

IndyCar Media Conference

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Josef Newgarden

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our Verizon IndyCar Series practice press conference. Joined now by Josef Newgarden.

Josef, back here on the streets of Toronto, a track that was great to you last year after first practice. What are your thoughts on the changes to the track?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, it's a little different. I think we're going to have to ease into it, at least for us. It's going to be tricky. It's trickier than last year, those last three corners.

I think we're trying to figure out what we need right now at the moment. I don't think we rolled off with exactly what we needed for session one, but what you need in session one is not what you need in qualifying and the race. It grips up a lot around this place, the track changes.

I think what we rolled off with was more geared towards later in the weekend. I'm hoping that's going to be the case.

We'll see how we run in session two. It's tricky. It's a lot tighter than last year here. Slower speeds through the last section. Hopefully that helps the runup to turn one. Creates more passing. I think that would be the best benefit. If we do find a benefit from it, that's going to be that, it helps passing into turn one, with a slower exit, then a longer straightaway to work with.

Other than that, we're still kind of feeling it out, still trying to learn what we need to do line-wise. It's quite tricky to learn what to do with the lines. There's a lot of concrete patches in the middle of the corners. How you place your car, where you need to push, where you need to be setting up for the next corner, it's kind of hard to figure out where we need to be at right now.

THE MODERATOR: You have the advantage of being the race winner from last year but also have the momentum of being the most recent race winner from last weekend in Iowa. Does that add anything to your confidence as you enter into the race weekend at all?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think we all feel positive that we're in the hunt. We're showing up here trying to



compete for the championship. We're not just showing up for a good result this weekend. We're thinking of the greater scheme of things.

I think because we're in that championship hunt, I think it gives us a lot of confidence that we're in the mix. That can do wonders for a race weekend. I think everyone on the team has a lot of confidence in what we can do.

I think it's going to be a challenging weekend for us. It's always tough around Toronto with the variables, the unknowns. Last year you can definitely make a case that we lucked into our win a little bit. I still think we had the car. We got it done. It's not like we were handed the victory. But there's always a bit of luck involved in these type of races with the way street courses operate.

There's tight corners, lots of walls, slippery with concrete patches like I mentioned that can always throw a wrench in the works. Rain, weather, what's that going to do. That mixed up everything last year and helped us out. Is that going to be the case again this year?

Then the variable of guys getting aggressive on street courses. You don't want to get caught up in something, caught up in a traffic jam.

It's going to be a tough weekend with the variables. It's not going to be as straightforward as what Iowa was. We need to come out of here with good points and focus on having a clean weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Josef.

Q. With turn 11 and turn 10 being so narrow, do you think you'll have to move the start of the race to the back straight? Do you have any concerns about how narrow the pit lane is?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That's a good question, a question we had in the drivers meeting. What are you going to do at the start. How are you expecting people to go two-wide and prepare for a two-wide start. I don't know what they're going to do yet. They were waiting to see feedback from session one.

I think it will be very difficult if that's what we're going to

do. I think you just have to delay the start way down the straightaway because we're going to have to go really slow around turn 11 to get cars two-wide around there.

Maybe that's what we're going to have to do, is push it to the backstretch. I'd be surprised if they do it. From a promoter standpoint, they don't want to do that. So I don't have an answer for you. I think it will be in discussion. I think it will probably be like a vote thing. We'll see how session two goes again.

My guess will be that they will either push back on the front straight where they throw the green to give us more time to get on the front straightaway or maybe they'll do something like that on the backstretch. It's going to be really tight. I think we're going to have to go really slow at the start of the race.

Q. Josef, do you feel your street course setup hasn't been quite as good as the permanent road course and oval setups? Do you feel you've been missing it a little bit in practicing or qualifying to where you're not Fast Six?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't want to make excuses. I think our setup's pretty good. We were pretty good here last year. We didn't really get the best out of it in qualifying. But in practice I think we were in top three most sessions.

I think we have a good street course car. I think I was leaving some stuff on the table there. I really thought Iowa was going to be the biggest challenge. But getting to a street course now, this is proving to be the biggest challenge. It's so bumpy. Since Texas, I haven't been on a street course. I forgot how demanding they are. You're really getting rocked around this place.

I think I'm leaving some time on the table. I was having a discussion with my engineer. Some of it was the car. The car wasn't where we needed it to be for session one, but also some of it was me. I know I'm leaving some time on the table in sections just from where I'm at. I need to sort my own stuff out too.

I think, to answer your question, I think we have a good street course car. I think it's been up and down depending on the street course. They all really require something a little different. I think St. Pete requires something, Long Beach requires something, Detroit requires something else. Then here, too. It's not one package we run for all street courses.

For this place we have a pretty good car, we just have to get everything together, that being me and where the car needs to be for the specific sessions.

Q. You touched on the importance of feeling confident coming in, being on a roll. Could you go back in memory lane and tell me about the lowest point of your career. Not something you want to dwell on too much. I'm certain there was a low point in your career.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I feel like that's one of those questions you answer, like, in November, reminiscing. You're like, Oh, you know, this was the hardest point right here, this is really where I hit the wall.

I don't know. For me, I've really had a great last three seasons, I would say, including this one. So I think in 2014, everything really started clicking. I think the hardest point for us was year one, 2012, when it was SFHR, there was a lot going on. It was a new car. It was a new engine package. I was a rookie. Didn't have a teammate. We were really a small team.

About half way through that year it got really difficult at certain points to have faith and motivation in what you were doing. I just remember thinking, What is going on? I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know what we need from a global picture, whether that be a team thing, from a car setup standpoint. There was just a lot going on. I would say that was probably the lowest point.

Then it's always just gotten better. You go into 2013, I think everything got better. 2014 everything got a lot better. '15, '16... Every year things have gotten better and better.

I would say the lowest point was the first year, in my opinion, from where we were at.

Q. Is it fair to say at that low point you feel almost invisible and at the high points you feel invincible?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think that's racing. You have one week, you're the biggest jerk on the planet, everyone hates you. The next weekend, you have an amazing week, you're the Messiah again. To me that's racing in a nutshell.

I think that's how racing works. If you're invisible and no one's seeing you, that's just what it is. No one notices you, you're not being talked about. All of a sudden you win a race, it's like everything is all good again. Then it can go bad immediately again. You can have a bad weekend the next weekend and it's all bad again.

Yeah, I think that's just a reflection of how racing is. Everyone is quick to the draw in racing, they either love you or hate you.

Q. The hand, the bandage there.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, I've downgraded from the brace 'cause it was taking up too much room. I couldn't grip the wheel. This is just for swelling. Tries to help a little bit with swelling. Not really doing anything.

The hand is really what's bothering me. It's going to be a problem. It's healing. I just went and got x-rayed this week. Everything's healing. The clavicle is healing. Still needs a couple more weeks to get there. The hand is kind of the same way. The fracture is healing. It still hurts.

I can use my hand. I can grab a water bottle. I can obviously drive the car. When you get hit by curbs and everything, it just hurts. You're just dealing with a little bit of pain still. I think hopefully a couple, three more weeks, then hopefully it subsides.

Q. Obviously the win here last year, then you're coming off a win in Iowa last weekend, do you feel as though you're the man to beat here in Toronto this weekend?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I don't necessarily feel that way. I feel like we're one of the guys to beat in the championship, I really do. I think we're going to have a good championship run up to the finish. That's what we're planning on doing.

I think here in Toronto, I don't feel confident that we're just going to walk away with the thing and we're the guys to beat.

We should be good. I feel confident we have a good race car. I feel we have a good street course car. I'm not worried about that. I don't think we're going to walk away. I think for us a goal for this weekend is get into the top six. If we can do that, we just need to have a clean race, we'll fight for a podium or a win.

I'm wary of everyone. I think Scott is always good here with Ganassi. The Penskes have been strong on all street courses. They're going to be tough to beat.

By no stretch, I don't think we're the guys to beat this weekend, no.

Q. What would it mean to you to repeat here as the champion this weekend?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Well, it would be nice to do it if it wasn't wet. We had a great crowd even though it was raining last year. Toronto, Canadian fans, they don't care, they're coming out to support you regardless. I think it would be cool to do it in a full, dry, sunny race, where everyone is having a good time. Even Friday here, looks like we got great fans out here.

If you could win on a beautiful day, it would make it even better. I'd love to do that. I think it would be awesome.

Q. I was wondering if having Spencer in the car this weekend adds a bit more in terms of preparing the car?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think so. Whenever Spencer is in the car, it's always a help. Regardless if I'm quicker or he's quicker, I think you're always learning something. There's always a corner. Guys will talk about this with any teammates. There's always a corner to learn something, whether it's eight corners or one corner. It would be nice to have eight corners to learn something, but one corner can always help. If you're losing a 10th in one corner, you can pick up that 10th. It makes a difference.

Spencer brings a lot to the table. It's nice having him onboard. I think Toronto is going to suit him a lot more than where we've been. He's a two-time winner here in Lights. I think he's going to be on his game this weekend, he'll be tough to beat.

Q. You're second in the points. It certainly seems like your commitment to drive even though you're still recovering from your injuries is working. This morning I saw you I thought slide, caught the car coming out of one. That didn't have anything to do with your hand, just the bumpiness of the track?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: That's just Toronto. You about saw me hit the wall in turn one. First off, the grip was really low in session one. I entered too quickly into turn one, got kind of sideways. It just gets worse as you get to the concrete patch in the middle. There's even less grip.

If you're already sideways, you're looking at the concrete patch, Oh, no, when I hit that, it's going to get worse. That's what happened. I got super sideways, about went off into the fence.

It wasn't the hand thing. I think that was a Toronto thing.

Q. Mid-Ohio they do start the race on the backstretch, near turn six. Hypothetically, I don't know what they're going to do this weekend. I want you to compare what it would be like coming down into turn three to start the race. Is there enough room? What do you think would be the best, from your perspective?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: I think from a turn standpoint, I think turn one is more optimal. You're a lot wider. It funnels into a tight spot, but so does turn three. You get the advantage of having a wider setup for it. I think guys can fan where they want to and kind of see more,

they can figure out what they want.

If you do it into turn three, you buckle everyone up, it's going to be really tight, not just where it crimps off at turn three. Nobody is going to be able to figure out and see what's going on. When you can kind of fan out into turn one, you know it's going to tighten up, but you can see what's going on. You get a better sight picture of everyone.

I think it's preferable to go through one. If we can't do it, we'll talk about making turn three happen. But I think turn one is more preferred.

Q. When you were talking about your rookie season in 2012, when you got to that midpoint, you were down, do you remember talking to anyone about what you were going through, and what feedback you got?

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You get tons of support from everyone. Sarah Fisher was hugely supportive to me obviously. Whoever you needed for support, I got a lot of support from the team at that point. You talk to anyone.

I remember talking to Justin a lot. Justin was one of those great guys that just didn't care about hiding things from you. He would just help you because he was a good dude. Justin was great for that.

I think for me I've worked with a lot of different driver coaches in the past that still work within the series now. They can be huge, huge aids. Just talk to them about the mental side of things, how it works when you get to this level, what to expect. If it's becoming difficult, understanding why it's difficult, that a lot of people go through it.

So there was many people, to answer your question. A couple driver, a couple driver coaches, people within the team. Yeah, you would talk to whoever you needed to to try to get clarity on things at a lot of points.

THE MODERATOR: Josef, thank you very much. Good luck this weekend.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Cool. Thank you, guys.