

# IndyCar Media

## Conference

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# Ryan Hunter-Reay

## Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: From one Indy 500 winter to the next, we're joined now by Ryan Hunter-Reay, driver of the No. 28 Andretti Autosport Honda. Ryan, you've also been through a day and a half of testing here at Phoenix. How great is it to be back?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: It's my first time here racing, so it's great to be back in Phoenix, for the series to be back here. But a lot of us on pit lane it's our first time here, so trying to come to grips with it.

I certainly love short ovals. That's one of my favorite forms of racing.

Right now we're having some aero issues with the car. We're trying to sort out some really naggy stuff going on on the car, but you have to get through that stuff. That's what preseason testing is all about. Hopefully we'll find some solutions and be there in the p.m. session to really mix it up again like last night in traffic.

THE MODERATOR: Last night we saw a lot of different kind of testing than we did in the morning session, running in traffic. What was your assessment of how the Andretti cars reacted to that.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I felt really good with my car in traffic, especially on the first of two group runs that we did. The thing is around this place, it's just like Iowa a couple years ago, everybody in practice couldn't pass, and then in the heat races that we had, nobody could pass. But you have to get beyond lap 20 to really start mixing it up. That's when the tires start to fall off a bit, that's when the handling care sticks of each different car is magnified, and that's when the difference is going to be made, and also we're going to be hitting traffic here, so lap traffic or whatever it may be, different strategies, that's when the racing is really going to get hot around here.

Other than that you're not going to have one IndyCar drive around another one just in a straight line, just coming out of a corner or something like that. You need to be interacting with other cars in dirty air.

THE MODERATOR: This is one of the first tests that we've seen the Honda and Chevrolet cars reacting together in the preseason. What are your thoughts on the packages that each manufacturer is bringing?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I don't know, it's still very early. Right now the top of the fourth obviously dominated by our competitors, but we've been working hard with it. It's a new package, so it's our first time on a short oval with it, with the production kit, so this is our first time with it, and we're trying to just understand what every step of downforce trim is and how we need to compensate with the front wing and what those levels are, so we're setting our own guidebook right now on each step. We're kind of methodically stepping through it. It's a new piece, you know, and we have to understand it before we can really, really lean on it.

**Q. Last night Marco was saying it's real heavy in Turns 1 and 2. Did you experience that and are you going to need Popeye's forearms to get through the race here?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I think it's very similar to Iowa last year. I think the two are very similar. I don't think there's a whole lot different than that, and that was very physical. I think Iowa was one of the most physical races I've been in, and I think this one is going to be very physical, as well.

But if you have a good handling race car, I'll take that beating any day. If the car is good, it's one thing to be out there getting exhausted trying to drive a car that's ill-handling. It's another thing to be tiring out driving a car that's balanced. I'll definitely take the latter.

THE MODERATOR: The physicality of this track is being noticed by a lot of the drivers here. What are your thoughts?

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, I mean, to me it's not -- it's interesting, it's got characteristics of Iowa and Milwaukee to me. I think it's a little easier than Iowa, but it's still damned tough. I'm not trying to make it sound easy, it's not, it's really difficult. But maybe just a little -- it's different than Iowa. Iowa you sustain the loading for longer than here. You know, there's -- I think you reach about the same peak loading as Iowa in Turns 1 and 2, but it's more crimped and you get in and out of it quicker so it's not as sustained, and 3 and

4 is more open than Iowa and not quite as banked.

It's tough. The reason it's tough is because the track has so much grip. You can peel quite a bit of downforce off and still run fast around here because, I think, of the surface. You can really feel the surface has a lot of grip in it. So physically it's going to be very difficult, I think, for everyone, but maybe just a tick under Iowa, which was no small feat. That was a tough race.

**Q. Do either of you feel the history of this place?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: You're too young. I don't think you can even talk about it.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I didn't run here. I wasn't around.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: The only time I ran it was in a test with Rahal in the end of '07, I believe, but I remember watching it as a kid, one of the best tracks. Like I said, the short ovals was one of my favorites to watch and also one of my favorites to drive. I just remember this place, IndyCars going by each other on the outside going into Turn 3. Always a great race here. It's a totally different racetrack, though, right now.

**Q. I know you haven't driven it, but were you --**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I can tell you what, everyone talks about it, which to me is cool because you can hear, I think, the passion for the history here. This was a big fan favorite for many, many years, in the '80s, '90s, even early 2000s. I hear everyone talk about it. Ed tells me about his stories when he was a kid, this was like always his spring break destination, and he saw some really awesome races here, and this is where he used to hang out when he was younger.

You hear all of that, it kind of -- I think it makes it exciting to be here for me when I hear all those stories.

But also I think more so than new venues that we've been to over the last couple years or venues that we've gone back to, this really seems like there's a serious amount of fan interest, so I hope when we get here for the race, it's just going to be packed. It seems like we're going to have a lot of people out here for just tests. We're still a month out and people are looking to come out. Hopefully that bodes well for the race. Hopefully we get a lot of people here. It seems like people really want to see us racing here, so that's great. It's a really great thing.

**Q. Do you see this evolving into more than a one-groove racetrack, and if not or if so, what are the ethics about actually lapping cars? Do they stay on the line and you have to make your way around**

**them?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I don't see it being a two-groove track, I just don't. Maybe a groove and a half. If you're lucky in some places, you've got a couple guys that are going to get away with it. It's just going to require timing passes in traffic when guys get held up and that ebb and flow of an oval race that you're going to have to wait for.

Like I said earlier, I don't think anybody is going to go around anybody, just drive right around someone, so you're going to have to wait to set it up for sure.

Sometimes the trickiest car to get around is that lap car that's just fast enough to be quick but not slow enough to really be holding you up. If you're dealing with old tires at that point, it could be very tricky.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, to me I think it's kind of hard to tell. This is a brand new package really that we're running this year, so it's unknown from what it was in the past, but to me it's really in between Milwaukee and Iowa. Milwaukee was really difficult to follow directly behind cars. You would -- the whole car felt like it just wanted to take off from underneath you. The rear would twitch. Here you can actually follow directly behind people pretty decently. But it's not as open as Iowa with lane usage.

So it's got characteristics of both. You know, how that's going to play out for a race situation, I kind of agree with Ryan. I think you're going to see racing, it's just going to be more in pack situations where people get jumbled up, people check up. You're going to have people moving. Is that going to be in the corners? It might be a little tough. I think you might have some racing room in 1 and 2, but 3 and 4 I think you'll find difficult to go two wide.

You know, it's kind of an unknown, but I think there's going to be some kind of racing here for sure. I think we'll have somewhat of a show, absolutely.

THE MODERATOR: Ryan and Josef, thank you very much.