

Newgarden claims IndyCar crown as Pagnaud wins finale

LOS ANGELES, Sept 18, (AFP): Josef Newgarden won the 2017 IndyCar Championship on Sunday with a runner-up finish to French Penske teammate Simon Pagnaud in the season finale at Sonoma, California.

The 26-year-old American started from pole after clocking a track

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record in qualifying on Saturday.

The point he gained for the pole saw him stretch his lead atop the standings to four points over New Zealand's Scott Dixon going into Sunday's race, which was worth double points.

Newgarden drove seamlessly

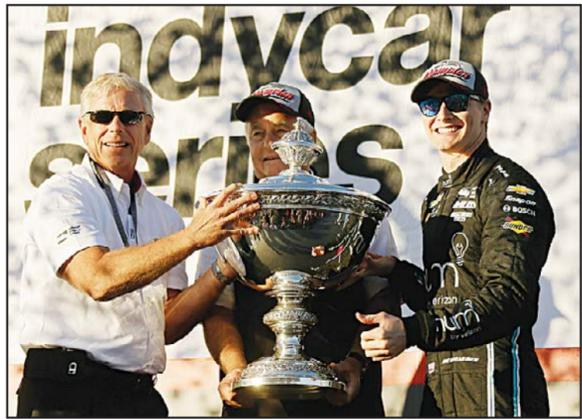
from pole, leading 41 laps of the 85-lap race on the 2.385-mile (3.84 Km) Sonoma Raceway.

But 2016 series champion Pagnaud's aggression – he twice missed the chicane at turn nine, kicking up dirt as he drove through the grass – and his bold strategy of four pit stops proved the difference.

"We did what we had to do," Pagnaud said. "We tried. We won the race. It wasn't enough."

Pagnaud emerged from his late final stop ahead of Newgarden, who couldn't find a way past, finishing 1.0986 behind Pagnaud – but 13 points ahead of him in the final season standings.

Australia's Will Power gave Penske a podium sweep and



Josef Newgarden (right), stands and celebrates after being presented the Astor Cup for winning the IndyCar championship on Sept 17, in Sonoma, California. Looking on at (center), is team owner Roger Penske. (AP)

His Highness the Amir congratulates fencer Al-Qallaf

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 18, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday sent a cable of congratulations to the Kuwaiti fencer Tariq Al-Qallaf on the occasion of being honored by the Arab Youth Council for Integrated Development.

His Highness the Amir expressed sincere compliments to Al-Qallaf,

wishing him more progress and achievements in all regional and int'l sport competitions.

His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent cables of similar sentiments to the Kuwaiti champion on the same occasion.

Chip Ganassi Racing's Dixon finished fourth – and third in the title chase, 21 points behind Newgarden.

"This is unbelievable, a dream come true, and it took so much to get here," said an emotional Newgarden, in his first year with Penske after driving early in his career in Europe and Indy Lights before landing rides with IndyCar outfits owned by Sarah Fisher, Wink Hartman and Ed Carpenter.

"I almost don't know what to say."

Newgarden became the third Penske driver in four years to win the title after Power in 2014 and Pagnaud last year.

Newgarden also became only the second US-born champion since Sam Hornish in 2006. The other was Ryan Hunter-Reay in 2012.

"This means so much to me and the sport," said Newgarden, a US flag draped over his shoulders. "To finally get it done is a dream

come true."

Pagnaud said having a home-grown champion was good for the series.

"Having an American champion is really important in this sport," the Frenchman said "and Josef will be a great champion."

Results

1. Simon Pagnaud (FRA) 85 laps en 1hr 55min 52.6840sec (avg speed: 164.7 km/h)
2. Josef Newgarden (USA) at 1.0986 sec
3. Will Power (AUS) same lap
4. Scott Dixon (NZL) s.l.
5. Helio Castroneves (BRA) s.l.
6. Graham Rahal (USA) s.l.
7. Marco Andretti (USA) s.l.
8. Ryan Hunter-Reay (USA) s.l.
9. Sebastien Bourdais (FRA) s.l.
10. Conor Daly (USA) s.l.

Final standings after 17 races:
1. Josef Newgarden (USA) 642pts, 2. Simon Pagnaud (FRA) 629, 3. Scott Dixon (NZL) 621, 4. Helio Castroneves (BRA) 598, 5. Will Power (AUS) 572



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

Omani Sports Media Cmte backs Al-Sahli's candidacy

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 18: The Sports Media Committee of Oman Journalists Association has affirmed its support for the candidacy of the Kuwaiti candidate Satam Al-Sahli for the position of president of the Asian Sports Press Union (AIPS ASIA).

It also praised Kuwait Journalists Association for submitting a nomination file for the presidency of AIPS ASIA for sports journalism and work in order to bring the presidential headquarters back to the founding state. The general assembly elections will be conducted in Islamabad, Pakistan on Oct 3-8.

The Omani committee explained that their support for Al-Sahli comes within the framework of GCC initiatives to ensure a strong presence in international media organizations as well as the

confidence in the ability of Al-Sahli to lead the AIPS ASIA, as he is a young GCC national who is capable of taking the continental union to distant horizons of success through his training in media work. He had a successful media career, and held distinguished positions, most notably as a member of the executive office of the Asian Sports Press Union in its previous term.

Chairman of the Sports Media Committee Salem Al-Jahouri has called on the committee to dedicate all its capabilities in the service of Al-Sahli to enable him to move forward in winning the AIPS ASIA presidential elections.

He said this will highlight the talents of the Gulf as well its confidence in its ability to achieve the union's goals for the benefit of sports media in Asia.

The Oman Journalists Association also declared their support for the nomination of their colleague Ahmed Al-Kaabi who is vying for a position in the executive office of the AIPS ASIA with a number of Asian journalists.



Al-Sahli

'It's a powerful pull'

At Harvard University, education through athletics (and vice-versa)

CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts, Sept 18, (AP): When Harvard sophomore Seth Towns awoke in his riverside dorm room Wednesday morning, he had options.

He could work out at the gym to prepare for the upcoming Ivy League basketball season. He could slog downstairs for another dining hall breakfast with his roommates. Or he could head over to Harvard Square to eat instead with civil rights activist Harry Edwards, sportscaster James Brown, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh and philosopher Cornel West.

Towns chose to stretch his mind instead of his muscles.

"It's the kind of thing you come to Harvard for," the 6-foot-7 forward for the Crimson basketball team said. "Growing up, I would have never thought that I'd have these people to look up to and talk to, I'm just acting as a sponge, and taking it all in."

At a monthly event dubbed the "Breakfast Club," tucked away in the private dining room of a Harvard Square hotel restaurant, Towns and senior Chris Egi joined coach Tommy Amaker this week to mingle with a few dozen leaders in the city's financial, political and intellectual communities.

Later that afternoon, Edwards spoke to the whole basketball team about a life at the intersection of sports and activism, from John Carlos and Tommie Smith – not to mention Malcolm X – to Colin Kaepernick.

Amaker arranged the talk for a simple but somewhat quaint reason: As long as his paycheck comes from Harvard, he plans to take his role as an educator seriously.

"We're teaching, we're engaging, we're exposing. We're hopefully enlightening," Amaker said. "I'm not sure how much they know about Dr Harry Edwards. But we're going to give them an education about that. I promise you that."

The oldest and most prestigious uni-

versity in the United States, Harvard has produced more than its share of US presidents and Nobel laureates, along with national champions in sports like hockey and crew. But the highlight of the athletic year has always been the football team's century-old rivalry with Yale known as The Game.

The Crimson basketball team had never won an Ivy League title, beaten a ranked team or cracked The Associated Press Top 25 before Amaker arrived in 2007. But the former Duke point guard, who previously coached at Seton Hall and Michigan, knew he had something else going for him.

"How amazingly powerful the brand and the calling card of Harvard is," he said. "It's a powerful pull."

While other schools built barbeshops or miniature golf courses for their athletes, Amaker name-dropped Harvard's academic credentials to attract top talent, landing a 2016 recruiting class that was ranked in the top 10 nationally – unheard-of for an Ivy school. He has also used it to lure politicians, Hall of Fame basketball players and coaches, and business and thought leaders to speak to his players on issues more important than bounce passes or boxing out.

"I tell them, 'You'll forever be able to say you lectured at Harvard,'" he said, half-joking. "They all like that."

Hall of Famer Kareem Abdul-Jabbar spoke to the team last year, two weeks before the presidential election – not about his basketball records or titles, but about the rising tide of racism that concerned him. Edwards' talk on Wednesday put Kaepernick's national anthem protest in the context of athlete activism over the decades.



Amaker

Truex opens NASCAR playoffs with 'victory' at Chicagoland

Elliott finishes 2nd, Harvick in 3rd



Martin Truex Jr, driver of the #78 Furniture Row/Denver Mattress Toyota, poses with the trophy in Victory Lane after winning the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series Tales of the Turtles 400 at Chicagoland Speedway on Sept 17, in Joliet, Illinois. (AFP)

JOLIET, Illinois, Sept 18, (AP): Martin Truex Jr stretched his arms to his side and waited for a shower of green slime, the colored goop traditionally poured over the heads of game-show contestants and A-list celebrities.

Add NASCAR race winner to the list.

"It's a lot funner to watch people get slimed than it is to get slimed," a smiling and sticky Truex said. "But it's definitely worth it to get that after the race."

Truex might have left the rest of the field green with envy that he was again the driver celebrating in victory lane.

Truex backed up his regular-season dominance with a victory Sunday in NASCAR's playoff opener at Chicagoland Speedway that solidified himself as the driver to beat over the final nine races as he chases his first Cup championship.

He raced to his fifth victory of the season and earned an automatic berth in the second round of the playoffs, piling on more points in his bid to compete for the title in the finale at Homestead.

A driver with three Cup wins in his first 10 seasons, Truex has nine over the last two years for Furniture Row

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Racing.

"I think we all realize it's just a unique time in history, in all our lives, that this has come together," team owner Barney Visser said.

Truex was in cruise control over the final 55 laps and built a nearly 7-second lead over Chase Elliott to win at Chicagoland for the second straight season. Truex's car flunked inspection following the win last season and the No. 78 Toyota ran into more issues Sunday – the car needed four tries through pre-race inspection before it was cleared and Truex later overcame an early pit-road penalty. By the end, there was no doubt the path to the NASCAR championship goes through the 37-year-old Truex.

Elliott was second, followed by playoff drivers Kevin Harvick, Denny Hamlin and Kyle Larson.

Truex again seemed right at home on the 1.5-mile track. Truex had wins this season on 1.5-mile tracks at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, Kansas Speedway and Kentucky Speedway.

Truex had a win snatched from him last week at Richmond because of a late caution and he ended up crashing. He and his team looked downright miserable accepting the regular season title trophy.

"After last week, he was like, I want to go to Chicago and lap the field twice," crew chief Cole Pearn said. "I think he was pretty motivated this whole weekend."

Truex insisted he forgot about the debacle at Richmond the moment he boarded the plane home. As the closing laps ticked off a week later, Truex said he refused to think another potential win would roll off the rails.

'You shouldn't take those risks'

Hamilton warns of Ferrari F1 fightback

SINGAPORE, Sept 18, (AFP): Lewis Hamilton warned the Formula One championship was far from over after Ferrari's first-lap disaster in Singapore put him in the driving seat for his fourth world title.

The Mercedes driver said he was expecting a strong response from Ferrari after both Sebastian Vettel and Kimi Raikkonen went out after a crash at the first corner.

Hamilton had laboured in qualifying, starting from fifth, but he drove brilliantly in the wet and under lights to open up a potentially decisive 28-point lead over Vettel

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in the standings.

The 32-year-old Briton has now won the last three races, but he said there was still a long way to go with six grands prix left in the season, starting with Malaysia next week.

"Honestly, I think it's going to be very close in the next races," he said, warning that Ferrari would be particularly strong in Japan and Brazil. "It's hard to predict."

Hamilton was one of only 12 drivers to finish the first wet race on the floodlit streets of Singapore, which started with a game-changing smash and saw three safety cars.

Pole-sitter Vettel and third-placed

Raikkonen sandwiched Red Bull's Max Verstappen going into the first corner, resulting in a crash which took out all three and also ended the race of McLaren's Fernando Alonso.

Asked whether it was karmic retribution for Azerbaijan, when Vettel finished ahead of Hamilton despite driving into him, the Briton told Sky Sports: "I don't know if it's karma but whatever it is I will definitely take it."

Verstappen said Vettel's move to cut him off at the start was an unnecessary risk by the German, who held a 20-point lead in July but may now have seen his season go up in smoke.

"If you are fighting for the world championship you shouldn't take those risks squeezing someone that much. You can see what happens," Verstappen told Sky Sports.

For Vettel, a four-time winner in Singapore, it was a miserable night and contrasted with his joy after qualifying, when he pulled out a mesmerising lap to grab pole.

"There is nothing we can do now

and for sure it is bitter, and it's a pity we couldn't show our pace today," he said.

"But we have other races ahead of us and I am sure there will be more opportunities for us."

With his 60th win, Hamilton is slowly closing on Michael Schumacher's record of 91 – but he said the great German's haul of seven world titles was far from his mind.

"It's hard enough to get these championships won one at a time, it's hard enough just to get this fourth one," he said.

"I'm loving driving more than ever. I feel like I'm driving better than ever. I feel the most whole as a driver that I've ever been, which is a great feeling."

He added that his priority this year, after team-mate Nico Rosberg narrowly beat him to last season's title, was simple: keep errors to a minimum.

"For me (Singapore) was just about staying focused and not making any mistakes. Something I'm very set on this year," he said.

"Coming from last year, where there were lots of mistakes, this is a year I try to make sure that, if I'm going to grow anywhere, in any space, that's going to be it."

"And focusing on not making any mistakes seems to be working."



Hamilton