St. Pete, it was the first time in my career I've ever experienced anything like it.

Being able to in this situation in the world right now,

being able to come back, the INDYCAR Series put on this action-packed show today, I just had a blast, I really did. I remembered why I'm racing. I certainly had the best time of my life tonight.

Obviously, you want to win. I'm here to win. But I think we maximized our opportunity, quite frankly.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions for all the drivers.

Q. On such a short day, this unusual one-day show here, what did you feel was the hardest part to deal with and cope with to manage to finish on the podium?

SCOTT DIXON: I think it's just the unknowns really. As Simon kind of pointed out there, we're super lucky to get back racing. I had a blast tonight, obviously with winning the race. Even if we didn't win the race, just to be back in the car, back on track, I think is a huge achievement.

It was really the unknowns. Trying to cram that all in. Traveling here this morning, qualifying, practice, race, then we fly home tonight. First time we've ever done anything like that. A lot of new things.

Maybe that's how we'll do a lot of our events from now on. I'm not sure. I actually kind of enjoyed it. Kind of cool to do doubleheaders like this, which I think we're going to do in the future this season, which is going to be a lot of fun. I think the unknowns are the most difficult part.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Same as Scott actually. The one-day show is actually interesting in many ways. I thought it was very interesting because you had to be very decisive on your decisions. Obviously, after the first session, we kind of had to decide the race setup right away because the car was going to go to impound after qualifying. That's a split decision you make in a very short amount of time with your engineer. Same for the crew.

I think, quite frankly, for me the heat was probably the hardest part of the day, getting acclimated to the heat in the car as well. It was a tough one. I've seen mechanics, a lot of mechanics, struggle today with the heat. Yeah, I thought it was very interesting to just do one day actually. Why not? Bring your stuff and race as hard as you can.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I had a blast tonight and today. Just like these guys said, it was super fun to have kind of a jam-packed schedule. Really entertaining just to be back and to be back to work, what we love.

The hardest part for me was thinking that we -- basically thinking we made the right decisions going into the race, about 15 laps in realizing that we were horribly off the mark. So you don't have a lot of time to

rectify an issue.

I think if there was more practice, more of a lead-up to this event, maybe we would have had some clues to point out maybe we weren't as strong as we thought we were going into the race.

When you have that jam-packed schedule, it's kind of on the team and the driver to execute quickly and to make the right decisions, to show up with good stuff, kind of stick to your guns.

I like that. I really like that style. It didn't work out for us tonight. I think in the future we can hopefully thrive in that situation.

Q. Scott, a lot of drivers talked about throughout this week how important experience was going to be for the guys who finished on top. In what ways do you feel experience paid off for you in this victory today?

SCOTT DIXON: I think experience is good most of the time. It can also set you in your ways a little bit too much, as well. If something changes, it's not what you're expecting, I think that can be a bit detrimental as well.

I think knowing the process of the race, the tires, even though those things can't change a lot, you kind of have, all of us do, a pretty big memory bank of things that do and don't work. This year for us it's been a little bit different with a change-up on the 9 car with the engineering side. That's been a little bit of a process.

But, no, I think, yeah, experience tonight definitely helped. You saw some people I think early on make some mistakes pretty quickly that maybe necessarily if they'd done a few more races before we got to Texas, that wouldn't have happened.

THE MODERATOR: Scott has another media appearance, so we'll let him go. Congratulations on the win.

SCOTT DIXON: Thanks, guys. Appreciate it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with Simon and Josef.

Q. When the team arrived, what was it like when you talked to them? They didn't have any breaks today.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, I think it was definitely jam-packed today. We all knew what we were getting into. We had plenty of time to all rest. Team Penske had everything in place to do it the best way we could. We had towels to cool ourselves down. Obviously, it was a tough day for the mechanics, no question about that. Tougher for the mechanics than the drivers, I think.

But yeah, obviously having the luxury of traveling on

the private jet really helps. Helps the team in a similar way for the charter for the teams out of Indianapolis worked out. I think we were on total equal footing there.

Yeah, personally I traveled last night because there's no way I could do this in one day.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Just as Simon pointed out, honestly this was a bit more of a cakewalk for us today compared to the team personnel, even the mechanics that had a really grueling day. They took it like champs. They always do. They're incredibly hard working. They do it because they want to succeed. Hopefully getting a victory is what makes it all worth it. That's why you see the good fighting spirit.

But it was a very tough day for the guys. They worked hard. It was hot. Some people had some issues with the heat today across the whole paddock, being on their feet for as long as they were, how hot it was with both ambient and surface temperature.

Yeah, I think as far as the drivers this was a much easier day, but still hard. Still tough to be in the car, deal with the heat, try to get through it in one shot, having been off for so long. I'm glad we survived it. Look forward to the next one.

Q. There were some drivers that had good races today, Charlie Kimball and also Zach Veach. Did any of you race those two? Were you looking around thinking, He's having a good race?

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, definitely Charlie. Charlie and I were together three quarters into the race. He was very, very strong. Charlie is super good at certain tracks like Texas. I was happy to see he was having a great run. Very disappointed at the end that he didn't finish, unfortunately.

Zach was having a great day as well. He hung on for a long time at the front. That was good to see.

Q. The Aeroscreen, first proper race, a lot of questions about it before the race. The two main aspects for the race was the sun and also racing side-by-side with other drivers. Talk through your experience of how the Aeroscreen worked during the race.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Other than the handling differences, I didn't notice the screen, to be quite honest with you. You can take that as a very good thing. I didn't notice it.

It's there now. I mean, it felt like a normal INDYCAR race to me. I didn't notice a big difference to last year. The handling is different in the car, but as far as the driver's experience, I don't even know the thing any more. It's crazy how good of a job they've done with the ducting. The visibility was fine. I had zero issues with it from that standpoint.

Very different animal to drive. Mechanically you had to work with it a lot.

SIMON PAGENAUD: Yeah, same as Josef. The car changed dramatically. We're going to have to adjust. Obviously today one day wasn't very easy to do that. It was good to have a whole race and be able to figure out what we need to do for the future going forward.

But same as Josef, you just feel it's safe. You feel like if anything happens, your face is protected. That's awesome. That's awesome to see that INDYCAR has made such a leap forward in safety. Personally, I'm very thankful that we're in that era with Josef and the others.

Obviously, safety is big. We go very high speeds. Things can get safer, it's pretty awesome. That is a big positive.

Q. With the setup direction, wasn't quite what you needed today, was that related to Aeroscreen in any way? Do you think the setup issues today were more to do with coming out of the box?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think at least from our side it was a little bit of everything. Limited track time obviously with practice. Felt like we got a certain read on where we were. But you're seeing a very large mechanical shift with the car, high CG, high weight, dramatically different weight distribution. With that, I think you get tire temperature shifts by yourself and in traffic.

It's really about how you're working the tires. I think that's where we struggled personally on the 1 car tonight. We were not in the right operating range. I struggled with tires mightily right from the beginning of each stint. That's all part of the game.

It's new with this Aeroscreen. We took a little bit of a guess on our car. It didn't come out as a winning guess. It at least gives us a direction. We're going to work with it and figure out what's best for it.

SIMON PAGENAUD: On our 22 car, we took a different approach. We decided to restart with what we had last year because there were too many unknowns. Just like Josef explains, the car has changed a lot technically. The tires obviously seeing a very different effort, I would say. Obviously, the degradation factor was different than what we expected.

When you only have an hour and a half of testing, you only have time for three changes, quick fix, but it's not like you can reinvent the wheel and go into qualifying and race with something you haven't even tested on track.

It was pretty much a day today where you had to unload good to win the race I think. I think we were okay on the 22 car. I think we were actually getting

pretty good at the end. Yeah, just ran a bit out of time I think. But overall I think we maximized what we had.

Q. Simon, a lot of confusion at the end about the way they apparently lined up the lap cars between you and Dixon. Did you feel something was amiss there? You would have had more of a shot if you had been closer or Dixon was too good?

SIMON PAGENAUD: I think Dixon was too good anyways, quite frankly. I'm pretty realistic about my chances. I think he was the car to beat tonight.

Yeah, I didn't understand the situation. I need to look at the rules. Maybe I'm the one that didn't understand it. Yeah, I was surprised that they didn't move the cars. I'm assuming it's because they wanted to go back green. Quite frankly, I get that. You have to give a show. We're here for a show at the end of the day.

Again, with everything that's going on, we couldn't finish under yellow, even though we did but it was the last corner. I think that's probably what race control saw. The only way they could go back green in time before the end was to do that. If they decided to do that, I totally get it.

Q. Josef, Ed Carpenter said after the race he felt like it was a track position race. He felt like if he had gotten to the front, he would have been able to challenge a bit more. Firestone does the best job it could. When you can't make tires with COVID-19, this is what you get. Did you feel it was a track position race?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: For me tonight, the 1 car, thankful we started first because we had good pace. Team Chevy did a good job. We had the power. We just didn't have the race pace whatsoever. It was about hanging on tonight for me. Most people had a tough time getting by. But it still happened. I still got passed here and there.

I would say it was mostly a track position race definitely. But there are variables that have made that partly the case, like you mentioned. With the pandemic, it's been very difficult to get up to speed and test new tires with specifically a new car with the Aeroscreen that's on there.

It's hard to blame really anybody. We've been trying to work best with the situation that we had. I think now that we're back on, we'll be able to improve that going forward.

But it was a hard night to pass. I think it will get better in the future as we get rolling here.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, the answer about Veach and Kimball?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: They had a great night. Well, I guess it was a great night for Zach. Charlie looked like

he was having a good night, too. They looked strong without a doubt.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on a strong start to the NTT INDYCAR Series season.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Thank you, everyone.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.