

IndyCar Media Conference

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Colton Herta George Steinbrenner Mike Harding Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the winning car owners of today's INDYCAR Classic Mike Harding and George Steinbrenner IV. Gentlemen, congratulations. Comments about the first NTT IndyCar Series victory for such a young team.

MIKE HARDING: We didn't expect it. We've been struggling for a while. We put together one heck of a crew and our driver showed it today. It was awesome

GEORGE STEINBRENNER IV: To Mike's point, it's always surreal when you have a dream and you chase it. Never really know what the outcome is going to be truly like when it happens. It was great. I mean, in the sport it takes perfect execution and a little bit of luck. Our crew did everything perfectly to keep us in front of Newgarden all day. Colton the same thing. We caught the little bit of luck on the yellow, then Colton executed from there, and here we are.

THE MODERATOR: George, you have a history with Colton going back to Indy Lights. Does that mean more to you?

GEORGE STEINBRENNER IV: 100 percent. I mean, the whole reason I'm here at such a young age is because Colton and I looked at each other, we said, We have the same dream, why not chase it together. We always would talk about what it would be like to win an Indy car race together. Now that it happened, we're still not really sure what it would be like. I don't think we really processed it yet.

Q. What is the next goal after this now you've won an NTT IndyCar Series race?

GEORGE STEINBRENNER IV: I think there's a pretty big race in May. I think for us, that's the next big goal. That would be it.

MIKE HARDING: The youngest driver to win the Indy 500.

THE MODERATOR: The organization you've put together, from the two of you to Team President Brian Barnhart to Vince Kremer and everybody else. What does it mean to see success so early?

MIKE HARDING: Each one of us has worked our butt off. It's been a hard road with lack of sponsorship. It's awesome. I'm so happy for everyone. Look at the pit stops. Couldn't be more proud.

Q. George your name is iconic. What does it mean to make it a winning name in racing?

GEORGE STEINBRENNER IV: For me, it was always just about -- I grew up with two passions: baseball and racing. I thought my family had one pretty well covered. We'll go and chase another one.

I got to with Colton, now partnering with Mike, putting this crew together, the hard work they put in, starting in the off-season, getting us to testing at COTA. Once we showed we had the pace there, it was all hands on deck, fire underneath all of us. We know we got what it takes, so...

Q. What kind of support does your team get from Andretti Autosport

GEORGE STEINBRENNER IV: I can answer that.

Andretti Technologies is a company that's come onboard to supply support for us on a technical partnership, much like you see elsewhere in the paddock. To have Andretti Technologies onboard, I mean, it speaks volumes to where we're at now and the fact that all three of us are sitting up here, they have a lot to do with that.

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the winner of today's race, Colton Herta, the youngest winner in Indy car history at 18 years 11 months and 25 day. How exciting is it for you to be a winner.

COLTON HERTA: Oh, man, yeah. Just to be up with the names of people that have won, I'm going to live and die an Indy car winner, which is spectacular in itself.

Yeah, it's a great record at a young age. To be standing up here kind of feels surreal.

THE MODERATOR: Did you think you would be able to win?

COLTON HERTA: I didn't think it was going to happen. Seems like Will and Rossi had a bit of a pace advantage on us. I think the max we were going to get was third without a caution. Caution came out. We did think we were third best. On the restart we were quick.

Yeah, we kind of sprinted off. I know we got the quickest lap on that first lap, which was pretty crazy to have the tires up to temp and everything ready for that

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Colton, your dad has been a great support?

COLTON HERTA: I'm sure he was pretty happy about it. I only saw him a split second. Yeah, I'll get to see him in a little bit when I get to go back to the trailer.

Q. George. We know your background, but one of the key figures was (stepdad) Sean (Jones). What influence has he had.

GEORGE STEINBRENNER IV: To elaborate a little more, he's referring to my stepfather, Sean Jones. Been a huge inspiration for me. He's lived a life in motorsports. He's lived a life in business. I have had and still have a lot to learn from him.

He's one of the many mentors that I've been fortunate enough to have in this paddock, sort of teaching me the ins-and-outs, getting me ready to go in INDYCAR. Obviously all of them, Michael Andretti, Bryan Herta, Mike Harding, JF Thormann, Rob Edwards, and Sean of course.

Once I started in Indy Lights, those guys took me under their wing and helped me get to where I am now.

Q. Colton. The track renamed its Twitter account Colton of the Americas. When do you think will set in?

COLTON HERTA: I got no clue. I've been bit by the bug now. One race isn't enough. Going to go for another one at Barber. Just want to get there and drive again.

Yeah, really good job by everybody. The boys did a really good job on the stops the whole day. Yeah, everybody did a good job. Everybody did a good job.

Q. Could you talk about how your ownership in Indy Lights prepared you for being an NTT IndyCar Series owner?

GEORGE STEINBRENNER IV: Honestly I'll start at the beginning of the journey when I interned at Bryan Herta Rallysport for the 2016 season for sort of learning the top to bottom of how a race team operates during the week and during the weekend and everything.

When Colton and I decided that we'd start this crazy journey together in Indy Lights, being able to partner with Andretti Autosport in Indy Lights was huge. They're a buttoned-down organization, do everything right. To be able to learn from the folks there was a huge jump-start, the perfect jump-start I could have hoped for for INDYCAR ownership.

Q. How confident you could hold off Newgarden and Hunter-Reay on the restart knowing they had

more push to pass than you?

COLTON HERTA: Not super confident at all, to be honest. I was kind of looking at it they might get by me. I thought I still to manage podium. The other thing, I've never done a restart from cold tires that were reds. In St Pete, I only made my restarts on blacks.

But, yeah, it kind of felt a little unnatural. The tires came up to temp really quickly. It wasn't really that big of a problem. I got a really big jump out. Newgarden got a little bit of wheelspin. It was off to the races for me.

Yeah, pulled out the gap. Kind of got it to where I wanted and tried to hold it there and save my 'push to pass' in case a caution came out at the end.

Q. Would the plan be to expand to a two-car team later this year?

MIKE HARDING: We're going to stick to a one-car team this year. For next year, maybe a two-car team. We haven't got that far yet. Obviously sponsorship has been hard, but we've got some things happening today.

Q. Maybe Andretti will sponsor you?

MIKE HARDING: None of this would have been possible without Michael Andretti. I'd like to say thank you, Michael and his team. He elevated us to the top real quick and without them we wouldn't be here.

Q. Were you just exhausted after the race. I think you couldn't get the steering wheel off in Victory Lane?

COLTON HERTA: I was a little exhausted. It wasn't terrible. I was actually more worn out after St. Pete. I don't know what happened (with the steering wheel). Yeah, it was tough when we first put on new tires, going through the Esses, especially when the rubber was down on the last set, we put on new reds.

It wasn't super physical because we had long straights and it was pretty cool in temperature, unlike St. Pete where you're constantly fighting the car, 85 with 80 percent humidity, which is really hot.

It was cool to win here, first race at Circuit of the Americas and youngest to win. I think it will be something I'll back to forever.

Q. What have you done differently from your time in Indy Lights in the last four months that have prepared you to win the race today?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I haven't really changed my driving style at all. The Indy Lights car is quite a bit different with the stiffer tires that Cooper has. Their tires are meant to last 45-minute to an hour-long race. We last for 20 to 30 minute (stints). We obviously have softer tires than they do. Produce a lot more grip. It's obviously a bit different driving style.

I don't know. Maybe my driving style suits Indy car

more than it did the Lights car. Yeah, maybe I just woke up one day and hit myself on the head and learned how to drive.

Q. Colton. First race here you come away a winner. Is there anything about this place that suits you?

COLTON HERTA: Pretty sweet. This is a wicked place. I think it kind of helps that it's low grip. I think I thrive a little bit more on low-grip situations. That's kind of what you need to get through the Esses fast. A lot of the guys that were struggling had a lot of understeer in the Esses.

Yeah, you got to be able to kind of drive a loose car. Obviously the grip level of the track didn't change much for some reason. I think the asphalt doesn't take rubber. Kind of just put it down on the track and shuffled it off. The lap times actually didn't really change that much throughout the weekend.

Yeah, I guess being able to drive a loose car is key, being able to hold onto it.

Q. Given your history, how much does it mean to you to win your first race for George?

COLTON HERTA: It's super cool. Obviously I've been friends with George since I was 12 years old. He actually came to Skip Barber race at Lime Rock, that's where we first met. That was my first year racing cars. I went to Europe and came back, and we partnered up with this crazy idea to race Indy cars one day. To have him with me along way is spectacular.

Q. Josef said he got the cider and you got the champagne.

COLTON HERTA: No, I didn't switch. I kept the champagne. I took a swig, I guess it's real. No, it's not. Kind of switched you up.

Q. George, did you ever try to drive a race car?

GEORGE STEINBRENNER IV: No, no, I never really did. I always had a passion for motorsports. Never myself got behind the wheel of a go-kart or anything at a really young age. By the time I started coming around to INDYCAR races all the time, the people I looked up to, coming from the family I do, Michael Andretti, Roger Penske, Chip Ganassi, Bryan Herta. For me, I figured out pretty quickly that if I were ever to get involved in motorsport like I wanted to, I would be in a management or more on the non-driving side of things, yeah.

Q. How much did the 'push to pass' make a difference getting away from Newgarden and Ryan Hunter-Reay?

COLTON HERTA: Not much because I think I had 35 seconds and they had 120 seconds at the end. I don't know how much Ryan had. So, yeah, actually I think it was just down to the car setup was like, what we were able to do on cold tires, kind of push it. I don't think it came down to 'push to pass'.

Yeah, I was kind of confused because Josef only used 26 seconds of push to pass. He said he was waiting for me to burn up tires, but the tires stayed

Q. Colton, it looked like a lot of fun out there. How much fun was it to drive today?

COLTON HERTA: So much fun. Especially fun when you get to drive up front with the leaders. First time I've done it, so it's kind of cool to see the guys I looked up to. I passed Dixon on the first lap. I passed Ryan. I was running down Will Yeah, it was really cool. I hope it was a cool race. I didn't really get to watch it

Q. Today was Art St. Cyr's last race as HPD president. How much does it mean to send him out as a winner with your first win.

GEORGE STEINBRENNER IV: It's really special. We had a tough engine manufacturers decision to make over the off-season. When we were at the end of the line we chose Honda for a couple of different factors.

I had a history with Honda, being involved with Andretti, being involved with Bryan Herta before. I knew some of the folks at the administration over at Honda, HPD. It was sort of a comfort level for me to be able to call Honda home.

To do it in Art's last race, for us to be able to bring him a win, when he and the rest of HPD had so much confidence in us, it was really special.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.