

IndyCar Media Conference

Friday February 26, 2016

Helio Castroneves

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Helio Castroneves. Helio ran the fastest lap in the first session today. It's 200th of a second under the track record.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Two-hundredths?

THE MODERATOR: Yes. Tell us about your first session.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Very good. We tested here obviously two weeks ago. Just keep going. We're working very close, not only myself, my group No. 3, but the entire Team Penske. Hitachi car seems to be very dialed in.

Again, there were areas we didn't have time to test when we came here because I was mostly looking for the aero balance. This was the first time I was able to make the car the way I want it.

So far the track is pretty smooth, no issues. I feel that it's going to be fast. Obviously it's going to be a very tight field. I do believe the rest of the cars are still up to speed, and tomorrow is going to be another fast day.

THE MODERATOR: You're one of the few drivers who raced back here when the IndyCar Series came back here in the past. What is the difference in the track?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: It's interesting because the characteristic of the track is pretty much the same. When you come into turn one, it's like, Are you going to turn? After the corner, you're like, Oh, it's open up.

It's very interesting on that scenario. Doesn't mean it's easy. Still we're talking about I don't know Gs, but I got to check. It's a lot. It's very heavy steering wheel, which is going to be even more heavy at night because we going to put fuel in and things like that.

Those are the details you and the fans are unfortunately not able to see. But I tell you, it's very fast, but it's a lot of fun, too.

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

Q. You will be coming back out in a couple more hours. How will the strategy change for tonight?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: We're starting I believe the race here at 5:30, correct? If it's 5:30, we will have a big shadow over there in turn one, which creates kind of like a very interesting vision. You kind of don't like see. When we tested two weeks ago, that was the biggest thing for me. It changed a little bit of the way it was so bright and all of a sudden it gets in the shadow.

But once the lights are on, once everything is the same, I feel it's going to be great. The good news is it's Saturday night. I think the fans are going to have a great time. They can come and, whatever, celebrate with the winner or celebrate with the guys that didn't win and still have a good time.

It will be cool, as well. Obviously, the heat, it tends to change a little bit of the downforce. But when it comes to night, it's going to be a little more consistent, and you're going to see a lot of cars becoming faster. That's why it's important tonight to find that out what's going to happen with the chassis.

Q. Will there be mechanical grip changes as it cools off as much as aero?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That's why I have the test. That's a very good question actually. That's why we have two days. Maybe something we tried today might not work. It doesn't mean it's bad. At least you checked the list and said, This doesn't work, let's not try again. Tomorrow we come back, you try something else.

It's extremely important for us to try and drive at night, which is the actual time of the race. Even when we come back here, maybe the weather might not be much of a difference, but still it gives you a direction.

But mechanical it's part of it, for sure. It's the whole thing. Today is basically the first practice for everyone. Everybody is adapting with the aero package, kind of like getting comfortable, getting the rhythm back. Tomorrow will be a little bit of the momentum from today.

THE MODERATOR: Appreciate your time.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Thank you.

