

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Thursday September 19, 2019

**Press Conference**

## Will Power

Team Penske

## Colton Herta

Harding Steinbrenner Racing



THE MODERATOR: What did you learn today?

WILL POWER: Quite a bit actually. We made a lot of changes. Definitely got into a pretty good window I'd say of the just need to work a little bit on the racecar. On the long runs, we weren't quite good enough.

Yeah, just down to fine adjustments now, trying to understand the tire when they come on and such. Yeah, happy with the productivity today.

THE MODERATOR: I suspect you very much would like to end the season having won three of the last four races. Be a great springboard for 2020.

WILL POWER: Absolutely. That would definitely help. In Josef's case, it makes it harder for the other guys to get him. Yeah, we'll see where we qualify, where the teammates are. Obviously the main thing for this weekend is for the team to win the championship.

If we qualify on pole, that makes it an easy job for me. That's definitely the aim.

THE MODERATOR: A loaded question, but do you have a preference in teammates?

WILL POWER: I do not. I do not. I never play those games. Definitely not favoring anyone in the championship. They're both there. They both deserve it, including Rossi. I know how hard it is to get to that point. You got to give the guys that have made it and have a chance a lot of respect, honestly. You can't be playing any games out there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Graham Rahal said earlier the track is very slippery. How are the conditions at the end of the day?**

WILL POWER: Actually, I tell you, the track was a lot better than when I tested here last. I was pleasantly surprised. It's quite fun out there. Tires degrade, the cars slide around. I think that's good, definitely in the drivers' hands.

**Q. We saw you caused a red flag at the end. Where**

**did you go off?**

WILL POWER: It was in turn six. I was on a really good lap. Had a car in front of me, a Carpenter car. Second time today. I don't know what guy it was. What can you do? It's a short track.

**Q. You did a really long run just before that. Seemed like 30 laps. How much did the tires go off?**

WILL POWER: Yeah, they definitely went off for us, over a second, yeah.

**Q. What will Roger expect from the three of you on Sunday? How does he want you to race?**

**Protective of each other or just your own race?**

WILL POWER: It's going to be different for Simon and Josef. I'm not in the game. Simply for me it's whatever those guys need. If I'm ahead, on pole, then it's take points away. Win the race and make it much harder for someone else to win the championship.

See how it plays out in qualifying. I understand my position. Those guys would do it for me if the positions were reversed, yeah.

**Q. Last night at the media function, Josef was talking about how driving for Team Penske sort of is viewed by some fans like the Death Star because you guys win too much. A faction of fans that love to hate you, some love you, but some think, Why do they win so much? Do you feel that way? Was there an adjustment at all when you went there?**

WILL POWER: I haven't even ever thought of that. Yeah, I guess if I was looking from the outside, Screw those guys, man. Too big of a budget. Get them out of here (laughter).

No, I honestly have not felt that. You know what, you know when you are truthful in the media, you get called out on Twitter. People hate the truth these days. They hate the truth. You know if you said something right when everyone is MF'ing you on bloody Twitter. You got to be truthful.

**Q. Is the corkscrew a Will Power type of a racetrack? Seems like that is something you would really enjoy.**

WILL POWER: Yeah, I mean, corner you got to work out. They all are around this joint. They're all different, very different.

Yes, quite a technical track. Definitely I was going to

say ballsy, but bravery track. That's why this bloke is up here, look at him, he's fast in the fast corners. That's where his time is. He's definitely brave.

I got to get back to my inner 19-year-old, just don't care. You would think I was a 19-year-old out there throwing it off all the time, though. He's keeping it on the track, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: We'll allow Will to be a 19-year-old. Thank you, Will.

We welcome Colton Herta. I don't know what six hours of testing means relative to the rest of the weekend, but you're off to a good start.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think it means a lot obviously. We're all trying to go for qualifying spec, really see what the cars can do when we have the new tires and go into race running when we have the old tires.

It's really useful. It's really useful when you have everybody here, as well, to see where you rank out. It's obviously a good step in the right direction when you can start P1 going into a race weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Will revealed you were fastest in the fast corners. Which one in particular do you like?

COLTON HERTA: I like the corkscrew. It's a good balance, especially in this car. The suspension's quite nice, so you can hit the curbs on the inside. You can kind of see what you can get away with without bottoming too much, where you put the car and can't put the car.

It's really technical. I don't know, I enjoy that. I enjoy turn six, as well. Fast little left, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Does this track have some of the same feel that you felt at COTA and at Road America where you've done very well?**

COLTON HERTA: No, it's really different. Tire wear is quite high so you kind of have two, three laps on the blacks. I imagine it's going to be one, maybe two on the reds.

No, I just think the track surface is quite abrasive. It's something about these northern California tracks. This and Sonoma just tear up the rubber. It makes it definitely challenging. It's going to be tough on Sunday when you have to do 23 laps straight on a set of tires.

I don't even know what you need for a two-stop, but it's going to be a lot more than that.

**Q. You seem to be fast...**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I don't know. I've had a good

two weekends. Obviously the permanent road courses haven't really been a struggle for us this year. It's been more on the street courses and short ovals where we've lacked a little bit of pace.

No, I think it's nice to kind of get back on the permanent road courses. I guess that's where I feel most at home.

**Q. Is it a bit of a bummer being this much quicker than all your teammates this early in the weekend, kind of seeing your data?**

COLTON HERTA: From that perspective, it's a bummer they get to go quicker. It would be nice if today was qualifying.

No, I don't mind it. I think even though it seems like I have quite a big gap, there's still improvement from our side. That's kind of what a test day is. Some people try different things. Doesn't work for some people. Others, you know, try stuff and it works.

We were on the good side of things. We had a test plan that just turned out to work well and set up the car nicely. Now we can kind of refine the car a little bit, find those little 10ths or two throughout the session.

**Q. With just one more race left, what is the mindset right now as far as Rookie of the Year or you're in the mindset of trying to win?**

COLTON HERTA: The mindset has to be to win because that's all you can do to win rookie, score more points than anyone else. Especially with it being double points, I think it kind of helps me a lot. I'm something like 43 points, 44 points back on Felix. If I win, he has to be sixth or seventh. That's kind of what I have to do.

Not really focused on the rookie championship as much as winning the race and hoping the rookie championship will come with it.

**Q. Last night we talked and you said you needed to find something on your tire wear late in the run. Did you?**

COLTON HERTA: I did. I did do better. I did a few long runs. I also took tires up to kind of four runs where I think most people were doing two to three runs. I took every set to four runs.

Yeah, had a lot of time with messed-up tires and get a feeling of the car, what I could do with the car to not only go fast but keep the tires under me for 23 laps to 30 laps.

I think I found some good stuff not only in the setup but mostly working on my driving from that aspect.

**Q. You may not win the rookie title, yet you're going to come away as the rookie that everybody talked about. How good does that make you feel? Even the races you fell out of, you were up front**

**when it happened.**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think it's important we had the pace in a rookie campaign, although you want great results. You can always refine things throughout your career.

Yeah, it's hard to make a slow driver fast, but it's easier to make a faster driver slow down. I think that's kind of what we're working with, refining the pace in the race to kind of make it for, whatever, 90 laps to 300 laps.

**Q. You mentioned the corkscrew. Many years ago your father had this legendary duel with Alex Zanardi. Did you watch something how to behave in the corkscrew?**

COLTON HERTA: No. Actually I think the coolest thing was able to be teammates with Zanardi this year at the Daytona 24 Hours. It was interesting because I watched the race with him. I actually watched the pass with him. He knew today if it happened, there probably would be a penalty. I don't know, it was amazing.

Like I say, big balls for that pass. Obviously if someone's behind me, I'll have to defend better than my dad did.

**Q. Has your father talked about the pass?**

COLTON HERTA: Oh, yes, he has. Yeah, we talk about it sometimes. He's in the same boat. He thought it should have been a penalty. I think it should have been a penalty. He doesn't dwell on it being a great pass. It was a cool pass.

Obviously nowadays with the track extension penalties, there no longer being grass and gravel, more runoff now, the penalties are more severe, people pay attention more to running off the road and gaining an advantage. I don't know, not my place to say anything.

I thought it was a cool pass, but...

**Q. Watching you guys go through there, some guys would get on the green part, miss it. When you're in the seat, about to go over the edge of it, how much do you see what's below and how much is trying to aim for where you think the track is?**

COLTON HERTA: It's all aim. When you turn in, you can't see anything. You can't even see the tires against the wall on the other end of it. You're kind of blind. It dips down and then picks up real quick, then the drops back down into the corkscrew.

What I do is there's a little tree, if you point directly at it, it's pretty much maybe a third of the car over the rumble strips going down the right. You can kind of base yourself off of that. Depending on what ride height you're using, you can steer a little bit more to the right of the tree or left of the tree.

**Q. You realize you're gauging off a tree?**

COLTON HERTA: You can see it clearly (laughter).

**Q. Because it's been 15 years since anybody has raced here in this series, do you kind of think that helps your situation because the veterans don't have any experience?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think there's only a handful of guys - Dixon, Hunter-Reay, Kanaan - that have actually been able to race here in IndyCar. It does help. It's kind of like COTA, it levels the playing field out. We all kind of start from zero.

Even the guys that have raced here before, the track has changed so much. It's been repaved, the curbs have changed, the profiling has changed. It's like a brand-new track for them. Obviously the cars are a lot different.

It does help a lot. Everybody kind of starts from ground zero, kind of works from there. It kind of helps a lot for setup, as well. Everybody starts at an even place. Nobody knows what to expect.

THE MODERATOR: All clear. Thank you.