

IndyCar Media

Conference

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Helio Castroneves

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Well, it wasn't the day that you wanted; did you have really good feelings coming into today?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, of course. Every time I come to a car, a race car, I never think it's going to be -- I'm going to be second or third, especially with the red tires when my teammates had blacks. I thought it was a good opportunity to go and try to pass. I got one, but Josef and Will -- Will did a good job in getting up to speed with the blacks. So I wasn't able to make a move, and all of a sudden since I was in a strategy to do three stops, I had to right away stop the attack mode and start saving fuel so that we could finish.

So that's the time I was like, all right, maybe something could help us here. But they were able to stay on point. We were able to stay there with the red tires. Obviously we had the new reds. I think Scott and the other guys, the people behind us, they had used reds. Not much we could have done. But I thought it was tough, especially towards the end with the used reds. It was really difficult to hold on and save fuel at the same time. That was most of the things.

We had a little more, but saving fuel was the hardest thing.

THE MODERATOR: How did the team decide that Simon's car was going to be the one to go on a four-stop strategy and maybe not somebody else's?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, we work together. We talk about it. The only thing we didn't talk about was the tire situation. We got -- the group No. 3 surprise, but we decided, and I last year did that strategy and it did not work, so I said, I don't want to be that guinea pig again and do the same thing. I want to change.

And unfortunately only him did. I don't know if in the back people did that, as well. For us, it didn't work. For him, he did a good job keeping the pace and work it out. Kudos for him, for everyone -- how did the championship finish, by the way? I still don't know.

THE MODERATOR: You're fourth.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: But second?

THE MODERATOR: Simon got second.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: All right, so yeah, good job for him. He did a great job pushing everything he could to get in that position. Yeah, it was a difficult, but top 5 again, not bad.

THE MODERATOR: Were you close on fuel at the end?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Pretty much, yeah. We finished with like zero, nothing else.

Q. You said last year the strategy didn't work for you; when you saw it was maybe your team or your engineer that it was successful for Simon, could you adopt to a new strategy during the race?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, last year the middle of the run, that's what we did, and I guess that's probably why it didn't work last year, and this year they committed early doing that strategy and it worked pretty well for them. That probably was the difference. But in the end if we would have changed again probably would have ended up with the same strategy as last year, and that would have been a disaster.

Q. When you look at this year, another top 5 finishing in points. Do you look at this moment or the fact that you were still in championship contention?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, obviously I'm always going to focus on the positive thing. I'm not going to focus on the Texas that we had a problem or other races that I missed strategy or me making mistakes. You've got to think about, again, it was another season that we pushed as hard as we could and another top 4. And again, sometimes it's funny because you see the statistics, finished second -- I finished second four times. But it was more times -- the P4 is not what it represents because we were in a battle a lot more years than that. And that's what I look. I look because each year that's what kept me motivated to come back and push hard, and that for me was -- I would say it's hard -- sometimes it's -- well, I try, but to get one -- it's easy to follow from that position, but to keep up like I've been doing all these years, I think it's the hardest thing to do. But it doesn't come with just it happens. It comes with a great team. It comes with great dedication from your guys, great trust, and obviously myself to keep motivating, finding ways to keep pushing and having teammates like I have today, no question, helped me to become a better driver.

Q. Of all the drivers on the team, Roger could pick

any one of the four, but he has you as his driver and he's the strategist. Can you talk about what that's been like for you the last couple years?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, Roger is the boss, so definitely you have to feel proud that when he ends up getting to your car, calling your race -- and I always actually want to see when that would happen. When I started racing at Team Penske, he was the chosen one, and then Sam was another one, Briscoe was another one. I'm like, man, what am I doing wrong here. But I guess finally when the time came, Roger said, okay. It was natural. I obviously always want him, and I guess it turned out to be a natural way to have us working together. No question, I learned so much over these four or five years that we've been working as the strategist, and he really motivates you. He really gives you the information, and sometimes we take a chance.

He's the best guy to take chances because he's the boss. If something goes wrong, hey, he knows what we did. It's been an amazing, obviously, journey to work with Roger and Cindric and all the boys.

Q. Your future uncertain, and you just talk about motivation, where do you feel like you are as a race car driver now in your career?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I feel that I'm in the prime. I feel that I have more fuel to burn than ever, more Shell-Pennzoil fuel to burn, let me clarify that. I still have a lot.

Now, you know, whatever happens in the future, sometimes you can use that in different ways, and something that I learned in the past. Sometimes we've got to dance according to the music. But at this point we're definitely going to announce -- I feel whatever it's going to be, if it's moving on or not, I'm going to continue to motivate and keep working hard to achieve my goals, which is winning races.

Q. You said Roger is the boss and you feel honored that he's your race strategist. Were there moments in races where you had a different opinion than him?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Oh, many times. I'm asking for reds and they give me blacks. What are you going to do? They have the tires out there, I cannot stop the car and change myself. And there was times that when he called me in, I was like, nope, I'm not coming, and it did not work very well, by the way. But I feel that we work together, but he does listen, and not only just because he's the team owner, doesn't mean we have to do what he wants to do. You know, that goes to not only myself but to the engineers, as well, that also run the car.

Jonathan, phenomenal guy. Wow, I couldn't be happier to have the group of engineers that we have. And again, finishing 1, 2, 4th, 5th, it shows that we definitely work well together.

THE MODERATOR: I think I speak for all of us, and you are one of our champions.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Thanks, man. That's nice, thank you.