

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

Colton Herta

Speaker1 Title



THE MODERATOR: We welcome to the press conference the driver of Harding Steinbrenner racing, No. 88 Capstone Honda, Colton Herta. You were fastest in the morning session. It was cooler, but I suspect that you must feel like you have a competitive car.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think so. And you know, we had the lap to go P1, but I checked it off on reds. It seems like we were good on race pace in the warmup, in the pit stop practice, and we've been good on blacks and reds, even though we didn't get to really fully show it in that session.

THE MODERATOR: You've obviously had a strong season, but particularly strong on the permanent road courses, of course the win at Circuit of the Americas and the pole at Road America. Do you feel more natural, more comfortable on these circuits as opposed to perhaps the other ones?

COLTON HERTA: I think I'm pretty comfortable on all of them. I don't know what it is. I guess I'm just more -- just better on the permanent road courses for some reason. It matches my driving style a little bit better. But no, it's not more of like a comfort level thing.

THE MODERATOR: The Andretti cars tested here. You were elsewhere testing, I believe, that day. Beneficial to you?

COLTON HERTA: Seems like it because we were able to roll off the truck good, and right away we were fairly quick in the first session. So yeah, obviously whatever they did worked. We were able to come here with a solid car, another track that I had past IndyCar experience on, with this being my first test in IndyCar was here. So yeah.

THE MODERATOR: It strikes me it was a long time ago, probably as it feels to you, when you tested here in Portland. So many things have happened in your career even just over the last calendar year.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, even though it's only a year, it does feel a lot longer than that.

Q. I know you didn't get much time on the red tires. I understand they're the same as what you ran at Mid-Ohio?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah.

Q. Do you think they're going to last very long in the race?

COLTON HERTA: I'm not sure. I think to two-stop, it's 35 laps, so it's quite a while on the tires. I'm not sure if they can last that long. Yeah, I'm also not sure -- I think to do a two-stop is quite a big fuel number, as well, so you're going to have to save quite a bit of fuel. Some guys might do it. I think it's going to be just like Mid-Ohio where it's kind of like on the cusp of being a two-, three-stopper. Both might work. So yeah, should be an interesting race. But for the red tires, it seems like they're very weird this weekend. They're quite similar to the black tires, which we don't usually see. They're usually a little bit faster. I guess we saw it in that session, a lot of guys didn't even go faster when they put reds on. That might be a bit of getting used to the tire and a bit of getting the car used to the tire, but I think they can go a little bit faster, just not what we're used to seeing.

Q. Much of the year y'all have run with the Road to Indy. They run their Cooper tires on the track, the track gets rubbered with their stuff. How has the Firestone reacted with that rubber and has it made the track grippier and more fun?

COLTON HERTA: It doesn't seem to affect our cars and the rubber. I wouldn't say it hurts it, but it also doesn't help it at all. So far what we've seen is like that rubber doesn't really hurt -- rubber like Pirelli completely destroys whatever rubber we put down, and it's not -- the track is terrible when we get back on. But Cooper tire rubber is pretty compatible actually with the Firestone. It's one of the few compounds that's not really a big deal.

Q. Colton, how much do you feel you've grown in the year since coming here last year where you were going for a Lights championship to now almost completing your rookie season, almost a year since your IndyCar debut?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's crazy how far I've come. Really happy with how well we've been able to do this year. We've obviously had good cars a lot of the places that we've gone, and I felt there wasn't really a place where we couldn't have been in the top 5 so far, except maybe one or two places. Obviously a really solid rookie year, and if you would have told me a year ago this is how it would have gone, I wouldn't have believed you, to be honest. I thought the first few rounds were going to be a little rough, and they weren't really.

Q. You mentioned earlier that you weren't pretty happy with the car setup you had in the first practice. Where do you stand after this session?

COLTON HERTA: I think we have a better understanding. After the first practice we -- we were good for the first two runs when we had the new tires on, and then we took those off and we did a bit of a big hit at the car to try and adjust it, and it worked, but it was too big. Yeah, I ended up struggling a lot with understeer in the first practice session, and yeah, obviously still I think a lot of people are kind of scratching their heads at the red tires and how they're not really producing the grip that we're kind of used to. They feel a lot harder to me than what they normally do when you put on new tires. It usually grips up within the first five or six corners and then you can get going and do it on lap one or lap two here. It was a struggle for me to even get it by lap three, and it just felt like the overall complexion of the tire, the stiffness of the sidewall was completely different to even Mid-Ohio. Obviously the tarmac is a little different here, the corners are a little different, the G loads and stuff. There is a little bit of a difference, so we'll have to look at all that stuff tonight and hopefully come back better tomorrow.