

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Wednesday April 24, 2019

Press Conference

Colton Herta

Harding-Steinbrenner Racing

THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome in Colton Herta, completing his Rookie Orientation Program here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Colton, congratulations on completing all the phases. Take us through that process and ultimately how you worked up through all of those levels to prepare you for practice here in a couple weeks.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's definitely a slow process to get into it at first, get situated. You have a lot of time to do it, 15 laps for pretty much every stage. Plenty of time to get comfortable.

That's what it was about today, getting comfortable with the car and that type of speed and moving forward from there.

THE MODERATOR: What was the first feeling like when you got on track at Indianapolis Motor Speedway in an Indy car?

COLTON HERTA: It was pretty cool. The first few laps was the same speed as an Indy Lights car, so it wasn't too impressive. But once they kind of let me run at 215 plus on the third stage, it was pretty awesome. Definitely a dream of mine for a long time to be able to run an Indy car here. Even though it's just testing, it's still really sentimental.

THE MODERATOR: Each stage has its purpose. Is that hard for you from a patience standpoint as a racecar driver to immediately want to go as fast as can you around this historic track?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, especially because our out-lap was already a 217 going into Turn 3, so we had to slow down quite a bit. Obviously, we were very comfortable right away. The car was super stable, which was the reason I was able to do that time so quickly. Yeah, there's a ton of factors that went into it.

But it is, like you said, very important to start slow and kind of build up to it. Yeah, obviously I haven't gotten anywhere near the speed I've gone today, so it was a big step up.

THE MODERATOR: Following your win at the INDYCAR Classic in Austin, Texas, you and your team owner George (Steinbrenner IV) mentioned, Sure, we



won our first race. When asked what's next, you said, The Indy 500. Does today feel like the start of that journey for you?

COLTON HERTA: For sure. I always wanted to not only compete in the Indy 500, but win. It's such a nostalgic event, it's hard to put into words what it means to me and to a lot of the people that come to the race.

Obviously, a bunch of history involved. If we can put our names into the history of the Indy 500, it would be incredible.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Colton.

Q. You've grown up in a racing family, known race drivers, friends of your dad. You probably don't get wowed very much. When you're sitting next to Fernando Alonso, do you sit there and go, This is pretty cool?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's cool, but I don't see it that way just because I have to beat him. I don't see it that way, no. Maybe if I was at a Grand Prix weekend, maybe a bit more. Not on these weekends, especially because he's kind of coming into my playground now, coming into our playground in America. If I was over in Rockingham, yes, it would be pretty cool, but it's different here.

Q. What did the AFP do to your driving?

COLTON HERTA: The AFP?

Q. The device in front of you.

COLTON HERTA: Is that what it's called? I've been calling it the head protector all the time.

I heard some guys said it diverted the wind differently. Kind of moving around people's heads, so they had to change up the wickers on the helmet. I had a little bit of that problem, so probably change it a little for the next time we come here.

On a sight thing, you could see perfectly fine. Not that big of a deal. Maybe takes a while to adjust. The biggest thing I heard from other guys, coming into the box, it's a little different because you're kind of looking forward instead of looking off to the left like when you're on track. I didn't feel like it was a problem at all.

Q. To get this exercise out of the way, now you can come back in two weeks, go for it, how big a relief is that?

COLTON HERTA: It's nice. Obviously, we're kind of looking at it today, it was raining a lot, we weren't sure if we were going to be able to get it done, which would cut into our practice time once we got into May.

That's what this day was all about, getting the program done, getting comfortable, getting above 215, to complete it, go from there. If we ended the day just finishing it or super quick, it wouldn't matter, we still have the same mindset and focus going into May.

THE MODERATOR: Colton, thank you very much. Congratulations.

COLTON HERTA: Thank you.