

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Saturday August 31, 2019

**Press Conference**

## Colton Herta

Harding Steinbrenner Racing



THE MODERATOR: We welcome to the press conference now two-time NTT P1 award winner Colton Herta. Initial thoughts? A good lap there on the exit?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, that was crazy. Yeah, it was crazy how close the field is here. Always seems to be that way, and yeah, I didn't really expect to have the lap, one lap on used reds, but the grip was kind of in right away, so it was all good.

THE MODERATOR: The separation first to third, .0244 of a second.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I didn't know that. I knew it was close. I knew I was third before I hit the timing line, and yeah, we kind of went with an off-the-wall strategy with the new blacks instead of the used reds, and it ended up being pretty close in the end to what was right and what was wrong.

THE MODERATOR: Would you describe this almost a perfect weekend so far?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think so, so far. I don't want to call it that yet, though.

**Q. You don't want to refer to that, but is it starting to look COTA-esque?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, COTA was weird, though, because I don't think we were as dominant as this weekend. You know, I think we were close to the top, but I don't think I led any -- I led the first practice session at COTA. That's the only practice session I led, and I qualified fourth. You know, I think it's something about these permanent road courses that just kind of gels with my driving style, and yeah, I don't know why, but it's just when I'm at my best.

**Q. The other thing is your poles have come at Road America and now Portland, and those are two pretty stout road courses, so how do you feel just being a kid being able to master --**

COLTON HERTA: Oh, yeah, super excited, super honored. I think happy right now, but I know that the real task kind of starts tomorrow. It's 105 laps, going to be difficult, and we've got the best starting spot and the best view going into Turn 1.

**Q. Colton, you led two of the three practice sessions, only fourth in the other session. Do you**

**feel like pole could have been almost a foregone conclusion given that you led two out of the three practice sessions? Were you expecting it almost?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I knew it was definitely possible. I knew we had a good chance at it, as long as we did what we were supposed to do. And everyone stayed focused and we had a good race car. We didn't make that big of changes from practice 3 to qualifying, and the changes that we did make helped the car. Yeah, it was very strange how the grip level came and went. I think group 1 and group 2 were pretty close on grip level, and then in the second round for some reason I think the grip level went away and everybody kind of went a little slower except for Will. Yeah, so it was a bit of a weird session.

**Q. I was just wondering, even before they came on the radio and told you what your time was, that you were P1, were you like, oh, I nailed that? Were you thinking it was a good lap?**

COLTON HERTA: I thought it was a good lap for my first lap on used reds. I thought the better lap would come on the second lap of used reds. I don't know what everyone did, but that was just my natural feeling. Like I said, I was surprised by the grip, how quick it came in, and you know, it was a good lap for the first lap, and I was surprised by the lap time. Although I didn't understand where I was at the time. I thought I was still quickest going on to the used reds, so I didn't know I got bumped back to third.

Yeah, but obviously they came on the radio and I heard everybody was super loud, so I just thought at that point we had to have had pole. I would have been disappointed if I pulled in and they told me third after hearing everybody cheering.

**Q. Road America was a tough race on tires for you. I remember the strategy was a little off. What can you take from that race to help you in tomorrow's race?**

COLTON HERTA: You know, I think we -- despite us having quite a lot of tire wear in that race, we were still really quick. Obviously we had really good pace on blacks, and I think the used tire pace that we had was pretty stout.

Obviously I think you can take away from abusing the tires. You can calm down a little bit. But I think the tire is so stiff at this track that I don't think it's really going to be as big of a problem as Road America. But I'm not sure, though, because 30- to 35-lap stints, you know,

so it's going to be a long race. Who knows how the tires are going to hold up. We'll just have to wait and see. I think the most I've done on a set it's 15 or 16, so about a half a stint, close to half a stint of a two-stop and a little bit past half a stint of a three-stop.

**Q. How hard is it to overtake on this track?**

COLTON HERTA: It is tough. I think any time you have that many cars on a 57-second lap, the traffic does get tough. Obviously, you know, I tried my best to stay out of the way when I did it, but it's tough to see when you go on the runoff in the chicane, in the festival chicane there, so it's kind of tough to see when you come back on, so you really need help from the radio for that. And with that, the rear wings on these cars are so massive and quite low to the ground that it's hard to see out the back as it is.

I think we were lucky enough to find some clean track. I think it definitely made it easier in qualifying. In practice when you had 23, 24 cars rotating it was very difficult. But yeah, I think when you had that 12 or 13 cars in the group 1, group 2 and Q2, it made it easier.