

IndyCar Media Conference

Tuesday September 5, 2017

Helio Castroneves

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Helio Castroneves onto the call. Good afternoon, Helio.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Hey, good afternoon. How you doing?

THE MODERATOR: I'm well, thank you. Helio sits third in the championship right now, 22 points behind Josef Newgarden. Helio, obviously you were able to gain some valuable points at Watkins Glen over the weekend. What's your mindset heading into Sonoma?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I'm ready. I'm ready to go to Sonoma where we're going to be testing Thursday, and then be back next week. First of all, we'll be getting ready here for the hurricane to be honest. I'm just a little confused to go back or not. But other than that, championship is on the line. We're really looking forward to it. As I said in the interview before, it's mixed feelings. Obviously Newgarden with the secure lead and now so close to Dixon but at the same time opened up a very good chance for me, and obviously I'm going to do everything I can to make that up.

Q. You just said you were concerned about the hurricane, and you didn't know if you were going to go home, so where are you, and what are your plans right now?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, that's right. Right now we are a little bit confused. I'm in Fort Lauderdale, tomorrow leaving to Sonoma. My flight is scheduled to come back here on Friday. Definitely considering to go straight to Atlanta and wait until it waves bye, and then go back here and get ready for Sonoma.

But there was a lot of things in planning since we got a lead here on Tuesday or Thursday -- Wednesday. I wonder if things are going to be okay. So I'm preparing right now, but we're going to be ready for whatever happens. We're going to be ready for obviously next week.

Q. Going into a good road course finish, you're only 22 points out. We learned that everything is on the table. In fact, I remember two years ago, Scott Dixon had 47 points to make up, somehow wrested control and won the championship. So it looks like you're easily within the envelope. What are your thoughts going into Sonoma, and what has been your biggest concerns about Sonoma as a racetrack?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, the good news is we do have a very good setup there the past few years. We've been able to really show that kind of like performance. And obviously as we saw it in Watkins Glen, anything can happen. So things outside of our control, that's something that concerns me sometimes. Some people might not be aware of what's going on and have an opportunity to show something, and those are the things that sometimes you don't have much control.

But hopefully at this point there is not much we can do. We've just got to keep bringing what we've been doing the whole season. We're not here at this position by luck. We're here because we perform as a team, as a group. Everybody in a consistent way, in a competitive way most of the time, and that's what we're going to have to continue doing.

Q. I am wondering, when you're racing Josef, do you see him differently? Do you think of him different than when you've had to race Newgarden in the past years?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: No, I -- well, certainly knowing him a little bit more from outside -- not outside racing but outside a different team. Now he's actually our teammate. No question, he proved for the entire team, and that's why Roger ended up hiring him, that he's here because of his talent. He's able to show that the entire season, and then we can see as a teammate what he has brought to the team. He definitely brought a very competitive edge, which is great. At least for me, it keeps pushing me as always.

As I always say, I hope my teammates keep me light on my feet. And it's great. It's great to have this situation again. We have five cars -- sorry, four cars in mathematical condition to win this championship, but at this point, we've just got to keep being focused a little bit now since we have our chance, No. 3, the group No. 3. We're going to have to take the opportunity to strike. But we don't forget that Team Penske still -- the goal is to have this championship with Team Penske.

Q. I wanted to ask how much of a distraction has it been to deal with questions over your future, and do you feel liberated in some way at the thought that this might be your final race on a road course in IndyCars?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I have not been a distraction at all. As I said before, as a group we focus on each race, and probably that's what keeps me focused and

pumped and ready. I believe I'm experienced enough to be able to separate a lot of things, a lot of rumors, a lot of noise. Let's put it this way. But Roger, Cindric and I, we have an agreement. I enjoy to be part of this team, and we just want to continue to focus on this last race, which is extremely important for, as I said, not only for myself but most important, as well, having a championship for the team. Whatever future happens, I'm ready to go. But at this point, I'm really focused on this season and this last race of the season. We are looking forward to whatever happens in the future, and I'll be happy.

Q. How special is the relationship between you and Roger from a strategy standpoint since you've had him on your box, and described the competition on the box is he's trying to beat Tim and Brian and some of the other guys are also trying to win themselves?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: It's so funny, this relationship obviously happens with a lot of my teammates before, and I remember very definitively with Gilles, with Sam Hornish, also with Briscoe. It's kind of like really funny. And let me tell you, RP is more competitive than anybody in this team. Cindric obviously wants to beat him, and he wants to beat him and Kyle, and I want to beat all of them, as well, too.

I get used to Roger. He gives very good information on the radio, and I have to say, it's actually pretty good. Some people think it's quite a lot of information, but I have to say, sometimes when you focus, that information is so useful that you don't need to worry about looking in the mirror or things like that, and it's very practical.

Over the years it took a little longer, it took a little time, too, to understand, but once we clicked, it was really cool. He's definitely passionate about what he does, and again, every time he always keeps you in control, coaching you well, so it's been a phenomenal experience, and I'm really looking forward to giving a championship to him.