

# IndyCar Media Conference

Friday April 21, 2017

## Helio Castroneves

Press Conference



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 zero 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.