

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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Press Conference

Felix Rosenqvist

Speaker1 Title

Santino Ferrucci

Speaker2 Title

Colton Herta

Speaker3 Title

THE MODERATOR: I think it's time we brought the driver third in the Rookie of the Year standings, points of frustration for him, but at the end of the day, he holds two incredible records, that is the youngest to ever win a pole position and the youngest to ever win a race in IndyCar Series history. That's pretty special.

Like I said, there's been moments of frustration where there might have been some reliability and things that prevented him from having better results, but it's definitely been a season to remember, the man who pilots the No. 88 Honda for Harding Steinbrenner Racing, would you please welcome Colton Herta.

Next up, on two different occasions he led the Rookie of the Year standings, won Rookie of the Year at the Indianapolis 500 in a fine performance. When we get a chance to ask him up here, he's going to say he's sick of finishing fourth, three times this year, pretty stout. Only at the last race he lost a marker and an honor he'd had for quite some time, completing more laps than anybody else in the field. He got let down in Portland by that. It's been a memorable season for the driver for Dale Coyne Racing, Santino Ferrucci.

Were you the one who got spoken to by Jay?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: After Toronto?

THE MODERATOR: I'm kidding with you.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I wasn't in trouble by Jay. It was a heads up. For whatever reason I was the poster boy for social media for IndyCar to show excitement.

THE MODERATOR: The leader of the Rookie of the Year standings right now, he too has had a memorable year. We know we're going to see him back next year. Narrowly missed his first career victory in IndyCar by just that much over his teammate Scott Dixon at Mid-Ohio, showed speed straight away on the streets of St. Petersburg with a good qualifying and good race, he's had his fair share of ups and downs as well, that is the driver of the No. 10 NTT Data Honda for Chip Ganassi



Racing, Felix Rosenqvist.

Has been quite the season, hasn't it?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Wow, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: What do you think of IndyCar now you're almost through your first season?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I love it. The racing is fantastic. I think that's the main thing. That's the thing that attracted me to go here in the first place, just fighting side-by-side, wheel-to-wheel every weekend. That's something every driver loves. I spent a good couple of years in my career just trying to qualify in the front, kind of driving on a train, trying to finish first.

IndyCar, there's so much more to it. You have to be good at strategy, you have to be real aggressive with other drivers. Yeah, it's just so much more demanding as a driver. That's what a driver wants, to be challenged. That's definitely worked.

THE MODERATOR: Everything more than you expected, fair to say?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Definitely needed to have this year to get into it. I think that goes for all of us. Coming back in next year will feel a lot easier, that's for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Santino, how would you sum up your first season?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: It's been exciting, to say the least. One of the reasons you got into racing as a kid was to have fun and go fast. Racing with these guys, I've never had so much fun in my life. Traveling back home stateside, it's been a blast. Been over in Europe the last few years, Felix's home territory. It's been interesting. Being back home has been a lot of fun.

I wasn't a fan of the ovals coming into the year. Unfortunately now I've really grown to like them. I kind of wish there were a couple more on the calendar. But, no, it's been a sweet year, that's for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Been a pretty sweet year for you, too, Colton. Think about the way the year started. You got a Rolex wristwatch on your wrist in January from the Rolex 24, then you go on to win at Circuit of the Americas. Your reflections? Is it all about that win or more than that?

COLTON HERTA: No, I think you want a really strong rookie campaign. The wins were great, but I think really focusing on the stuff that I've lacked this year is more important to kind of carry forward into a sophomore season.

I think the biggest thing that I struggled with that you could see on the broadcast is the tire deg. Focusing on that, this is going to be a good track to focus on that because I think the tire deg is going to be awful. Yeah, I think the tire deg is going to be the biggest thing. It's going to play a huge role.

So, yeah, I think I got something to work on for this weekend. I think everyone is going to struggle with it.

THE MODERATOR: You're back home here in California, get to race in your home state twice. What does that mean?

COLTON HERTA: It's awesome. Obviously it's nice because you spend week in and week out flying to the East Coast and back, coming home for Monday and Tuesday, then flying back Wednesday. It's nice to have a four-hour drive. If anybody is from California, I'm from Santa Clarita, just north of Los Angeles. I got my first cart win here actually against Santino. He was second, close. Close second (smiling).

We had a lot of good battles that year actually.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: My gosh.

COLTON HERTA: 2012?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: 2013, dude. We got introduced to each other through Skip Barber. My introduction to Colton was the gearbox blew in reverse, started to leak oil. Unfortunately when that happens the car right behind you doesn't stop quite as quick.

COLTON HERTA: I didn't stop at all.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I think he did about six barrel rolls almost into the fence coming through into 16 in St. Petersburg. Anyone knows where 16 is, there's a lot of open space. But I remember driving the broken car to get out to see if he was okay. I was just blown away by that.

COLTON HERTA: Anyway, I don't remember your question, but I hope I answered it.

THE MODERATOR: You did well.

Santino, you often hear about athletes, doesn't matter what area of sport, there's a moment where they feel they belong or it feels natural to be there. Do you feel at home in IndyCar now?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, for sure. Coming every weekend, being with the team, which has become part of my family, to show up and drive these racecars, it's been so much fun.

One of the other things you're really looking forward to as a young driver is moving forward, going into something like the new car. I've always been a fan of horsepower and speed. Anyone that knows me knows I have a few stories with going fast.

But, no, I feel at home with the series, with everybody here. Especially with the drivers. It's kind of nice to just be able to go out with them after the race, hang out, have a good time. It's not something that you're not commonly adjusted to or have been at least in the past. It's been a lot of fun.

THE MODERATOR: I'll tell you something about Sweden, about your homeland. I just learned this tonight. With the IndyCar app, outside of the U.S., the country where the app is most downloaded is Sweden.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Sweden (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: That sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: It's impressive.

SANTINO FERRUCCI: It was the live stream.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: I think you have to thank Marcus a lot for that as well. He's the famous boy in Sweden because he's been in F1.

All our attention in Sweden has kind of moved towards IndyCar after Marcus stopped F1 and I went to IndyCar, him at the same time. It's good to hear. Really warms my heart to hear how the Swedish fans are growing, growing, they're so involved.

In the beginning, no one understood anything about IndyCar. Everyone thought there's too much safety car, blah, blah, blah. Now everyone just loves it. It takes time. As much as it takes time for us to learn how to drive here, it also takes time for the fans. It's been good to see that they are into it now, acclimatized.

THE MODERATOR: There's about a 50-point spread between the three of you for Rookie of the Year honors. How important is that for you? Are you still waiting for that first race win? How important is it for you if you left this weekend as Rookie of the Year? Famous IndyCar drivers have won that title.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah, you can only win it once. I'm definitely already old being a rookie. I think this has to be the time to win it.

I think in the beginning of the year, I probably had

unrealistic expectations. As you said, St. Petersburg, I started off too well, leading a lot of that race, then finishing fourth was amazing. Then you kind of want to win immediately, which didn't happen for a long time.

I mean, I would say middle of the season, like Indy, Detroit was really tough, kind of had a mental rollercoaster there. That's when you had to stop focusing on the championship, and the rookie championship became more the one to fight for, unfortunately.

But it's still fun. We have Santino, Colton, Marcus, Patricio, it's been amazing to fight against these younger than me guys.

THE MODERATOR: I like that 'younger than me'.

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Marcus is older.

THE MODERATOR: You're still young.

Santino, did winning Rookie of the Year at the 500 change things for you, give you more of a boost?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: Yeah, that's such an honor to win as well. It's like one of those things, winning it over one race is very different than winning it over a championship.

With the 500, as everyone knows, it's a really long one. You need to have everything go right, you need to have a good car, need to be lucky. We had one of those days to where nothing ever really went wrong. We raced really well.

To win that was an honor, unbelievable. It's one of those things to where that made Indy really feel like a home for me.

If you're to win the second one, obviously this weekend I have some really stiff competition, he might disappear after tonight, but it would be incredible to sweep that. But it's going to be a long weekend ahead. Both these guys are really quick and competitive.

THE MODERATOR: Let's not forget double points. Colton, anything can happen. Do you still hold hope that you could take the Rookie of the Year title?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah. I think as we've seen, we've all had good weekends, but we've had equally terrible weekends. I hate to say it, but I'm wishing for terrible weekends for these guys, then I just need to win the race. Easy as that, right?

No, but honestly, it's been a true honor racing with these guys. I think a lot of us will be in the series for a long time. I'm glad to be part of a rookie class that has been profiled as one of the higher ones that have come through IndyCar.

THE MODERATOR: For so long you were Bryan Herta's son, now Bryan Herta is Colton Herta's dad.

COLTON HERTA: Maybe not this weekend (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: What has it been like? Has your relationship changed as a result of this year? How much time do you get one-on-one with dad?

COLTON HERTA: I still live at home, yeah. So I get a lot of time with my family. Too much time. I'm enjoying these race weekends. It's almost time off.

No, it's awesome. Obviously you do get profiled as Bryan Herta's son, but it's better to have it this way than any other way. He taught me so much through my career. He's the whole reason I got into this sport. If he wasn't into it, I don't know if I would have the drive and passion for it, if I wasn't around it at such a young age. Very grateful.

THE MODERATOR: First time you came here to Laguna Seca, do you remember how old you were?

COLTON HERTA: He probably ran here in 2001, so I was probably one year old at the time.

THE MODERATOR: That beats Alexander. I think Alexander was three when he came here.

Similar question to what I asked Jay Frye: When you leave here, leave California, head home to Connecticut, how will you view 2019?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I mean, you look at it as you take it as it was. It was a phenomenal rookie year. You're going to go into your sophomore year looking to do better, fix all of the mistakes you had, to excel.

For me, 2019 is over on Monday morning, hopefully with a trophy and some really great partying, we move into 2020 the day after. I'm trying to work on making it even better, to fight for the big, beautiful championship trophy. We go from there.

THE MODERATOR: Are you a better driver now, do you think, because of being in IndyCar?

SANTINO FERRUCCI: I like to think yes. I think IndyCar has taught me a lot about myself. Starting with even coming into the sport last year, in Detroit, Portland and Sonoma, it helped so much to start this year off throughout the winter, to kind of give me a little bit of a heads up of what I was expecting out of the car, how I needed to train myself, what I needed to focus on already. It was a nice jump-start to the year.

I like to think now I'm much smarter, the way I do things, much more efficient as well.

THE MODERATOR: Felix, you have had the opportunity to be in a pretty unique environment. I saw that because when we are allowed into the hauler, get to hang out with guys, I see you in there with Scott Dixon, five-time champion, I see you in there with Dario Franchitti, four-time champion, you're mixing with some pretty amazing talent there who happen to think that you're pretty amazing as well. Tell the folks what that has been like just hanging with those guys, going over hard race data or hanging with them. Has that helped you grow as an athlete and driver?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Definitely. I think actually the good thing with being around Dario and Scott has been that it's like being around your own friends from back home. They are not acting like superstars. You realize that they are superstars when you leave the truck, there's like 300 people waiting to get an autograph and I can just sneak out the back.

THE MODERATOR: That will change (laughter).

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Dario is leading the way for Scott. He's leading the way for me among all the fans. But, no, Dario is super nice people. I think that's how you work together in the best way, what is easy, comfortable. There's nothing serious. Just good times.

THE MODERATOR: You guys have a few laughs, don't you?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: Yeah a good couple of laughs. Especially in Iowa leading up to the race, that was a good one.

THE MODERATOR: Have you ever had a team boss like Chip Ganassi?

FELIX ROSENQVIST: No (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Great getting some insight for the weekend. Lovely to spend some time with these guys. Guys, thank you very much.