

# IndyCar Media Conference

Friday August 25, 2017

## Helio Castroneves Tony Kanaan

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll roll right into our next group. On my far left, the driver of the No. 3 Shell Fuel Rewards Team Penske Chevrolet, Helio Castroneves, and driver of the No. 10 NTT DATA Honda for Chip Ganassi Racing, Tony Kanaan. Gentlemen, welcome. Obviously you two are two of the three drivers in this weekend's field who have previous experience racing on this track. You both have some good memories racing on this track. Helio, you have a special bond that you drove for Hogan Racing, a St. Louis-based team, in 1999. If each of you could talk about this track, how it's different than other tracks and what you need to do this weekend.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, this place is very special for me because, as you said, in 1999, I drove for Hogan Racing. They're based here in St. Louis, and the family has always received me with open arms, so I'll always remember those, so every time I come back, I still remember those times.

Last time we were here, obviously it was a great race. I remember also not having any particular information in my dash. It was completely wiped, and we were still able to race and ended up winning the race. Obviously it was first, second, another Brazilian, crazy Joe de Ferran, so it was cool to see Brazilian yellow and green over here. It's a great memory, so every time you come to a place when you have good memories, it's great to be back. And the place is awesome. It's always been super cool, and now with the new surface, which we haven't tried yet, it's fun.

TONY KANAAN: Sounds like it.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Everybody is going to love it. Whoever complains -- which we'll find somebody that probably complains, but anyway, they're crazy because it's a really, really nice place. Everybody did a great job.

TONY KANAAN: I have some great memories on the Indy Lights days, too. Me and Helio were teammates here, and I remember '98 I left, and it was before the tunnel existed, and I crashed in the race, and my neck was kind of like sore and bruised. I remember we had to wait for the track to go yellow to cross the track, and I shared the ambulance with three other people that were not feeling well, as well, not related to the race,

but it was funny.

You know, and also the last time we were here, had a good Brazilian podium one, two, three. Great place to come back. I was always a fan of this track. It's a lot tougher than I would say many ovals that we go. Turn 1, the radius is extremely tight, and it makes it extremely challenging. The guys did a great job repaving the track for us, and hopefully the fans will appreciate that and will make this event stay on the calendar like the way we used to.

**Q. The variety of tracks within the Verizon IndyCar Series is very important. How important is it to have another oval on the schedule?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: It's always good to have another oval. We definitely are able to go to street courses, road courses and ovals. We do have great ovals, but unfortunately they start going away, whether it's due to a promotor or dates or whatever it was, but it's great to have an addition like this place, as I said. It's not a superspeedway, it's not a short oval, it's a unique oval, and I feel like we need some kind of like that for our series.

TONY KANAAN: Same, and I think look at the effort these people put to have us back here. We came here and tested twice, and we brought up some of the issues that they had, and you know, they didn't hesitate. That doesn't happen very often. That means how bad they want us to be here, so I think the best thing we can do is put a very good race and promote this race as best as we can. It's a way of saying thanks to the people that really, really put the effort to make the event happen and to make us look good.

**Q. This oval according to the local press is regarded as short oval. Can you draw any similarities or a big difference to Iowa and Phoenix?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: The way I see it, it's more like Japan that we used to race in a small version scale. I don't think it's like Iowa or Sonoma -- Pocono or -- but I think it's more like -- big time right now. So I feel like it probably looks like Motegi.

**Q. Helio, you're in a points battle here to try to win your unbelievably first title. Would you talk about that?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Sure, yeah. We're in a battle here, third in the standings, definitely with Newgarden, Dixon, Simon, Will. I mean, even Rahal. I think there's

still more people eligible to win the race, to win the championship, and with three races to go, a lot of points in the game. So right now we've just got to keep scoring points and doing what we're doing. We're still up there. I'm really looking forward, no pressure, to come to this place because I feel like it's one of the places that can help us a lot, and it's been exciting. I can't wait to go to Sonoma. It will be 200 points in the game, and that's a lot to do with how you approach there, how you get there.

But still, everything is still wide open.

**Q. You haven't won a championship yet; how is that?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I guess it wasn't meant to be. Not for lack of trying, not for lack of being competitive, otherwise I wouldn't be here today. I prefer actually -- it's a shame, it's an unfortunate situation, but at least probably that's what keeps me motivated to keep coming and trying harder every time I come back to the race car and come back pushing. As I said, I don't think just because of a title it's going to destroy everything what I've done up to this point, but again, we're going to keep pushing, and it ain't over till it's over.

**Q. As a former champion, Tony, do you have any advice to offer?**

TONY KANAAN: He's doing just fine, trust me. He's fine. I don't think he has anything to prove to anybody. This championship if it comes, I'll be extremely happy for him, but I don't think it's going to be something that he will regret if it never happens, so he's okay.

**Q. What is your outlook for these last three races? You're not as close in the championship battle, so how are you approaching these final three races?**

TONY KANAAN: You know, it's interesting because you get to a point that you have five drivers worrying about one thing and 16 others worrying about a completely different thing. It will be for us just go win some races. Of course I've been in the championship hunt and many championship hunts before. I do not want to get in the middle to change the outcome for anybody, but it's a race in the race. They have a lot to lose, we have nothing to lose, and we're going to try to go for wins. That's all we really have to do. It's taken me a little longer than I wanted it to be to win another race, and Helio was in that shoe until Iowa. For me it's just really winning. It's what we're going to go for.

**Q. Helio, it seems that there's a little difference in philosophy between the Ganassi team and the Penske team in that fighting for the championship, it seems like there are four drivers on Team Penske that are all going for it -- well, they're all in contention, and then in the Ganassi team, it seems from past seasons that maybe depending on how far down the road we are toward the final race, it seems that things seem to work for the driver that's**

**leading the points, which would be Scott, which has happened. In your case, Helio, who's the strongest of your four Penske drivers would you say on the short ovals, because you did win at Iowa?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, that's a very good point. To be honest, all my teammates are strong. There is a reason why they are battling for the championship. As you heard before, we always race hard. There was no -- the only team order we have, it's not to take each other out. And at this point, Will proved himself winning last week in Pocono so he does really well in ovals. Simon won in Phoenix, which is a short oval. I won in Iowa, and Newgarden already won in Iowa -- maybe not an oval this year, but it shows that everyone has a pedigree. Everyone has been there before.

It's hard to pick one guy. I would say me because I believe in myself. I know what I can do. I believe in my team, as well, so I will do everything I can to show those guys, hey, back off. (Laughs.)

**Q. How difficult is trying to find a setup here with such a compressed time schedule where it's practice, straight into qualifying, straight into night practice? How much does your past experience at this track help if at all?**

TONY KANAAN: Well, they tested here, a bunch of the guys, at least one car for each team. I think it's not going to be as pressed as was Pocono, for instance. I think that's been the nature of the two-day events that we created. You know, I think everybody kind of likes it in the beginning because it's compressed, but then when you go through the day, you're like, man, it's a busy day. Especially like a night race like this, it's a long day. We do nothing until 4:00, and then you have one hour of qualifying and half an hour and that's it.

It's always busy, but it's the same for everybody I would say, and I don't see a problem. Obviously you put a lot more pressure on the engineers back in the shop to load up the truck with something close because it's quite hard to catch up with only a one-hour session. You're trying to do race and qualifying work.

**Q. I drove myself my rental car very early in the morning to the track, and maybe I'm wrong, but I have the impression the new surface is very, very soft. What about the grip level?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, it's unbelievably smooth. And the grip, every time you keep going out there, sounds like it's accepting -- the track is accepting very well the Firestone tires, and it keeps adding more grip, meaning as you keep running around, the track gets better. So imagine when we ran here two, three weeks ago, we still improving the time just because the track was adding more grip.

Will be very interesting. I think that's going to translate to the race, as well, and again, definitely it's new for

everyone. Even though we've got the technology today that's so advanced, I can see already my teammates looking at the in-car cameras that we have analyzing all details which are going to help everyone in our team. It definitely will be very -- obviously when it comes to the race it's a little bit different strategy because you have draft, you have cutting, taking the air out of the car, and it throws a different perspective, but everybody is experiencing -- at this point of the season, everybody understands what the car is doing.

**Q. Practice session today starts at 4:00, but the race tomorrow is at 8:45, so that's --**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I thought it was at 8:00.

**Q. No...**

TONY KANAAN: Put some rubber down, we'll be fine.

**Q. Which is considerably different timewise with the sun going down. How is that going to change your strategy because you're going to set up the car for this practice session, but usually that 30 minutes that comes later, what is it, 8:30 to 9:00 tonight, that will be at the same time frame, but usually everybody is trying to see how they can follow in traffic, and you only have 30 minutes. How can you make changes?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, this is not our first time. Texas was like that. I don't know, many other -- all the places that we've been there. And temperature is very sensitive for our cars. It's become extremely important. It won't be different this weekend, either.

The good news is the track is so smooth that people are going to be really, really happy, but we're going to face the same thing.

TONY KANAAN: The good thing is IndyCar planned really well. At least we're going to have one session at the time we're going to race. It's only half an hour, but it's the same for everybody.

**Q. Actually it's a full hour from 9:00 to 10:00.**

TONY KANAAN: So we will definitely be able to figure that out. At least we have one session to try to simulate the race.