

# IndyCar Media Conference

Friday April 21, 2017

## Marco Andretti Helio Castroneves

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with our Verizon IndyCar Series post-practice press conference. Pleased to be joined by our fastest driver of the day, Marco Andretti. Marco has three top-five finishes here at Barber Motorsports Park and a best finish of second. Take us through practice today and everything that went right today.

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I think just as a team, we're on the 27 side just really trying to focus on us and trying to make the best educated guess at what the reds would do, and I think we did a good job of that today. We did a good job of that at Long Beach, too.

We just need to do it when it counts tomorrow. You know, it's very important to qualify well here, so I'm pleased that we have the pace to hopefully be able to do that. But yeah, I mean, so far, so good. We just need to replicate it tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: What does it take to qualify well here at Barber Motorsports Park?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Fast lap time, faster than most if not everybody else.

THE MODERATOR: Why?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I don't know, honestly, it's tough. The balance here is finding the balance between the high and low-speed corners because a lot of things that help you in some corners hurt you in others, so it's tough to get the best of both. We have a pretty good handle on that right now.

THE MODERATOR: You have a handle of good finishes here at Barber Motorsports Park, but your teammate Ryan Hunter-Reay is one of the only drivers that's been able to keep Team Penske off of the winner's circle. Does it help to have that knowledge from him on what it takes to win twice here?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, we had this one -- we had Helio beat the first one here, but we had to stop with a couple laps to go. That one definitely hurt. But yeah, our cars, I just think it's a reaffirmation that we do a good job here. I think our cars are a lot better than 2016 here. Actually, so far this year, knock on wood. But particularly here, we had a decent test in 2016,

then came back and lost pace for the race weekend. But what I like about it is we had a good test and we came back for the race weekend and the car was still good. That always shows you that we're in the ballpark, and now we just need to stay there.

THE MODERATOR: We've seen you in the press conferences this entire season, you've either been fastest in practice or qualified well. Are you happy with the way the season has started off?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I was talking to my guys, and I think dropping out last week, or a couple weeks ago, hurt, but it's sort of doesn't hurt as bad because I'm looking forward to the season; know what I mean? We're still somehow top 10 in points.

I'd rather have pace and have misfortunes and luck into some podiums here and there, right? We need to do it outright, and I think we're showing that we can do that.

**Q. Is it fair to say that Saturday is so crucial for determining what you're able to do on Sunday? If you don't get out of the first couple of segments and get into that Fast Six, it's very hard to come from the back or middle of the pack?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, you're right. The only way to do it is to get like a start like I had last year, passed like nine cars on the first lap. But you need a lot of luck for that to happen, as well. That's not the way we want to do it. We want to be able to control the race and hopefully start up there because that would definitely make my Sunday easier.

**Q. Can you describe a little bit about how you did that nine? Sounds like a Tony Kanaan start on an oval like at Phoenix.**

MARCO ANDRETTI: He gets a lot of credit, but I've had some decent starts, too.

**Q. You have, but this is different because you're on a road course. I never really thought that the front straightaway here was that great a place to pass, but you must have kept passing people. You didn't do all nine between here and Turn 1, did you?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: No, I got one or two in Turn 1, I got a lot in Turn 2, and I was lucky to miss the spin in 3 -- I mean, 5. There's definitely some luck with it, too. But like I said, I don't want to see anybody at the start on Sunday. That's the plan. Maybe the pace car.

**Q. Marco, you've shown you're pretty fast here so far; what's it going to take to get a little bit more speed out of the car for qualifying?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: I think it's just going to be about maximizing when it counts, you know? It's going to be doing it on that lap and putting all my sectors together, and got to do it three times, three rounds. That's going to be the plan. It just seems we have a pretty good car. It's just going to come down to whether I can put it together.

**Q. There's a change this year that the teams each get one set of red tires for Friday to practice to try and get their car balanced. Does that help, or do you think it's an advantage for you in terms of all the other drivers getting a chance to work with those, or do you think that makes it better for you to get your car balanced?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: I don't know because you still have to chase the track tomorrow, as well, if there's a different track condition or whatever. There's still a lot of elements to the sport that you have to -- we rolled the same race car out, and it doesn't behave like the same race car. You're always trying to stay with it.

But I kind of like it. I kind of like -- it takes the guessing out of it because there used to be a big guessing game. If you guessed wrong, you're starting pretty miserably. Now it's about really putting it all together, and if you have it together, just keeping it there. That's going to be the goal.

**Q. You got called out on Twitter earlier today by your ex-teammates about potentially running the Daytona 500 at some point in your career. Is that something that interests you as we keep talking about Fernando Alonso doing a crossover and other drivers doing a crossover?**

MARCO ANDRETTI: Just driving race cars in general interests me, but definitely some unfinished business here. I want to win the Indy 500. I want to get a road or street course pole and start showing our speeds there. And a championship.

So there's a lot of unfinished business here.

But if it's an off weekend, it's better than the couch, that's for sure.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with our post-practice press conference. Joined now by Helio Castroneves driving the No. 3 AAA Chevrolet for Team Penske. Helio won the race here at Barber Motorsports Park in 2010 and was fourth fastest in today's practice sessions. Obviously your team has a lot of success here including your win in 2010. Why is Penske so good here?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, this track, it's very challenging in the setup, obviously Firestone Tire has been doing a very good job changing a little bit of the

compound or the construction, and it seemed to suit our setup. We keep chasing all the areas, so it's not only straight, brake and turn, you have a lot of technical corners here that are becoming very difficult, so it makes a big difference when you have a good setup.

THE MODERATOR: All of your teammates are race winners here at this track. That's kind of a rare thing. What does that experience add up to on a race weekend where each of you know that you have the potential to win?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, each one of us has a great input to improve not only the setup of the car but a drive style, maybe can improve in the corners and go faster. That's the great thing about having great teammates; you're going to always develop and upgrade your driving style no matter what happens. That side of it, unfortunately, they're there, as well, and they're winners, and they're also going to play really hard when you go out there. So it's a healthy competition.

THE MODERATOR: Ironically you spent some time yesterday talking with the Weather Channel, and weather has been the topic of conversation this weekend with temperature changes, maybe some rain, maybe not some rain. How does that affect what you and your engineers do?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Our cars, obviously, it's very sensitive to the weather, so meaning you can gain two miles an hour on the straightaway just by five degrees on temperature. So it's kind of like you can gain a lot of horsepower, as well, but when it's cooler, and we can lose easy when it's hotter the way it is. Combining the track temp with the ambient, the engineer is able to calculate quite technical parts and simulate some times in the morning, some times in the afternoon.

It's a very -- today's teams, they have kind of like a weather station there on their own. Everybody is always checking to make sure that we can predict as much as we can, and the weather becomes so important because of the sensitivity of the downforce that it plays a big factor.

**Q. Will the cooler day make for a better race in the fact that it seemed like today the hotter it got, the more slippery it became?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, it depends on the setup, obviously. I think the cooler makes everybody's car better, faster, so necessary, maybe not so much of a good race because everybody is going to be good, so it's difficult to pass.

But you know, right now I think the weather, it might be -- the rain might be a possibility, and that could be a big factor. But normally when there's cold weather, everybody's car is fixed, every problem, which is the opposite that we want. We want it to be very difficult.

**Q. Helio, I noticed a lot of cars are going off in the dirt in the runoff there in Turn 1. Where that concrete ends and it curves back, how is that track doing? Is there a hole starting to come up in the ground where the dirt is off there?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Oh, I have noticed. The problem when people start coming off, it's bringing that dirt to the track, and whoever is next behind essentially ends up getting affected by it. But the reason probably -- the reason probably people are going off on the high speed corners is because the total amount of downforce that we gained during the off-season, not only Chevy but also Honda, and people are really becoming more comfortable to go to those corners faster. But it's also tricky, and that's probably why it's being -- we are right on the edge right now.

**Q. How do you feel like this increase in downforce is helping you? Is it making it easier to get around here or harder?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: The thing is you've got to combine with the mechanical setup to work, and that's the hardest part because you can actually -- this is a road course, it's not an oval, so there is more of volatility -- things that happen during one corner. You turn, you hit the bump, you hit the curve, you react to something, and that is really tough to control. So just because you have more downforce, it gives you confidence, but sometimes the setup is not there.

**Q. It's only practice, but the four Chevys on your team were pretty impressive today. Do you think too much has been made of the Honda gains? I know some people thought the Hondas may have actually been detuned to a degree because of the engine problems they had at Long Beach.**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I agree with you. I have a feeling that they are playing a game, detuning the engine. Seemed to have some issues in Long Beach, so they are playing the game, detuning and waiting for the qualifying to go in. We can only focus on our job, on our work, and that's what Team Penske is doing.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I'm sure they have one extra slot there on the steering wheel or on the dash or whatever they have. I'm sure they are just -- it's red tape right now. (Laughing.)

**Q. Helio, you started on the pole at Long Beach, and you led some off the hairpin turn, started to go and then got swarmed by five Hondas basically. Do you know what happened? Was it what they call sometimes the engine -- I don't know if you have this with the Chevy or both Chevy and Honda have this, where they call it an overboost and then you have like a time out?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, that's what happened to us. What a frustrating start. The entire Team Penske did such a good job on putting the car on pole position,

and right on the start of the race, the only thing I did difference is carry a little bit slower so that at least I wouldn't have to worry about drafting on the end of the straightaway.

Unfortunately, we know that we are a little bit behind compared to the Hondas, and so we've got to run really close to the limit. And somehow the system learned something that we unknow and tune out. I asked questions but nobody answered me yet, even our engineers. So unfortunately that's what happened. We overboost, and about three tenths to half a second they cut the power, so imagine, if you were in first, second gear, when they have half a second the engine shut off, that's what happens. Everybody just runs by you. I'm glad nobody hit me to be honest, but from there on it was just downhill because we ended up having more overboost during the race, and we ended up having some sort of an issue, as well, with disable the speed limit, so we ended up having two speed penalties because of that.

So our race went from -- we went from hero to zero, but to be honest, it ended up being in the top 10, which under the circumstances was pretty positive.

**Q. It seems that every week now there's another driver announced for the Indy 500 --**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I was waiting for it.

**Q. Your quest for four keeps getting more difficult because of the competition level, so what do you think of how deep this field is now?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, I'll tell you what; no question, having more drivers, including now Alonso coming from Formula 1, is absolutely great. It's great for everyone, for the drivers, for the teams, and especially for the series. Normally in this era, I don't think it's very common for people to break their contract for one race just to come to the Indianapolis 500, but that shows that the Indiana 500 is the most important race of all. And I'm glad. I respect Fernando for that, to do that, and trying to do something that in this point in his career he can do that, obviously, and he's an experienced driver, very talented, and I'm sure he'll do well. I'm going to try to do everything I can to make sure that he doesn't do too well, so I'll push extremely the limit to make sure that we can get our victory and celebrate the fourth one.

THE MODERATOR: Helio, thank you very much for your time. We appreciate it.