

The 2023 Indianapolis 500

By Landen Nelson



Picture Credits INDYCAR.

It is noon on May 26th, 2023 and the sound of 33 cars come to life at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway before the 107th running of the Indianapolis 500. My Mom and I are sitting in the Northwest vista about to watch our second Indianapolis 500 together and there is a buzz in the air. The race had the largest fan attendance since the 100th running of the Indy 500. Also, this race meant more to me than previous 500's.

A week before the race I announced my pick to win the Indianapolis 500 on my radio show at Ben Davis High School. I decided on Josef Newgarden and I was criticized by my hosts. This

was due to Newgarden starting 17th and the Team Penske cars struggling all of May. One of my hosts absolutely hates Josef Newgarden and all he would do was give me a hard time about it. Maybe this was because he dislikes Team Penske. The reason I chose Newgarden to win is because he is my favorite INDYCAR driver and in his career, he has won on every over oval track on the INDYCAR schedule. He was due and my co-host was going to be at the race and all I wanted was for Newgarden to win and after the race, I could tell him I told you so!

At the start of the race, Newgarden was methodically marching his way through the field but it was Álex Palou and Rinus VeeKay leading the way. During that time I continued to tell my Mom “The field better watch out for Newgarden once he cracks the top five.” Then on lap 95, I witnessed the most insane moment I have ever seen attending the Indy 500. During under-caution pit stops Álex Palou driving the best car and Rinus VeeKay driving the second best car crash into each other on pit road. I start yellowing in joy when this occurs because I can not stand Chip Ganassi Racing. After all, they are a rival to Team Penske and I am a Team Penske fan. Also, this resulted in many drivers having a better chance of winning the race.

By the restart on lap 156, Josef Newgarden had made his way up to 2nd place. Then on the restart, Josef Newgarden passed defending 500 champion Marcus Ericsson for the lead. My Mom and I start screaming because my favorite driver has taken the lead in the biggest race in the world with 44 laps to go. By this time in the race, this is go time for the drivers to start positioning themselves with the best chance at winning The Greatest Spectacle in Racing.

After the final green flag pit stops with 30 laps to go the drivers with the best shot of winning the 107th running of the Indianapolis 500 were Marcus Ericsson, Josef Newgarden, Santino Ferruchi, Felix Rosenqvist, and Pato O'Ward. Suddenly with 17 laps to go Rosenqvist hits the wall and comes back up onto the track and Kyle Kirkwood runs into him and is sent hitting the turn two wall upside down. That was the worst crash I have ever seen in my entire life. To see a car go upside down, hit the wall, and the car goes sliding towards the back straightway upside down about made me throw up. You could feel the hit by just watching the crash unfold. I was happy to see Kyle Kirkwood exit the car ok.

After the crash was cleaned up Josef Newgarden restarted third on lap nine then I witnessed one of the best passes I have ever seen at a race. Josef Newgarden passed Pato O'Ward and Marcus Ericsson going into turn number one. I am up on my feet and going nuts in the grandstands because at the time I thought Josef Newgarden had made the move for the race win, correct? Well, I was wrong Pato O'Ward makes a bold move attempting to pass Marcus Ericsson for second place and absolutely hammers the turn three wall. I am thinking to myself you have to be kidding me the last thing I wanted to see was a caution. This meant Newgarden was going to be under threat for the lead of the 500 by giving Ericsson a chance to retake the lead and possibly win back-to-back Indy 500s. My Mom and I looked at each other in disappointment and said "What the hell."

The race restarted with five laps to go and Ericsson passed Newgarden going into turn number one and simultaneously a huge crash occurred on the front straightway. The 107th running of the Indianapolis 500 is one of the most controversial races in INDYCAR history. At this point in the

race it would have finished under yellow and Marcus Ericsson would have won his second 500 in a row but the INDYCAR officials decided to settle the race with a two-lap sprint to the finish. I was ecstatic to hear over the speakers that INDYCAR was decided to group the field together one last time and race two more laps. Plus this gave Newgarden one last shot at winning his first 500.

I did not care if the Ericsson fans or die-hard INDYCAR fans were upset by finishing the race like this. I understand that Marcus Ericsson and Chip Ganassi racing were livid by this ruling and they felt like INDYCAR was giving away the win to Josef Newgarden and Team Penske but this is the interesting part the attendance of the 107th running of the Indy 500 was the largest it has been since the 100th running of the race. In my opinion, I believe INDYCAR decided to restart with two laps to go because they did not want to disappoint the fans by finishing the race under caution.

Then the race restarted with two laps to go and Josef Newgarden retook the lead coming out of turn two out of turn two. My Mom and I are roaring and cheering on Newgarden as he passes us by one last time coming out of turns three and four. Then as Josef Newgarden crosses the finish line one last time I start to cry. The tears roll down my cheek as I hug my Mom and I tell her this is the best Indianapolis 500 I have ever attended and I am glad you were able to share this moment with me. I captured my favorite driver making a last-lap pass to claim his first Indianapolis 500. This is what makes sports truly unbelievable. When you cry when your favorite team or favorite driver wins then it is truly meaningful. I have been attending the Indianapolis 500 since I was in second grade and I had to wait until after my junior year of high

school to see my favorite driver cross the finish line first in my favorite sporting event in the world and all I can say to that is a quote by Al Unser Jr. “You just don’t know what Indy means.