

# IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday July 9, 2017

## Helio Castroneves

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are pleased to be joined by the Iowa Corn 300 winner, Helio Castroneves. This is the first win for Helio in 2017 and the 30th win of his IndyCar career. He is the ninth different winner in 11 Verizon IndyCar series races, and ended a 54-race winless drought. How good did it feel to climb back up on your Spiderman fence climb?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, that was great. I can't thank enough Team Penske, Hitachi, Chevy car group and all our partners, and especially the people in the shop. They don't get much credit, but without their work and effort, we wouldn't be able to do what we did.

And again, it's a great team effort because we came here, we tried a lot of different setups between all four cars, and man, I picked the winner one, so it was really good. The car felt really good, and it was just great.

It was a little bit -- in the beginning we missed a little bit on the setup, then we made some adjustments after the first stop or second stop, and the car was fantastic. It was really good.

Yeah, you're right, it was a long time, but you can never stop believing, and my team never stopped supporting me on that, and today was great. Everything went great. Didn't have a yellow at the wrong time, we didn't have issues with the tire or anything else or mechanical. Everything was really, really good, and when you have a day like this, you've got to execute.

THE MODERATOR: As we mentioned earlier, Helio led 217 laps today, which passes Al Unser for fourth on the all-time laps led list.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Damn, you hear that? That's what I'm talking about. How many, 217?

THE MODERATOR: You led 217 today. Would you like to know how many laps you've led in your entire career?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: 5,947.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Really? Oh, my God. That's a fun fact, eh? Do you have more?

THE MODERATOR: This is the first IndyCar win for

Team Penske at Iowa Speedway. Not only a big win for you but also a big win for the team. What do you think it took to finally get past that? We don't have a lot of tracks out there that Penske haven't won at.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I have to say we've always been very quick here. We've got a lot of pole positions as a team, and the rhythm has always been there. Unfortunately, as I said, last year, for example, we pitted at the wrong time and a yellow came in and we were two laps down.

This time the car was really good. We learned our lesson. We focused on something that we knew that we've got to work on it, which was able to maintain the life of the tire, and that was it. So it wasn't any particular small thing that we always had, and finally we were able to put it together.

**Q. I had the possibility this morning to do a pace car ride, and I found even in the road car the track was very, very bumpy. How was it in an open-wheel car?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, interesting. We did a test here I want to say two weeks ago, and when I came the first time yesterday morning for our first session, I felt completely different. In fact, I made a comment, like man, is it the tires, is it the setup, because we experimented with a lot of different setups. Is it the setup, what is it? Today in the race, the car was so good. I noticed in one of the -- especially the straightaway it was really rough there. But guys, asphalt creates characteristics that are displaced. I remember in the past you used to have a huge bump in Turn 1, and every year it's something different, which is I would say the way that the track is designed and everything now finally paid off our hard work. Sometimes when you get a night race, you know, cool down, all the cars are becoming very good and it becomes more difficult and competitive.

But today, wow, it's been quite a long time I don't have a car like this, or I had a car like this but something would happen. But it was fantastic.

**Q. (Indiscernible.)**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, it smelled a lot of rain and also the visor was getting a lot of water. In fact, I haven't seen -- I haven't seen where is this rain coming from because I look at the sky and I haven't seen a single cloud. It was very weird, to be honest. But it was the right decision because I was worried. I would

be the first one to go, at this place you've got to commit. You can't think too much when you go into the corners because if you do that people are going to pass you by. I would be the first one committing on Turn 1, and I'm glad they (indiscernible) the safety crew guys, and I think that worked very well for everyone. We lost a little bit of the rhythm, yes, because we spent probably 10 minutes pitting and tires, go to a new cycle, car cooled down a little bit. Everything changed, but it changed for everyone.

**Q. Helio, how much does a win make a statement for you as far as the championship goes, you're now right there with Dixon? And not only are you moving up the IndyCar win list, you're also closing in on Mark Donohue, the winningest driver in Team Penske history?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, it's great. It's great momentum to carry on for the championship, and this is exactly what we need. Now we're going to Toronto to another place that we run really well in the past, and I am really looking forward to that one. So we've just got to carry good momentum, and with that, we just keep doing what we're doing, putting ourselves in good position to win races.

And 30 wins, we just passed Rick Mears, which is my hero, and getting close to win most of the team, which is great. I have to say I'm honored to be part of this organization, and I can only thank Roger, Cindric and the entire team to be supporting me. It's easy to be behind you in good times, but they've always been there no matter the time, so for me that's priceless. I'm going to continue focusing in this season, and there's more to come.

**Q. At this point in your career, to have gone that long between wins, I heard you say in Victory Lane it felt like the first one again. Going through a drought at this point, does that make you appreciate it a little bit more, winning a race?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, finally everything came together. Yeah, appreciate more, but when I say like for the first time, it's just like I remember this feeling before, and I didn't think that climbing the fence would get a little bit harder this time. But it still had the same feeling looking at everybody's face through the fence and everybody is excited for me. That's a feeling that nobody can take away from you, and that's what motivates me more to come back now and do what I just did.

**Q. Helio, given your past record here with one top-5 finish and Team Penske's record here without having a win, did this track come into your mind as the one that you would use to break your drought of 1,134 days?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I'll tell you one thing. I always come to this place knowing this is the year. This is the year it's going to happen. This is the year we're going to break through. I didn't think different this

year, either, and I always wanted that trophy, believe it or not. I'm always like, man, I've got to get that in my collection. I really like that. So it is a dream come true, and I tell to everyone, you've got to dream big because one day this thing will come true. It took a long time, 20 years, or I don't know how many years we're here.

THE MODERATOR: This is our 11th race.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: It took 11 years, but we made it happen, and I'm very happy.

**Q. In many ways it was kind of like the old Helio today, but you seemed to have a little bit of extra determination and motivation. Was that true?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: No. It was the same. Car was really good, and the car gave me really competent engineers, and I'll tell you what, a lot of people don't hear about the engineers that we have who all work together. But today my engineer Jonathan Diuguid did a phenomenal job because sometimes you're trying to explain something, and if they don't understand you, there's nothing you can copy, you can look, you can see everything from other teammates, he won't be able to understand. And since I've been working for a few years now with Jonathan, he understands, and that's exactly what I was asking for him, and he gave me.

When that thing was stuck, especially behind traffic, and I'm throwing myself into the inside, I was confident that everything was working together. But there was no extra motivation. My extra motivation is every time I finish a season I just can't wait to come back again and do better, whether if it's a place that I haven't win, if it's a place, a championship that I'm still looking for, so that's what keeps me motivated.

**Q. Can you talk about what it was like running behind Will Power, your teammate? Could you tell if his car was not as strong as yours, for example? And did you have any close calls out there? And did you try to go for the lead right away or were you just kind of biding your time even though you led over 217 laps? Was it just go to the front as soon as you can or do you try to save the car?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I did run behind Will. Our setups were very, very close, to be honest. That's one guy that I said, you know what, if I have to choose one here -- we're like friendly, and we're able to do that with some adjustments that I feel comfortable with. And yes, when we start the race, I tried to take the lead because I want to be in clean air to save a little bit of the tires. But as soon as I knew that it was going to be a little bit rough, I decided just to take my time, and once the traffic gets in, I knew -- I knew. I was just confident that maybe I would be a little bit better, and I was.

We missed a little bit in the first pit stop, some adjustments that I'm supposed to do. I hoped that it would get better, and it did. We lost a little bit on that.

That was a part that we didn't lead much. But once my team put me back in the lead again, one of the pit stops, with the adjustments that I was asking for, that's it. I didn't have anything more to do. I did not have any close calls. Everything was always well-calculated. Today experience really paid off. I'm aggressive when I have to be, and I take it easy when I need to. I don't know, but probably that's one of the reasons we led today.

THE MODERATOR: Helio, thank you.  
Congratulations. We'll see you in Toronto.