

IndyCar Media Conference

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Helio Castroneves

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Helio joins us. I've got a sense there's a little disappointment there. You were poised, seems like you had everything ready to go, just wasn't today.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, no, it was -- I mean, expectation was high for sure, and all of a sudden I got -- I said, you know what, I'm going to take a chance. I have nothing to lose in this situation, just -- it paid off in the past but did not pay off today.

Certainly Shell-Pennzoil did everything they could, the group did everything they could, and when I was kind of following what my teammates were doing, I was like, we've got to take a chance because I knew I was going to be strong, and then when I was sitting in the car and when I saw the 230, I heard the 230 obviously, and I even asked the guys, do we have enough gear to do that, and they said, well, with a little help from the wind, we might.

So that was impressive. So I said, you know what, leave it as it is, we'll take a chance and see what happens. Unfortunately the car started to lose in every corner basically, so I was just literally saving out there.

And this morning it was the same thing or early afternoon. We were just practicing, trying to condition to see -- we were just searching to see how fast we could go.

Q. You must have really entertained that this was going to be your day. I think it would have been a fifth pole. You must have thought, today's the day?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, no, I was excited. The team was excited, not only myself but all three guys, Simon, Will and Josef, and it's a shame that we didn't get it. But good job for Ed. That 230 was absolutely untouchable, and well, now the stress is over, so we can relax and start back to work again on the race car, no question tomorrow. Hopefully the weather holds up and we can continue finishing the last-minute adjustments on the race car, and to Carburetion Day, and now focus on the big one.

Q. Helio, given your status as a part-time driver right now, how much more meaningful is this month for you and your performance so far?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I can't thank enough Team Penske, Roger and Shell-Pennzoil to give me the opportunity to bring me back. Obviously this is a

dream come true that any driver wants to be part of it, especially now that there is bump days. Everybody is really like, I don't care whatever start, I just want to be in the race. Certainly in this position we really wouldn't have a chance to be on the front row in the pole position, and you want to be there.

But yes, today is special when yesterday was so promising, but no, I'm still -- I miss, of course, but I also do have a great program with the Acura folks. They do a phenomenal job. So it's kind of like you balance it out the new toy that you have and the one that you used to play. Like man, can I take both?

Right now it's focus only on this month, and we'll see what happens, and focus later on in Detroit.

Q. With the speed that you had yesterday and the fact that you were going to be the last driver out, when the cars were lining up, you were going to have a really good shot at winning the pole. How big of an emotional letdown did you feel when you just knew you weren't going to be able to get the speed out of it on those early laps?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, no, the first one -- I was expecting the first one to be a big one, and wow, 228 high? I was like, even in practice we did about 229. So maybe it's something that we did, and we were just judging from my teammates and I didn't work it out. Yeah, it was just a shame, unfortunately, to see that dropoff the way it did, about 3 miles an hour. Well, by the last lap I was literally hanging on. My brain was thinking to go flat out, but my feet was kind of going like this, so it was one of those moments that you're like, oh, this is going to be a close one.

Yeah, it was kind of like surprising for sure, but you know, sometimes you've got to understand when you're defeated, and just no worries. The race is not over. It's just the first race, which that's what engineers always said, it's a kind of race, the first one, and we didn't do well, so we're looking toward the big picture.

Q. Just to go back to that, when Ed turned that 230, were you surprised he had that in his car, and did you think maybe you could match him at that point?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I was always thinking I could then. This place is special, and it happens before, a gust of wind helps you all of a sudden go that fast. So I was hoping. When I saw my dash about minus 200, I was like, oh, I need 219; three or four, I'm going to be

able to do it. And when I saw the 228 high, I'm like, ooh, that's not what I was expecting.

be a long time ago. It will change the way you perform here for sure.

It's a special place for sure, and Ed and his team were able to figure it out, especially the last few years. But you know, the big picture, as I said, is the big race, and now we've got to just change the mode and focus on the race.

Q. Helio, how much harder is this hard to hang out on the edge than some of the other IndyCars you've qualified here over the years?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, it seems like everybody is in the same boat, I guess, learning a little bit. You don't want to learn the hardest way, but you've got to believe what your tushy is telling you, and that's exactly what -- it was telling me a lot of things, and that's why I was making sure that I -- you've just got to finish. It's very hard because you try to fix the front of the car because a lot of people have understeer, and then the rear comes around, and then you're trying to fix the rear. Now the front start pushing. It was a fine balance, and a fine balance to get it is very, very hard.

You saw yesterday a lot of guys trying things, laps coming up and down, because people still figuring it out. It's part of the game, and it's going to continue that until the end of the year, that's for sure.

Q. There was a few exceptional boosts coming right in the straight line. Does it have something to do with your performance today?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I don't know. We've got to analyze. I think probably those lifting towards at the end, it contributed to that for sure. But first lap, I was completely flat out, so I didn't have any issues. In fact, I was surprised how stuck the car was. So it changed quite a lot from the first lap to the second and third, and then the last one was just, wow, what happened. So it was a big loss, to be honest.

We've just got to keep going on and focus on the race.

Q. In your current role as an Indy-only driver and a full-time IMSA driver, they announced yesterday that the 2021 there's going to be a 900-horsepower engine going around here. Does that make you want to keep coming back and at least drive that beast again?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Oh, yeah, man, I said it before, I should have stick around. I'm definitely going to stick around. I'm going to be making friends, continue to be with Team Penske hopefully. But no question, it's a great opportunity for -- when you're talking about 900 horsepower, definitely the 230 is going to be probably the mid-field, and you're going to start talking about 234, 235. It's huge. It's great that opportunity. It will definitely change the way of the race because it's not going to be able to be unless they do some changes on the aerodynamics, but you're definitely going to have some lifting like there used to