

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Tuesday May 14, 2019

**Press Conference**

## Will Power

Team Penske

## Colton Herta

Harding Steinbrenner Racing

## Kyle Kaiser

Juncos Racing

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with today's NTT IndyCar Series press conference. Joined by Kyle Kaiser who completed his refresher test on the first day of Indianapolis 500 practice today. First of all, congratulations on finishing that refresher program. Take us through your day and how the car felt out there today.

KYLE KAISER: Yeah, it went exactly how we hoped it would be for the most part. I mean, we went out, had to do the 210 (phase), the 215 (phase). Obviously initially we had to make sure everything was working properly. We hadn't been out here since last year. Make sure everything feels right, obviously the new tire compounds and everything.

We went through that, we got to try some different aero pieces and wanted to make sure they all read the same, and it went really smoothly. We jammed right through rookie refresher, and I was just overall happy with how the car felt. It felt very similar to last year, and last year we had a lot of pace, so I think it's all feeling really positive going into the rest of the week.

THE MODERATOR: Clearly some news coming out earlier this week that the team and Juncos Racing is actively searching for a new sponsor for your entry. Can you take us through what the past couple of days have been like for you and where you and the team are from a mindset standpoint right now?

KYLE KAISER: Yeah, from my mindset, it doesn't change no matter what's on the car, if there's nothing on the car, if the car is covered in sponsors, which obviously is what we'd love. But for now, I go out there and I drive the car as best I can and put the car at the front every chance we can, and hopefully, if we perform the way we're supposed to perform, then we'll have people coming in to get on the side of the car.

THE MODERATOR: Joined next to our fastest driver of the day, Will Power and the No. 12 Verizon 5G Chevrolet for Team Penske. A great day for you starting off the month of May exactly where you left it



last month, on top. How did the car feel today, and how are you feeling very early on about how this weekend might go for you?

WILL POWER: Yeah, we were -- obviously the speed was a big tow, but definitely a different car with that tire that Firestone brought. We've had to make quite a few adjustments to what we ran last year. I mean, I started with what I raced last year, and it definitely was not in the window. So made a lot of adjustments at the end. Obviously, keep working on that tomorrow and see how we progress.

I would say that we weren't very good in traffic the first day. But by the end, felt way more comfortable.

**Q. Obviously the speed was up a little bit today. Combination of temperature, tires, new aero pieces, new track surface, anything in particular?**

WILL POWER: The speeds -- I think the speeds are -- yeah, maybe a little quicker by yourself. All the big speeds came from big tows. The tire that -- what INDYCAR wanted Firestone to do with the tire is exactly what it has done, which is help that front work off the corner so you can follow closer, and you've just to obviously get your car to work around that.

Yeah, it's kind of hard to judge the true speeds of cars right now by themselves. You don't know what aero configuration people are running, whether they're doing qualifying sims or they're in race trim. We don't know where we stack up, honestly, as far as true speed.

**Q. Can both of you address how you use this week as a split time between preparing for the race but also preparing for the most upcoming challenge, which is qualifying this weekend? Obviously not a lot of practice time following qualifying, and so I'm sure you have to mix that practice method a little bit.**

WILL POWER: Yes. Yeah, you do. You've got to try to use the tires in the right way, too, because obviously when you're doing quality sims you always want to be on a new tire because you want low downforce. But you've also got to try to do some race running starting with new tires so you understand the way the balance truly goes, not with the -- kind of distorts it a little bit with doing a quality sim before you use those tires.

Yeah, that's actually been tough because it used to be -- used to be -- I can't remember how it would play out, but you used to be able to use a lot of new tires for

qualifying, and then you had a lot more practice. It must have been when we were able to run on Sunday.

But yeah. It's a tough balance, honestly, because it's such a difference between the two cars, a race car and a quality car.

KYLE KAISER: Yeah, kind of following up on that, I feel like from our perspective last year we put a lot of focus on qualifying because we had no data to go off of, so we really wanted to make sure we qualified for the race, knowing there'd be bump day. This year we have some data to go off of, and I think we're putting a lot more focus on the race car.

We're going out there really feeling the car behind traffic, and we're finding, kind of similar to what he was saying, they're still understanding the car and we're having to make a lot of changes to get that front grip. But unfortunately we had a little mechanical and just cut our day a little short, but I think we're going in the direction and our car has pretty solid pace to start.

THE MODERATOR: Colton, we were just chatting with Will and Kyle about how they're splitting their team this week between preparing for the race but also keeping in mind that qualifying is coming up this weekend and how you split the time in the limited practice that you have.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think today we were more towards trying to figure out the race car, and that's how I want to kind of go, because if we can -- I think we have a good qualifying car already. We were kind of fast on our own. I was really struggling in traffic, though, and that's when it's going to count, in the race. I think we have a good enough car to make the show and then to compete in the race is another thing.

Just focusing on the race car mostly and getting some qualifying runs in in the morning and then the rest of the morning, all afternoon trying to work on the race car.

**Q. Will, you waited forever to win this race last year and you finally did it. A lot of misery but you finally made it. How tough is it going to be to repeat this year?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, the competition just gets tougher. It's obviously the second year with this car, and the INDYCAR competition -- the team standard has got a lot better. There is no bad teams and no bad drivers. Yep, it will be tough, simply. Like it will be -- first thing is to make the show and qualify, and then focus on what you can do in the race. But I expect it to be probably the most competitive 500 ever when you look at the standard of the teams that are down pit lane right now.

**Q. Have any of you got a read yet on how you think Chevy and Honda are stacking up in comparison to each other?**

COLTON HERTA: No. I think it's still too early to tell for anyone. This first day it doesn't really matter. Everyone is just trying to get sorted in. Even if there is a power difference, you're not going to see it because some guys are going to be going harder than others and just trying to dial in the cars early on to make a still too early to tell maybe. Thursday, Friday when people start settling in and start going for qualifying more, you might see the difference, but I'm not sure yet.

**Q. Same with you guys, then?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, simply because you can't tell what trim anyone is running. You do get the no-tow laps, but is he running minus 4 or minus 2 or zero, what is it. So yeah, I had zero indication or idea of where we stack up.

KYLE KAISER: Yeah, kind of following up on what they said, I think on the first day everybody getting baselines getting a feel for the track and everything, and then Colton said later in the week he'll get a better idea of where people stand.

**Q. Colton, can I also ask you about what happened in your exiting pit lane? It looked fun, but...**

COLTON HERTA: It was not fun. I guess just bit off a little bit more than I could chew. Was just trying to creep up to pit exit and pushed a little too hard and caught me out. Be also did a front wing change which I don't think had anything to do with it, but yeah, just carried a little bit more speed than I had been and spun out.

**Q. Will, TV made a big deal, they said that you and Simon when you went to the top of the speed charts and you guys packed up and called it a day, and they noted that that could be demoralizing to the rest of the field. I'm wondering if that was planned, that you guys were going to make that run --**

WILL POWER: No, it just got sent out and was just trying to catch the train, simply. I wasn't even thinking about speeds or anything. It just happened that I had the perfect gap and closed up and so did he. Yeah, you never -- some people go out -- I know Helio does. If there's prize money on the line, like he'll say trim us out and send us out, new tires, low fuel. We'll say, why, it's race running. Don't worry about it. Do you get prize money today? Come on. It used to be \$10,000 a day. I risked all that for nothing. You can't believe it. Like I was lying I didn't think about -- I was going out there to get that money. I'm going to take my team out for dinner, man. I need some cash.

THE MODERATOR: Our company isn't enough for you, Will?

**Q. I have a question for Will and then for Kyle. Will, it seems like you're starting this part of May very calm, very relaxed. You got the monkey off your back with the Indy 500, but it seems sometimes**

**when a driver goes through a very calm May, just can do everything methodical, that you become very hard to beat, and I see that kind of the way you're starting this month again. Do you think you -- does that help you maybe find a second wind here?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, I think actually winning, it takes a little bit of pressure off, especially when you're a bit later in your career because you realize you don't have that much time to win it. Bit more relaxed, but honestly, when you're getting down to the work of it all, getting the car and all that, you're in your normal zone of trying to get it right and understanding where you need to be good in traffic and fast in qualifying.

Mindset is very similar. You know, and obviously you gain a lot of experience on these superspeedways and understand how you've got to tackle it. It's not something you've got to very much creep up on, because you can get caught out and ruin your whole month pretty quickly. Yeah, you just -- you've got a lot of time, a lot of time to get it right.

**Q. Kyle, I was really shocked to see a note that -- an interview that I think Marshall Pruett did with your team owner, Ricardo, and it seems that you've lost one of your sponsors. I'm wondering if that affects your confidence going forward and if you're running all week or if you're running a limited program. I do know that the broadcast is pointing out how your car is all white and that someone can come in and put their name on the side of your car, so you're getting a lot of coverage that way. But how are you approaching it under those circumstances?**

KYLE KAISER: Yeah, I don't feel like my confidence is contingent on what the car says or what the car looks like. If that was the case, I wouldn't be a very good driver if my driving depended on what color the car was. So I go out there, I do my job, I drive the car as fast as it can go, and I let the business end take care of itself.

Actively we are looking for sponsors to be on the side of the car, because that's what keeps the car going the track, obviously, but, regardless, the cars, if we qualify for the race, we'll be in the race.

**Q. Colton, you seem pretty calm, cool and collected for only being 19 years old and this is pretty high up here in the Indianapolis 500. How are you approaching this, and how much does your dad (Bryan Herta) have to do with that?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, him and Al Jr. have a lot to do with that. Obviously they know a lot about this race. I can pick their brain whenever I want. Yeah, just trying to learn as much as I can. This is very different from anything I've ever done. Obviously I did the Freedom 100, but it's still quite a bit different from that, and yeah, it's been a bit of a struggle, actually, feeling changes in the car for me. Whereas on the road course, I've driven

road courses all my life and it's very easy to depict a change and if it's better or not, but that's kind of something I'm kind of learning on my way going through, and some of these small changes, I don't really feel a difference in them, whereas maybe a veteran might. So just more time in the car will probably be better. I'll be able to feel the changes a bit better and kind of go from there.

**Q. How stressful is it to be with the Steinbrenners considering the empire they have in everything, shipping and baseball and everything?**

COLTON HERTA: It's not stressful for me at all because they don't put any pressure on me to perform. I think they know I can be quick. They have a lot of confidence in me. So with that kind of helps it. But yeah, I know their dynasty is quite big and well known and they've won a lot of stuff, obviously in baseball. So yeah, this is a bit different. In motor racing. But yeah, they don't put any pressure on me, so it's pretty simple for me.