

IndyCar Media Conference

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Josef Newgarden Post-Race Press Conference



JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, it was a long day. I mean, I thought we had a good race car. It obviously wasn't enough for Pagnaud or Graham, but we were close. I think that's why we were able to get third was that we were close to those guys. I think we were just about as good as Power if not a little better on blacks. Really our second stint killed us on the new red tires. I just wore them out really badly, and I couldn't hold onto the thing. Graham got past me, we lost a lot of time, and we were just trying to play catch up after that.

I think that's what really hurt today, but it still wasn't enough for the top two. I think we were a third-place car, and that's good. That's nothing to be mad about, but we've got to be a little better for the next round and try and get first.

I think the Fuzzy's guys are capable of it. We were here last year and we did the job, so we've got to find a little bit more, but I think the Fuzzy's guys can do that going into the next race.

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by third-place finisher Josef Newgarden of Ed Carpenter Racing Chevrolet. Your best finish of the season, first podium of the year, your second year on the podium here. Obviously a couple steps lower than you'd like. You came back at the end of the race and you were able to get by Will at the end. How did you do that?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: In Turn 16, for me that was the good place to do it. I think 5 was tough because you just -- everyone was braking really deep, and unless someone made a mistake, it was going to be hard to do it. Well, technically Graham got me out of 6 kind of coming through 5 and 6, but I was really struggling. I mean, I think my left front was completely to the cords on that red set of tires. That's what they said when I came in. I couldn't even steer the thing. It just was going to go straight off the track. Unless that was happening, it was kind of hard to get someone out of 5. 16 is always a good place. Will looked like he was super loose in 13, so I was watching him those last ten laps, and I was like, this is the place where it's going to happen.

Q. So just three hours north of here in your hometown of Nashville, there are like hundreds of

thousands of people who have not tapped into this thing you do that you've given your life to. How does a race like today in this place make a case that they ought to get on board?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, you know what was cool this weekend was I saw a lot more people from Nashville here that told me they were from Nashville or surrounding areas of Nashville, and they said, hey, we want to root for you because you're the closest guy that lives to us or is from our town, and they were excited to see an IndyCar race. I saw some first-timers here.

I think what we need to try and show people is that they come here to this type of race, you're going to get treated with a lot of hospitality. Barber Motorsports Park does an amazing job of trying to create a great venue. This is one of the best tracks that we have for IndyCar racing. Outside Indianapolis Motor Speedway, it's one of the most pristine you're going to find. It's very inviting. It's a great place to view IndyCar racing in general. I think there's so many hilltop areas that you can see a lot of the track, and then I think what most people find is that we put on a good show. Cars are kind of badass. They're the best on the planet, I think.

You know, we're very open. You can get into the paddock here. You can get close up to the action with the mechanics, the engineers, the drivers. You can see everything that's going on, and I think that type of access is what people want. Verizon really creates a great environment for people to have that access, and I think people that when they come to our race, they see that for a firsthand experience, and they want to come to more.

Q. You just mentioned Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Obviously we look ahead to a huge, huge month of May starting with the Grand Prix of Indianapolis and then the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500. Talk about what you're looking forward to.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I'm excited to go. We didn't have the best month of May last year. We struggled in the GP and then we didn't have the best 500. We finished ninth, and JR was eighth. It wasn't the worst results finishing top 10, but it's not what we go to Indy for. The only reason you go to Indianapolis is to win the race.

We're excited for that. I think we've been planning for the Indianapolis 500 for all off-season. That's been our No. 1 priority, and I think it's a lot of people's priority in the IndyCar Series. It's going to be a big month for us.

I'm excited to have JR back. He's going to be in the GP of Indy with me, so I'll have a teammate there, which will be great, and then obviously we'll add Ed, as well, for the 500, so we'll have kind of the triple American drivers trying to go for the Indianapolis 500 win, which will be pretty fun.

Q. Can you talk about how the tires compared to -- some drivers on their last pit stops were on reds, some were on blacks, and I don't know that that was really an advantage to either one of them.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, for me I found the blacks easier to handle today. I think the reds went off a lot harder than I remember last year. I don't know if it's something in our setup or tire difference, but it was harder for us to manage the reds. Like I was telling you, that second stint for us, I fried my red tires. They were just gone. Once I got the blacks on, they were a lot more consistent for me, and I was able to run a full stint pretty successfully I felt like, better than Will.

Probably just depending on setup and cars, but I think most guys would say unanimously that the blacks were easier to handle today, so those tires seemed to hang in a little bit better. It's kind of a toss-up. It really depends on track temp here. Each year it gets tougher, I feel like the track wears down more, becomes more abrasive, and that's probably why it was harder than last year.

But yeah, it was a mixed bag. If you're going to do a short stint, I think the reds were the way to go, but if you were going to do a long stint, you really needed black tires.

Q. Some drivers might be a little bit tired after this event. You look fantastic. How hard was it out there to keep your physical stamina up there when it was so hot, no yellows, and you're pushing the whole time?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think I'm putting on a big persona right now, trying to act like I'm not tired and exude energy. I feel great, but I'm super tired. I hope someone drives me to the airport tonight and I can just get on the plane and listen to some music and fall asleep. But it's hard, man. I wish we could convey it more so how physical these cars are. I mean, they're not easy to drive. This is one of the most physical tracks we go to, and what makes it tough, you're driving around here averaging 120 miles per hour, some corners you're doing 150, 160 into the corner. You're

pulling five G's. It's massive loading on your body. It's hot, like you said. We have to wear all this fireproof closing. The cockpit of the car gets really hot. You've got no assistance on the steering wheel. They're really beasts to drive.

When you don't have any cautions to break it up a little bit, you get thirsty, you get dehydrated, you get worn out, you get short of breath. It's all this that comes into effect.

I think IndyCar drivers are some of the fittest on the planet with what they do, and we prepare for days like today. We prepare that there's going to be no cautions. We hope there's going to be a couple cautions, but we prepare that there won't be.

I think that challenge is something we're ready for. I think all the guys in the field are ready for it. That's why we train as hard as we do in the off-season. But it's tough. A day like today was really hard. It was hot. Cars were a handful, and when the cars are a handful, they're more physical actually because you're kind of wrestling the thing around.

Q. I need some help with this. Watching the drivers set up for a pass going into the hairpin here, the 5-6 combination, I could see the green flashing the Push-to-Pass, but they were going downhill into the turn with that on, doing the turn, and it was still green coming out. You can do that with the Push-to-Pass and go through a turn?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, so the way the Push-to-Pass works is it's on for a length of time, and that time is set depending on the circuit length, and it stays on for that distance. Here I think it was 20 seconds. I could be wrong.

So once you press it, it stays on for 20 seconds. It doesn't matter if you're in a brake zone, if you're just going into the corner. As soon as you press it, it's on for 20 seconds, so we kind of account for that when we hit the button. Like today when you hit it out of 3, we know we're going to get most of P-to-P, all the way down the straight but then also most of the way down into Turn 9, so it's kind of strategy to know how long the P-to-P is each weekend and then you kind of plan when you want to hit the button because it's going to stay on. So that's why you saw people on the brakes in and out of the corner. It's staying on for the amount of time that you hit it. It doesn't shut off because you're decelerating and then accelerating again. It just stays on the entire time.

THE MODERATOR: Josef was correct; the Push-to-Pass today was 10 activations for 20 seconds each.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I thought it was, yeah. I normally get that stuff wrong.

Q. Next stop, Indianapolis. Give us a preview of your month. What are your expectations? Of course you want to win, drink the milk, but going into the month.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, the good thing for me is I feel like I'm with one of the best teams. You really can't undervalue Ed Carpenter. He's a two-time pole winner. He's really fast around that place. I mean, he really is. People don't believe that, just look at his pole record. He's quick around that place.

He's a great teammate to have. JR is one of the best teammates I think you can have around that place. I have, I think, advantages of having great teammates, a great team, but the challenge of Indy, I think, is really the grind of it. You have to get there. It's a whole month. It's pretty action-packed now, which is great. We have events going on all month long with Rev. We have a big kickoff party with Rev Indy, so everyone can come for that. You've got the GP of Indy, which is an awesome race. It's cool to show the diversity of IndyCars around the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, that we don't just do ovals, we do a whole championship, so you've got that race to consider. And then once you get into practice, you have, whatever it is, eight, nine days of practice and you've got qualifying. It's two weeks to get ready for this race, and you've got one day to figure it out.

The pressure of that really mounts throughout the month, and I think that's what you have to try and manage throughout practice and qualifying is that you've got to get it right for one day. You don't want to have it right on a practice day and have it wrong on race day. That's kind of the challenge of what's going to happen during the 500.