

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Sunday September 22, 2019

**Press Conference**

## Colton Herta

Harding Steinbrenner Racing



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by Firestone Grand Prix of Monterey race winner, Colton Herta. Congratulations. Good genes, as you said yesterday.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah. Yeah. Mixed with a lot of other things. But yeah, great car. A car that you could manage the tires pretty easily with, so that seemed to be really important.

And yeah, it was a tough race. It was either getting hounded by Dixon or Pagenaud or Power the whole time, so they definitely didn't make it easy on me. But yeah, happy to kind of put together what we had in Portland and learn from our mistakes of the tire wear issues and go forward with it.

**Q. The one thing I was most intrigued by is how well you would learn from what happened in Portland and you led 83 of 90 laps. You obviously had things under control and a big improvement.**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah. And you know, I'd never really felt too threatened until the end when Power was on me, and I thought I had it under control for, I guess, 80 percent of the race, 85 percent of the race.

But yeah, it seemed like our tire wear was a lot better than a lot of people's. I would say for sure Dixon and Pagenaud, definitely not Power. He seemed to have a little bit of an edge. But that last two or three laps I would gap by like a second a lap and have a nice margin coming into the pits if anything were to go wrong or if I had a slow out-lap or in-lap.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously you had a lot of help this year in the Andretti program, but the Harding Steinbrenner Racing team as it stands at the moment goes out as a race winner. You had fabulous pit stops and good strategy. Talk about that as a collection of people.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it was a perfect race. Whenever you win an IndyCar race, it has to be a perfect race. You can't really make mistakes and get away with it, just because there's always two or three other guys on that day that can win. For sure there was a few guys that could win today, and we just outdid them. We had the pace on them, and we were definitely the best today, so we definitely deserved to win.

**Q. You may not have gotten the Rookie of the Year title, but you were certainly the rookie of the year. To have two victories and three poles, you're not even 20 yet. How do you look back at all of that?**

COLTON HERTA: You know, I think just look forward into next year. Obviously I'm really proud of what I did this year and what the team has been able to do and given me the car to do. But yeah, you kind of have to take it in the off-season. I like to take a month off and not really do much and then kind of look into focal points of what I lacked, and for sure I'd say going into the off-season it was going to be mostly about tire wear and maintaining the tires. I think I did that very well today, and most of the time I was doing it better than the other guys. I think now I can kind of focus on other things.

**Q. I wanted to ask, you know when you were coming out of the -- or when someone else is coming out of the pits like Power and you can see around the corner of your eye, I assume, as you're sort of going around the Andretti hairpin, do you know exactly where he needs to be relative to you that he won't be able to just come out and just chop you up?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, kind of. You can definitely tell when you're accelerating because you view the corner off quite a lot, so you probably have two, two and a half seconds of acceleration where if you were to make contact, it would happen, so it's enough time to react.

But yeah, you can kind of gauge -- obviously it's a lot tighter for him, so you can carry a lot more speed around the Andretti hairpin than the warmup lane. But I think, yeah, you have about a second, second and a half to gauge it and lift off.

But also the guy coming out can see in the mirror pretty well, and I really wouldn't expect that from Power or Dixon or Pagenaud to just kind of come across and hit you off track. But yeah, definitely got to be conscious of it.

**Q. Simon Pagenaud urged the officials not to do anything to the track, not repave it or anything. What did you think of the track today and how the track prepared for this race?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it definitely makes -- this is normally a place that you can't pass, normally a track that makes it very difficult to do overtakes, and I think the tire wear helps that because you have some guys that drop off drastically compared to others. I don't

know how many passes there were, but yeah, I think it's important -- it's definitely a different skill set. IndyCar, we go to all these different street circuits, permanent road courses and ovals, and they're all different in their own ways, and I think this place is unique because of the tarmac and how abrasive it is.

Yeah, I mean, I think if they did repave it, it would make the racing probably worse. But I'm not sure. I'm not sure what I would prefer. Obviously qualifying, you definitely want the track to be repaved and be going a lot faster. If they repaved it, we'd definitely break the track record. But I don't know if that's the best thing. It's definitely challenging right now how it is.

THE MODERATOR: In a minute we'll have Honda representatives up here, and they won a championship today. Your thoughts on everything Honda provided for you and the team?

COLTON HERTA: Oh, it's awesome to work with Honda and HPD. I grew up in Santa Clarita. I still live there. That's where HP is based. So it's four minutes away from my house. And actually worked with a lot of the guys growing up in go-karting. And yeah, I work out with a lot of the guys, too. I mountain bike with a lot of the guys from HPD.

Definitely feel at home there, and obviously my dad was with Honda for most of his career, and yeah, I get to know a lot of the guys, and they're just doing a tremendous job, obviously, and I was happy to kind of be part of two of their wins this year.

THE MODERATOR: What's on the to-do list? A lot of mountain biking this off-season? What else is on the to-do list?

COLTON HERTA: I think just finally do nothing. I've got Petit coming up with Bobby Rahal in his BMW, and then after that it'll just be about testing the IndyCars. Obviously getting used to the new car, obviously going to be in a different team next year working with a lot more of the guys at Andretti than just Harding Steinbrenner.

I think the off-season might actually be quite nice. I'd like to go to the F1 race just to go check it out if I have time, which I'm sure I will because I've got nothing going on.

THE MODERATOR: What about the band? Does the band have a lot of gigs?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, actually we have a West Coast tour the end of November. We play Phoenix, San Diego, Los Angeles, Fresno, Sacramento and San Francisco. That's like the 22nd to the 27th of November.