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BACK-TO-BACK VICTORIES

Newgarden becomes first driver to defend title in over 20 years

By **RICHIE HALL**

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SPEEDWAY – Josef Newgarden is making a habit of the winning final-lap pass.

One year after winning the Indianapolis 500 with a pass on Lap 200, Newgarden did it again for the 2024 race. By surging ahead of Pato O'Ward as the last lap began, the American claimed his second consecutive 500 win, becoming the first driver to defend an Indy 500 since Helio Castroneves won back-to-back in 2001 and 2002.

"I'm so proud," said Newgarden. "I'm appreciative of this team. This team earned this win this entire month."

The win marked a milestone for Team Penske, which won its 20th Indy 500, a record.

"This team just has no shortage of excellence across the board,"

said Newgarden.

The race was delayed exactly four hours due to rain and thunderstorms that were long predicted. But the Indianapolis Motor Speedway had made plans early and communicated them well. By 2:30 p.m. the rain had moved out and the track was quickly dried, allowing the green flag to drop at 4:45 p.m.

Newgarden led four of the final five laps of the race, although he was in a heated battle with Pato O'Ward during that time. O'Ward passed Newgarden as both drivers began their final lap, and O'Ward had as much as a 0.3 second lead going around the back straightaway. But Newgarden kept pushing as they entered Turn 3, and that's where he made the winning pass.

"I don't think it works unless you're racing someone like Pato,"

See Newgarden . . . Page 2



Photo by Joshua Herd



Photo by Joshua Herd

Indianapolis 500 winner Josef Newgarden kisses the bricks along with his wife Ashley and son Kota, after defending his Indy 500 title. As he did last year, Newgarden used a final-lap pass to get around Pato O'Ward to become the first driver to win back-to-back in over 20 years.

Race Results

Here are the results of Sunday's 108th Running of the Indianapolis 500 presented by Gainbridge NTT INDYCAR SERIES event on the 2.5-mile Indianapolis Motor Speedway, with order of finish, starting position in parentheses, driver, engine, laps completed and reason out (if any):

- (3) Josef Newgarden, Chevrolet, 200, Running
- (8) Pato O'Ward, Chevrolet, 200, Running
- (21) Scott Dixon, Honda, 200, Running
- (4) Alexander Rossi, Chevrolet, 200, Running
- (14) Alex Palou, Honda, 200, Running
- (1) Scott McLaughlin, Chevrolet, 200, Running
- (11) Kyle Kirkwood, Honda, 200, Running
- (6) Santino Ferrucci, Chevrolet, 200, Running
- (7) Rinus VeeKay, Chevrolet, 200, Running
- (29) Conor Daly, Chevrolet, 200, Running
- (15) Callum Iloft, Chevrolet, 200, Running
- (24) Christian Rasmussen, Chevrolet, 200, Running
- (28) Christian Lundgaard, Honda, 200, Running
- (10) Takuma Sato, Honda, 200, Running
- (33) Graham Rahal, Honda, 200, Running
- (23) Sting Ray Robb, Chevrolet, 200, Running
- (17) Ed Carpenter, Chevrolet, 200, Running
- (5) Kyle Larson, Chevrolet, 200, Running
- (26) Romain Grosjean, Chevrolet, 200, Running
- (20) Helio Castroneves, Honda, 200, Running
- (18) Kyffin Simpson, Honda, 200, Running
- (22) Agustin Canapino, Chevrolet, 199, Running
- (13) Colton Herta, Honda, 170, Contact
- (2) Will Power, Chevrolet, 145, Contact
- (19) Marco Andretti, Honda, 113, Contact
- (12) Ryan Hunter-Reay, Chevrolet, 106, Contact
- (9) Felix Rosenqvist, Honda, 55, Mechanical
- (27) Linus Lundqvist, Honda, 27, Contact
- (31) Katherine Legge, Honda, 22, Mechanical
- (16) Marcus Armstrong, Honda, 6, Mechanical
- (25) Tom Blomqvist, Honda, 0, Contact
- (30) Pietro Fittipaldi, Honda, 0, Contact
- (32) Marcus Ericsson, Honda, 0, Contact

Race Statistics

Winner's average speed: 167.763 mph
Time of Race: 2:58:49.4079
Margin of victory: 0.3417 of a second
Cautions: 8 for 46 laps
Lead changes: 49 among 18 drivers

Lap Leaders

- McLaughlin, Scott 1-23
- Robb, Sting Ray 24-26
- Daly, Conor 27-31
- Robb, Sting Ray 32
- McLaughlin, Scott 33-34
- O'Ward, Pato 35
- Daly, Conor 36-42
- McLaughlin, Scott 43-48
- Rasmussen, Christian 49
- McLaughlin, Scott 50-57
- Daly, Conor 58-64
- Robb, Sting Ray 65-76
- McLaughlin, Scott 77-87
- VeeKay, Rinus 88-91
- Rahal, Graham 92
- Lundgaard, Christian 93
- VeeKay, Rinus 94-96
- Lundgaard, Christian 97-99
- Newgarden, Josef 100-112
- McLaughlin, Scott 113-125
- Newgarden, Josef 126-129
- McLaughlin, Scott 130
- Rossi, Alexander 131
- Ferrucci, Santino 132
- Dixon, Scott 133-134
- O'Ward, Pato 135-136
- Dixon, Scott 137-140
- Daly, Conor 141-143
- Robb, Sting Ray 144-150
- Dixon, Scott 151-154
- O'Ward, Pato 155
- Rossi, Alexander 156-159
- O'Ward, Pato 160
- Rossi, Alexander 161-163
- O'Ward, Pato 164
- Rossi, Alexander 165
- O'Ward, Pato 166-169
- Dixon, Scott 170-171
- Palou, Alex 172
- VeeKay, Rinus 173
- Kirkwood, Kyle 174-175
- Iloft, Callum 176
- Carpenter, Ed 177-179
- Larson, Kyle 180-183
- Simpson, Kyffin 184-186
- Rossi, Alexander 187
- Newgarden, Josef 188-190
- Rossi, Alexander 191-192
- Newgarden, Josef 193-194
- O'Ward, Pato 195
- Newgarden, Josef 196-198
- O'Ward, Pato 199
- Newgarden, Josef 200

NTT INDYCAR SERIES Point Standings

Palou 183, Dixon 163, Power 157, O'Ward 134, Herta 134, McLaughlin 131, Newgarden 122, Rossi 120, Rosenqvist 116, Kirkwood 115, Lundgaard 102, Ferrucci 95, Rahal 87, VeeKay 87, Armstrong 81, Grosjean 79, Lundqvist 73, Simpson 70, Ericsson 68, Canapino 56, Rasmussen 51, Fittipaldi 50, Harvey 47, Blomqvist 46, Robb 46, Iloft 39, Theo Pourchaire 38, Daly 21, Larson 21, Sato 19, Carpenter 14, Luca Ghiotto 14, Castroneves 10, Colin Braun 10, Nolan Siegel 10, Hunter-Reay 6, Andretti 5, Legge 5

When Sting Ray met Molly

Up-and-coming race star engaged to Hamilton Heights graduate

By **RICHIE HALL**

sports@readthereporter.com

Two young people from small towns meet in the big city and fall in love.

It sounds like a romantic comedy movie, but two years ago, it became real life for Cicero's Molly Mitchell and race car driver



Mitchell

Sting Ray Robb, who competed in his second Indianapolis 500 on Sunday.

Robb made a remarkable jump in only his second appearance at Indy. He finished 31st last year in his rookie race, with his day ending early. But in 2024, Robb found himself pacing the race. He led 23 laps, the third most of any driver on Sunday. The only competitors with more were polesitter Scott McLaughlin (64) and race winner Josef Newgarden (26).

"I couldn't have asked much more," said Robb after the race. He credited his team with calling a great strategy that saw him lead



Reporter photo by Richie Hall

Sting Ray Robb signs autographs for fans during the Sunday, May 19 second round of Indianapolis 500 qualifying. Robb, who is engaged to Hamilton Heights graduate Molly Mitchell, finished 16th at the 2024 500, leading 23 laps in his second go at the race.

and keep up with the top drivers during the race.

"Proud is a word I'd use to describe the day," said Robb.

Among the people congratulating Robb after the race was Mitchell and her family. The two of them met a couple of years ago when

they were both living in nearby apartments in downtown Indianapolis.

See Molly . . . Page 2



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NEWGARDEN

from Page 1

said Newgarden. "He raced me clean. I think he's a tremendous champion. He could've easily won the race himself. For us it worked out."

For O'Ward, it was another tough result, as he also finished second in 2022. O'Ward started in the eighth position, but quickly jumped to second and was in contention for the entire race. He was one of three drivers to lead 12 laps, the others being former champions Scott Dixon and

Alexander Rossi, both of whom were also in the mix during the last few laps. Dixon finished third and Rossi placed fourth.

Alex Palou, winner of the Sonsio Grand Prix two weeks prior, placed fifth. Polesitter Scott McLaughlin finished in sixth place; he led the most laps with 64 during the first two-thirds of the race.

Daly finishes 10th

Noblesville's Conor Daly enjoyed another great race at the Indianapolis 500.

Daly placed 10th, earning him his third consecutive finish in the top 10 at the 500 and his fourth overall.

Daly ran aggressive throughout the entire race and it paid off, as he led 22 laps, the fourth most of any driver on Sunday.

"Being aggressive is the way to be at this race," said Daly. "I wanted to race hard, wanted to get up there with the front guys, and it was a great time. We executed. Just needed probably a little bit more speed. I can count on one hand the amount of changes we've made in the last two weeks because we just have had so little track time. Hopefully, if we get a chance to come back next year, we know where we want to start."



Photo by Joshua Herd

Tastes just as sweet the second time: Josef Newgarden takes the traditional drink of ice-cold milk after winning the Indianapolis 500.

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MOLLY

from Page 1

Robb, who was born and raised in Idaho, moved into an apartment in downtown Indianapolis with his roommate Stafford, another Idaho native. They did not have much of a social life for the first two months - "We would just go to and from races and that was it," said Robb. "We didn't have anything else to do in the meantime."

One night, Robb and Stafford saw Mitchell and her roommate leave their apartment to go to a concert.

"And we said, 'Oh, no way, friends! Like, finally someone,'" said Robb.

A few days later, Robb and Stafford went to Mitchell's apartment and decided to knock on the door.

"We were the two creepy neighbors that showed up at Molly's front door," said Robb. "But it turned out for the best."

Mitchell, a 2016 Hamilton Heights graduate, moved to downtown Indy from Cicero, which she admitted made some of her friends and family nervous.

"It's not generally super

unsafe, but every once in a while something happens down in the canal," said Mitchell.

Still, she was apprehensive when Robb and Stafford knocked on her door one night.

"I didn't answer at first because I was nervous, because the door goes out to a path that walks down to the canal," said Mitchell. The two men knocked on the door louder, "like more aggressively, and now I'm like 'Oh, no.'"

"So naturally, I open it, just because I'm curious enough. And there's two men I've never seen before which is arguably worst-case scenario. But it's Stafford and Sting Ray. Of course, they're the sweetest guys ever. But at that time, I didn't know that."

That initial meeting was not a success.

"They knew it was a bad interaction," said Mitchell. But a couple days later, the group was outside at the same time with a mutual friend.

"It was like, 'Oh, have

you guys met each other? These guys are great,'" said Mitchell. "Reintroduced us, vouched for the guys. Felt a little bit safer and ended up hanging out with them that night. And from that point on, we made a lot of dinners together, had a lot of nights where we'd sip tea and watch a show."

By that point, Mitchell said the foursome was "inseparable." Robb and Mitchell were friends for about a year before they started dating, which Mitchell said was "awesome."

"We weren't necessarily pursuing each other or trying to impress one another," said Mitchell. "So it was really awesome just to see him in his natural setting. Just being his friend was really great for us and allowed us to grow to really care about each other even before we were dating."

Once the couple began dating, Mitchell said it wasn't long before the two realized they wanted to get married. They were engaged in January of this year, with the wedding to

come in November.

"They love what I do and they also have that faith, that purpose side," said Robb of Mitchell and her family.

Robb, 22, was named after the Chevrolet Corvette Stingray car and has been racing since a young age. He made his first big impact when he won the 2020 Indy Pro 2000 Championship, claiming seven individual races on his way to the title. He moved to Indy Lights (now INDY NXT) for the next two years, placing second in the overall championship race in 2022.

Robb moved over to INDYCAR in 2023. His 16th-place finish at the 2024 Indy 500 tied his second-best finish in a race; he took 12th at the season-ending Laguna Seca race in 2023.

Sting Ray is on the rise, and he's already looking forward to next year.

"Absolutely," he said. "I think that's the most fun we've had on an oval to date. All the glory goes to God." Robb called the race "a big confidence booster, and I'm just so thankful."

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Larson too fast at Indy; maybe next year

Arguably the best driver in American motorsports, Kyle Larson's Indianapolis 500 bid ended in frustration. In the end, his talent succumbed to his inexperience as he was penalized for speeding on pit road with less than 70 laps to go.

Larson's Indianapolis 500 attempt has been nothing short of amazing. In his first Indianapolis 500 attempt – and first race ever in an INDYCAR – Larson made it through the first two rounds of knockout qualifying and started the race in the fifth position, the best qualifying effort for a rookie in Indianapolis 500 history. He continued his impressive run after the green flag waved.

Despite spinning his tires on an early restart and losing a handful of positions, Larson methodically worked his way into the top 10.

With less than 70 laps remaining, Larson's team called him in for a green-flag pitstop, his first green-flag pitstop of the race. Before the race, he expressed concern about pitting under green-flag conditions and only had a handful of green-flag attempts during final practice on Friday.

Unfortunately for Larson, who was running sixth at the time, he entered pit road too fast and despite locking up the front tires could not slow his car in time for the pit road timing lines. Larson was given a drive-through penalty, which essentially ended his opportunity to win the race.

Clearly frustrated, Larson learned why Indy is so difficult to win. His talent and preparation gave him a chance to win the Indianapolis 500. His inexperience, however, took it away. From the radio communications with his team during the race, Larson was still learning his car. This very fact is amazing and



ZECH YODER
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shows just how good of a racecar driver Kyle Larson is.

If there was any doubt about Larson coming back to Indy next May, his disappointment on pit road all but guarantees his return – not only to fix his mistake on pit road but to have a proper shot at the double. Hopefully, it will not be interrupted by rain.

But redemption may be closer than next May. The NASCAR Cup Series returns to Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the oval in July.

Is it too early to predict a Kyle Larson win?

Zech Yoder is a local resident, an attorney at Adler Attorneys in Noblesville, and a lifelong race fan.



Photo by Joshua Herd

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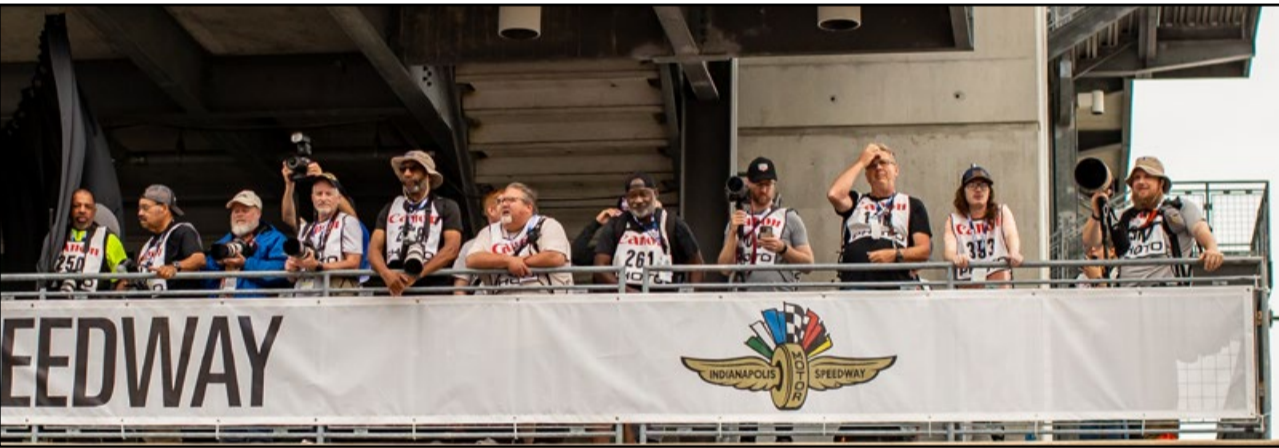
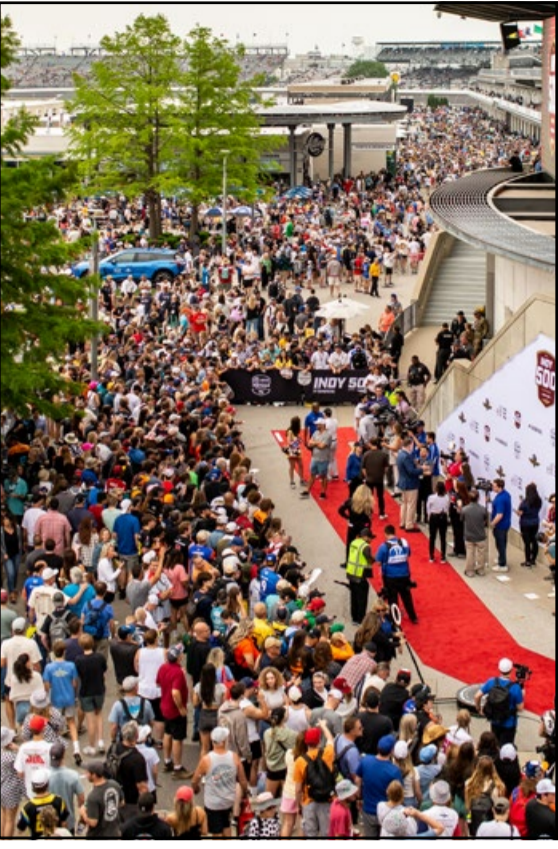
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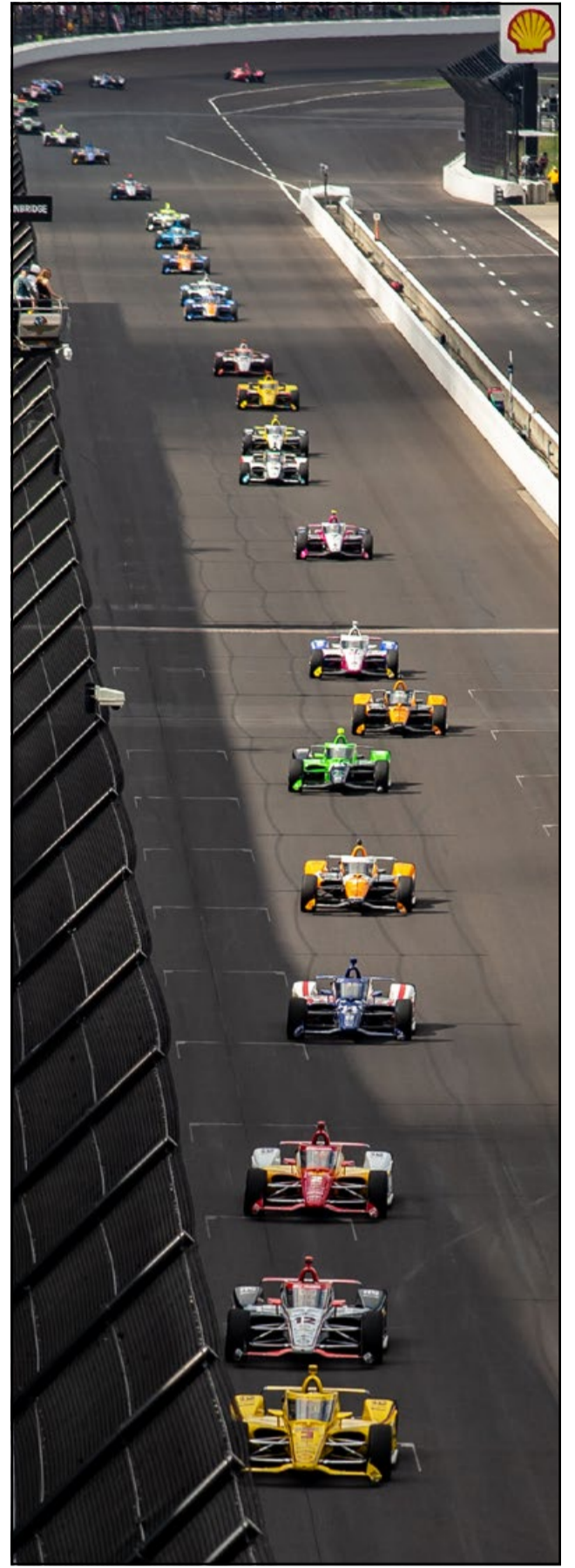
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