

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Press Conference

Colton Herta

Andretti Harding Steinbrenner Autosport

Rinus VeeKay

Ed Carpenter Racing

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody, to today's pre-event REV Group Grand Prix video conference. We're joined by two drivers who will compete this weekend in the REV Group Grand Prix doubleheader. We are joined by Rinus VeeKay of Ed Carpenter Racing, and Colton Herta of Andretti Harding Steinbrenner Autosport.

Rinus, fifth place, your first top five in the NTT INDYCAR Series. Talk about your performance at Indy, the momentum heading into the REV Group Grand Prix at Road America.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I just feel very happy to finally have my first top five in INDYCAR. It was a tough start in Texas. I worked hard in the past month to make sure that I would be prepared as best as possible for Indy. That, yeah, worked. Indy was a nice weekend. Everything was according to plan.

Yeah, I was very happy with that. Have to thank the team for that. Yeah, it was just a great weekend. Make me smile when I think about it. I think we can go into the REV Group Grand Prix with the same mentality, hopefully go for more top fives or even a podium.

THE MODERATOR: Colton, you're sitting fourth in the points standings right now. Kind of the best guy in the standings who isn't on Team Penske or Scott Dixon. Seventh and fourth to start the season. Are you pleased with the results or do you think going into a track like Road America where you sat on pole is a place where you can grab the first win of the season?

COLTON HERTA: I'm happy with how the year has gone so far. We've been consistent. We've shown speed everywhere we've gone. Happy to get back to Road America. I'm happy it's a doubleheader. Felt like we were very fast there last year. Like you said, I sat on pole for the first time.

Yeah, I think we do have a chance to win. Obviously it's going to be a little bit different, a lot hotter than last year. Obviously with the weight of the windscreen and the more drag that it produces, it's going to be a little bit different setup probably. But I don't think it will be too different from last year. I'm excited to get back



there.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. We're going to do something different this week: have fans. First race with spectators there. How cool is that going to be for both of you?

COLTON HERTA: I think it's going to be very interesting. I am excited for it. It's obviously weird going to the track and getting ready for the race and getting into the car without that energy. It's still going to be a little bit different because fans aren't going to be around the paddock, they're not going to be really able to see us up close. It's still going to be a little bit different.

Obviously we'll get that feeling back when we're on track. Yeah, I'm excited for it.

RINUS VEEKAY: I'm excited also. To finally have fans, especially at Road America, it really makes the race weekend. Normally when you drive through there, you can smell the barbecues. It would be less fun if we had no fans there. Of course, it's different still. At least there's people that will be able to see us drive in real life.

I'm happy with that and I think the fans will be happy with it, too.

Q. Marcus Ericsson called it earlier today, a doubleheader-doubleheader the next two weekends. A short oval at Iowa, that's tough. How do you look at the demands of having four races over a seven-day period at two different tracks?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's going to be really tough. Luckily I don't think Road America is that physical. With the windscreen and stuff, it doesn't even matter about that any more. It just matters how hot it gets in there.

I don't think they shortened the race actually. It's going to be two full-distance races at Road America. Obviously 50 laps less at Iowa, which will help.

Yeah, man, it's going to be physical. Excited for the qualifying format at Iowa, see how that plays out because it's going to be interesting. Yeah, it's going to be cool.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, it's going to be tough having back-to-back doubleheaders. Of course, it's going to be really hot like Colton said. I experienced in Indy that it

was one of the toughest conditions I've ever driven in, being in the car with it being so hot.

I think it will be important to recover well between races. It will be, yeah, tough. In Road America, you got a lot of rest on the straightaways. That's a plus. In Iowa, you're just working the whole time.

I'm curious to see how it works. I'm planning to finish in Iowa. Let's see how elbow feels in the full race. I'm excited, yeah, I feel happy to have four races in two weeks.

Q. We've already talked a lot about the heat. The turnaround on this one is especially tough. Could you have raced again 16 hours after you finished at Indy? Is that going to be really hard to think about attacking another 55 laps that soon after Saturday?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, no, I think it's going to be very tough. Even just to recover for the next week going to Iowa, it's going to be tough. We have practice, qualifying and a full race all in one day. That's tough on its own. Then you do that twice. It's going to be a tough one.

Luckily Road America is probably one of the least physical places we go to just because you have the long straights to rest. Yeah, as long as it's not too hot. Forecast looks like it's dying down a little bit. Looks like it's going to be in the 80s, a beautiful weekend. Yeah, should be interesting.

But it's definitely going to be very tough. It's going to be interesting to see how everybody shapes up with all of it, if performances drop because guys aren't fit enough.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I think it will be tough recovering from a full day of practice, qualifying and race. I think it will be interesting to see, too, with only having one practice, then having qualifying, then a full race where you can learn and set up a car, then having another qualifying which will be I think a lot different. Yeah, it will be exciting for me to see.

Yeah, Road America is my favorite track. I cannot wait to go there and drive one of the quickest cars in the world on that track.

Q. Are you getting any indication that anything can be done to get you a little more air to try to make improvement on your ability to keep cool?

COLTON HERTA: I think the teams are kind of constantly working on it. I would say nothing major has happened in the last week. They obviously know what the problem is now. They're looking for solutions to fix it. I don't think it's something that you're going to fix in a week. We'll see. Hopefully throughout the season we can find some stuff to make it better.

RINUS VEEKAY: I think it will be a little bit better with the longer straights this weekend. But also an issue

last weekend was the water bottle being extremely hot. We have been able to give the water bottle a different location so it gets a little bit more airflow and stays colder. I think that will help, yeah, just cool water to cool us down. We'll see how that goes.

Q. Rinus, you mentioned the tough start at Texas. After the race Ed Carpenter said they still loved you but wished you would have taken his advice on going high. Can you explain what those discussions were like? How difficult was it for you to come back losing two cars in the opener?

RINUS VEEKAY: It was definitely tough. It was, like, the biggest setback I've had in my career. But, yeah, it's like being young: you do something wrong and your parents, they make sure you don't do it ever again.

Yeah, we had a month to work on it, make sure my preparation was as good as it could get. Of course, before Texas I've had the most trouble getting into the country. That wasn't ideal. I think that kind of affected my focus throughout the weekend.

Then in Indy, I just spent the whole month looking at onboard data, everything I could. Yeah, I was so prepared that I stepped into the car and it felt like I had already done a few days of driving.

Q. Did you have any moments at Indy where you approached it differently based on what you had done at Texas? Is it hard to strike the balance of being conservative and being fast enough to show your speed?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, so in the first practice we could do quite a few laps. I just started off with braking points that were safe for me, that I didn't lock tires and destroy my tires for the rest of practice. I started easy, moments where I thought, If I go further, it will snap or I will lose the car. I just built it up very slowly.

At the end of the weekend, I got a top five in my second INDYCAR race. Very happy with it.

Q. Colton, you mentioned Iowa, qualifying there. Can you talk about what you anticipate it being? Obviously it's going to be interesting. Is it something you've looked at a team already? What are your trepidations, what you anticipate being the key problems there?

COLTON HERTA: I think you qualify as you normally would. It's just interesting because I think some teams you've seen in the past have really quick second laps, and their first lap isn't quite up to speed. It's going to punish them for the race.

I've never, like, seen a qualifying format like that, with the first lap setting the first day's race and the second lap setting the second day's race. It's going to be very interesting. Do I think it will affect the result? No. I think passing is so plentiful there, it won't even matter.

It's just interesting for me to see how that works out.

Q. What is the biggest priority with the cockpit situation? Is it getting the water in the right place, getting cool? Would you like to see an extra hose in there for a bit more air? What are the things you're looking at to be the priorities being sorted?

RINUS VEEKAY: Well, I think it's both. Of course, you need to hydrate as good as possible. It's going to be hot in the car anyway. I think it's never going to be perfect. Yeah, it's tough to say.

I would like to have another hose. Also there's a lot of debris, rubber, little stones coming into the helmet duct, getting into the helmet.

It's kind of give or take. I think Indy was kind of the worst situations we will get this year. We'll see. But at least I got my first experience, know what to expect for the future.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, both, everything. Just colder water.

Q. What was it like racing without fans? How much of a different dynamic is it going to be? Y'all talked about how the heat affected y'all in Indianapolis. I've heard some drivers talk about how much weight they lost. How do you recover from that, go about recovering and preparing for a doubleheader this weekend?

RINUS VEEKAY: I thought Indy was really hot. You're constantly working there. You got like one real straight where you're just going straight. I think to recover, it will never be 100%, so you always will be a little tired from the day before, a little sore.

At least for the rookies that had their first INDYCAR road course, the first time is always the worst. I think now with the doubleheader it will be important to just have good nutrition and good sleep. I think it will be mostly about that instead of taking it easy in the first race or something.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think it is weird without the fans. You don't really get that energy, that atmosphere pre-race. It is a little different.

The only way you can really recover is just by I think getting fluids. That's really what you're losing. I know, I saw Conor, he lost something like 12 pounds at Indy, I think he said, which is insane. But it's just your water weight.

I think a lot of guys these next few weekends will get IVs after the first day, and that will be good for the second day. Some guys might do it after the race then on the day, too, if they're really worried about it.

Yeah, it's just fluids.

Q. What about the speed you found at Road America? If you look back in your brain, where did that come from, your comfort level, what the team did? Your team, a team of so many teams, where does the Herta team stand out?

COLTON HERTA: So last year against the Andretti guys, looking back at the data, the most speed I found was probably turn one, then straight line braking. I feel like that's kind of a strong suit of mine.

Then, yeah, I wouldn't say I'm like -- I wasn't particularly fast in the high speed. I any Rossi and Ryan Hunter-Reay were faster than me. I made up a little more time on them under the brakes, the low-speed stuff.

Q. A team with so many different teams, where do you think your strength is as a group? Bryan is a well-known name. Where do you see your strengths?

COLTON HERTA: I think we show up with fairly good cars. The engineering is really good, the chemistry is really good. So, you know, I think we've got a really solid program. Yeah, it does seem like we -- does seem like the Andretti fields half the field (laughter).

No, I'm happy with where it's at. I don't feel like there's a bunch of cars on the team. They've done a really good job of having a really key engineering staff and making sure we get the comments from each car that we need to make our car faster, but then it's not too hectic. They've done a really good job with that. I feel like it's a very small program.

Q. Rinus, obviously you've had experience at the Indy road course, but also you have a lot of experience from Road America. What did you learn at Indy that you can bring forward for the two races this weekend?

RINUS VEEKAY: Well, I really kind of got my first taste of real fuel saving in a long stint. I've never driven more than 15 laps in an INDYCAR back-to-back.

Yeah, this was a whole different experience. I was kind of tense in the car, so I kind of held my shoulders up, which was hurting at the end of the race. I kind of know not to do that in Road America.

But also it's just all the little things, pit stops, having a direct race in pit lane, all the things where you can save a little bit of time, it will just be crucial at the end of a race.

Yeah, I think overall just have more experience. I've had 80 more laps in an INDYCAR which is quite something that you would take forward. Doing long stints on the red, I kind of know how they behave now.

For the future, I really learn all the time.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, everybody, for joining

us this afternoon for our video news conference with
Rinus and Colton.