

IndyCar Media Conference

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Carlos Munoz Josef Newgarden

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Carlos Munoz joins us here in the press conference room. Another finish that is just another in a long line of outstanding finishes for Carlos here.

I don't have to look very far to know it's a little frustrating, yet you were very much in the hunt. Tell us about the last few laps, the whole saga.

CARLOS MUNOZ: I was really disappointed when it comes with fuel and you lose the race because of that. I was really disappointed get second. Half a lap short. That's what it took.

I was sliding the last two stints. I knew I had the car to win in the first half of the race. I just was holding my position. Last part of the race I was pushing really hard, overtaking everyone.

One of the yellows didn't help us. Went back to the field, got again back to the front of the field. It wasn't our day, if I'm honest. My team never was in the fight. But this is racing. We have to congratulate him. Is part of the racing, strategy and everything.

What can I say? The only thing I'm clear about that I was win this race one day.

THE MODERATOR: Your record certainly indicates that. Did you try to bargain with your team and say, Let's go for it?

CARLOS MUNOZ: I knew I didn't have enough fuel. I don't know how my teammate did it without stopping. If I'm honest, I want to know what he did. I will look. I am second, why he's not stopping? He's supposed to stop. I have to look and see what he did. I don't know what he did.

But, man, it was a close one. I think me and Newgarden had the win, we were so strong. But happy for the team, one and two Andretti, one and two Honda.

I cannot say I'm really happy, I'm just really sad and



disappointed.

THE MODERATOR: We don't blame you for that.

When you were going side-by-side with Josef, you both had real strong cars, switching the lead, was there any thought about if you had the fuel, did you want to lead the last lap, and second, had you sized him up, and in your mind did you have the stronger car?

CARLOS MUNOZ: In my mind I was really strong in the end of the race. I knew I was a little bit stronger than Newgarden. The engine was pulling so good.

But, you know, at the end the fuel was playing. In the end I was pushing the last three laps with the same set of tires. I don't know how many laps. I was all over the place on the rear. I'm going to keep it flat. If I crash, I crash. I don't want second; I want to win.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Carlos.

Q. There was a lot of talk leading up the Indy 500 about the dome skids and how they could wreck the racing. We saw a pretty good race. What are your feelings on that? How did the car feel with the dome skids?

CARLOS MUNOZ: The show I think was awesome, right? I wasn't really paying attention, but there was a lot of overtaking. For sure the tires were going off a little bit more than last year. But, you know, the show was there. The crowds were good.

I think IndyCar did a great job to balance the dome skids with the sidewalls and everything. If it's for our security, is better, right?

I think is the same for everyone, so you have to adapt to it and the team have to adapt to it. I think Andretti did and give me, again, an awesome car.

THE MODERATOR: Carlos, I hope someday you recognize it was a great finish.

CARLOS MUNOZ: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Josef is always one of the best interviews here. He has a tremendous, outstanding personality. I was just looking. I think I've been doing

these winner interviews since about 1999. I don't think I ever remember a time when at least the second- or third-place driver wasn't happy. One of them was happy because they fell into a third or second. I've already seen your first interview. We talked to Carlos. The overall feeling was of frustration.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I mean, it's really heartbreaking, to be honest. The reason is because I think we had a car to win. I'm not saying we should have won the race definitely because we had the best car, I just think we had a car that could have won.

What I wanted was an opportunity to try to race those guys at the end. We didn't get that. That's no fault to my guys. I think that's just how the race fell. Sometimes it doesn't fall your way. Today was a day it didn't fall our way.

Congratulations to Rossi and Honda. It's a huge achievement to win around here. I just wish we had an opportunity to race those guys straight up at the end. I really think we would have had something for them if we could have gone flat out there at the end and tried to beat them straight up.

Just proud to be here, though. Shoot, just having an opportunity to be here with as good of a car as I did, not many people experience that. Today was something new to me.

Thank you to my team, Ed Carpenter Racing, all our partners, Preferred Freezer Services, Direct Supply, Fuzzy's Vodka. We've had amazing sponsorship and support within our team. They're the people that enable us to do this.

I think JR had just as good as a car. Ed would have been there, too, if he didn't have an issue. Tough day.

Man, I was really feeling it at the end. If we get a race going, we're going to be good, we're going to be able to beat these guys. The way the fuel played out, we didn't have an opportunity to do that.

THE MODERATOR: I'll ask the same question I asked Carlos. At some point when you were swapping back and forth, did you start thinking who wants to lead the white-flag lap, and when you were going back and forth, did you have a stronger car than Carlos?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: To be honest, I was going to wing it at the end. My priority was staying up front, going flat out, trying to get as much speed out of the car at the end of the race as possible. I thought we had to trim this thing to win it. We had a lot of downforce at the beginning. We tried to trim and trim and trim. My sole focus was, Let's get to the last three,

five laps and be up front, then I'll do whatever I got to do at the end to win the thing.

That kind of sounds silly. Well, didn't you have a plan? Weren't you thinking of a plan the whole race? I was. I was sticking to my priority of, Let's get this car up front, the keep it there for the last five laps. When we're up there, we're going to have a great shot at winning the thing.

Really you can't predict what's going to happen at the end of the race. I could see how Carlos was, I could see where he was good, where he was bad. I think he had a little bit more straight speed than us, which was going to be difficult to overcome. I was going to wing it on those last three to five laps and kind of feel out what I had to do to try to beat him, if he was the guy I had to actually race at the end.

I had a priority, like I said. I just wanted that opportunity. Didn't really come for me.

THE MODERATOR: I don't think anybody thinks going 240 into a corner that you should be.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You should. You do. You're scheming every stint, trying to figure out what guys are doing, where they're good, where they're bad. You're definitely processing that information and trying to formulate a plan.

I just didn't think I had to have a definite plan for those last laps. I didn't think I had to lead here or there. It was like, we're going to see how it starts to fall. I think the safest thing was to lead the thing and be up front. I would have devised a plan there in the last couple laps and tried to make it happen.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Josef.

Q. Josef, what makes a great racecar driver is the ability to manage his emotions, don't get too high when things are good, don't get too low when things are bad. You had a lot of good and bad in the last five or six laps. What do you do to try to manage that in the cockpit?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You know, I personally try not to big it up. This race is so easy to be overwhelmed with. You get on the parade laps, you see all the people that were here, it was nuts here today. It's always cool when you do the parade laps, see the people, how many there are. But today was another level.

I think for me, I try and not think of that. Hey, this is just another race. Let's see what we can do. I try not to put a lot of pressure on it.

There at the end, I could feel we had an opportunity to win. I didn't get too excited. It was just, Let's keep working on the task at hand. Like any other race, let's try to get the car up front. What do we need to do, what do we need to do at the end to have good wing angles. Let's have a good last pit stop and try and win this thing. That's what I was doing.

When I came out of the pits, Carlos was way out on me, he gained a lot of time. I was thinking the same thing, It's not over, I'm going to keep sucking up on him with the draft. There were a couple lap cars that were kind of helping me. I was go, go, go, till the very last stint with the checkered flag.

I think the biggest thing is not bigging the race up. It's a huge deal. This is the one race in your life you want to win. You can't think about that. You have to think about it as another race and just try and focus on the task.

Q. On qualifying day, we talked to you about the dome skids, how that affected the cars. On Carb Day, everybody got very racy. How did they affect you today in racing?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I thought it was great. We've had to run, in general, more downforce than we have in years past, which I think has changed the racing slightly. But I think people were concerned. They said the dome skids were harder, made the cars trickier in the wind, made them slide a little more. I think people just put on more downforce and that helped cure the problem. You've seen just as crazy a race as you've seen the last four years. You didn't really see that much different of a race.

I guess the answer is, we're all a bunch of smart teams, we all figured it out. It makes the car safer. When someone spins, it goes backwards, they don't lift as much. So it really wasn't much of an issue at the end of the day with the dome skids.

Q. The aerodynamic changes to the cars over the years, looked to me like they could run nose to tail and didn't get upset a lot. Was that true or was it difficult to run close to the guy near you?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I thought it was very similar to last year. It was a little trickier in direct wake. What I mean by that, if you're right over someone's tire tracks, it's hard to sustain your spot behind them. But if you had a wing out, you were high or you were low on them, I mean, the car had tons of grip. I was side-by-side with Hinch a couple times through three and four. I'd never done that around here for two corners in a row. Normally someone gives up. You don't hold two-by-two. I thought that was cool.

I don't think the dome skids made the cars harder to drive when you had some air on the wings, it was just in direct wheel tracks that it seems to be a little tougher.

Like I said, everyone tried to figure out how to get around that. You had to make sure you got some air on the wing on the car and you were good to go. You saw a pretty crazy race.

Sucks not winning this thing. But at least people had an amazing show to watch for the hundredth running. That's all we can really ask.

Q. Josef, how much do you know about Alexander Rossi? Are you always going to wonder how they pulled off 36 laps in the final fuel load?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I mean, man, it's hard not to say the wrong thing. I think if I was in Alex's position, I'd be the happiest man in the world right now. I wouldn't care how we won the damn race. We won the damn race. So that's one part of it.

I think they did a great job. Honda has been a very strong opponent this month. They've been very tough to beat. Andretti Autosport has been no slouch. I think Ryan Hunter-Reay was one of the guys to beat today. Fortunately he took himself out of the equation, which I thought was great. I didn't see what happened. Maybe it was Townsend's fault. I don't know what happened.

Getting back to Rossi, no, I'm not going to think about it. It just sucks that it didn't play out the way we needed to. Fuel became a factor at the end. Everyone was on different strategies. They played the fuel strategy. For us, it would have been silly to do that. That's why none of the leaders did it.

When you have fast cars, you know you got cars to win, you got to go flat out and you got to try to win the thing as you would, without trying to play the fuel game.

Those guys I think, you know, to put it politely, I don't think they were quite as strong as us today. I don't think they had as strong of an opportunity to win at the end, so you have to mix it up. They mixed it up and it paid off big for them.

You can't be sad about that. If I was on the other end of the fence, I'd be feeling just as good as Alex is right now. It's hats off to those guys, what they did all month. Everybody tries hard to win this thing. He was there at the end and he capitalized.

It just sucks that we didn't have a shootout where we could have raced each other. I really would have liked

to race people. I would have been high side, doing something crazy to try and win this thing. I think that would have been a lot cooler. It didn't work out.

Q. As far as the short oval and road course package, Chevrolet seems to have everything in line, largely with Pagnaud. Honda brought their best game today. As far as the rest of the season, do you feel like Chevrolet still has a leg above for the rest of the season?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think Honda's going to be tough to beat all year. I think they have been tough to beat this year, even with Pagnaud having a nice little steamroll session that he's had the last couple months.

He's just done a great job. He's got a great group at Penske. He's a great driver. He's had a really strong four races, five races, however many we've had up to this point.

But I don't think it's going to be easy for us the rest of the year. I have confidence in our team. I have confidence in Chevrolet and our package. I'm not saying that. I just don't think Honda is going to be a pushover. They're going to be very difficult for us to beat the rest of the year.

You'll probably see it go back and forth a little bit more now. I really think you're going to see that for the rest of the season.

Q. 107 years ago Carl Fisher decided to build this place. If he were here today, what would he have thought?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I would hope he would have been damn impressed by what we put on. The race has evolved. You can't get away that time has changed the way this race happens, the way it plays out for those 200 laps.

I think the thrills around this place have not gone down. I mean, if you told me the thrills went down with that race, I think you're crazy. You're not into racing then.

This place is all about courage, innovation, passion. I think providing a great spectacle for America. It's one of our icons for sporting events, I believe. It's probably the largest crowd you'll ever see gathered together in one setting for one day.

So I think they'd be proud that we still have cars running this race, providing bits of information and innovation for the industry of motors and motor vehicles, trying to push the boundaries of performance and safety.

That's really what it's all about. It's all about drivers

putting courage and everything on the line, pushing the boundaries of safety and performance of your vehicle. I really don't think that's changed as far as the core values of what it is.

I think he'd be proud of the amazing race. I think you've seen the response by the fans, with everyone that came out, they still supported just as much today.

Q. For better or worse, you've had a number of heartbreaks in your IndyCar career so far, Mid-Ohio. Is there anything that can help get you through this or is this a completely different animal?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't think I have a pity card to play. You could probably go through the list of guys that have nearly won this thing or that should have won the thing. This is really the first time I've ever felt like I could have won that race and it just didn't happen. It's really the first time I've ever felt that way.

So it's tough. I hope I have more opportunities to try to win it. You kind of feel special when you have a car that you think you can win and you got a shot to win the thing at the end. That's kind of rare to get that opportunity and be in that spot.

I'm thankful for that. I can't be sour about it, like I said. There's been a lot of guys that have had near misses around this place. It's going to suck, but...

The good thing is we race again next weekend. That kind of helps. I don't have to go on the media tour, which I guess is a positive. I would have loved to do it if I won the race. I can rest a little bit now and go to Detroit and try to kick everyone's ass again. That's positive.

Q. What goes through a rookie's mind when he comes here for the first time? How well did you know him previously?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, it's overwhelming. I think that's part of why I don't think you can undervalue what Andretti Autosport or what Alexander Rossi did today. This place is hard to survive the entire month. It's hard to survive the entire race.

For him to be in a position where he's still on the lead lap and to pull off a strategy like he did, that's not easy. I mean, it was hard for me to come here as a rookie and to get through everything cleanly. It was very difficult.

I think he had a very strong support group. I think he had a good team to be with. He had a good opportunity. But you can't undervalue what he did all month. It's very difficult to make it this entire month

without something going wrong and getting through the whole race without something going wrong.

I think being overwhelmed is what goes through a rookie's mind, just a lot. There's a lot to get through, lots to do. It can be very draining.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, thank you very much for coming in.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Thank you, everyone.