

IndyCar Media Conference

Saturday February 27, 2016

Juan Pablo Montoya Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: What are your thoughts of how an IndyCar reacts here on the track?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: So far it's been good. We came here and tested before, so yesterday was a really good day for us for what we wanted to do. Today we had a couple of spin, a little bit of accumulation, nothing too extreme. Just figured out an idea of what we need to do. I think it's going to be interesting because NASCAR is going to be here about two weeks before we race, two, three weeks, so I think it's going to change the track a lot with all that rubber they're going to lay down and everything, so we'll see how the track changes.

You know, you've got to be careful because we're doing two days of running, cleaning the track, sludging the tires, and the truck it just rubbers up and it's going to feel great. When you come back here to qualify, you're going to have, what, one one-hour session and then qualify. I think people -- we're all kind of surprised ourselves.

It's going to be fun. I think it's going to be challenging to get to up to speed because you've got to really get out all the way to Turn 3 by the time you get into the track. You come by once, and because you run flat, they get up to speed, momentum is going to be key.

THE MODERATOR: I might be wrong, but I think this was the track that you did your first oval test on returning to the series. What's changed for you from then to now?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Oh, my God, that was scary back then. Honestly I can't even remember, I ran a 20.1 on the old car or something, and it was tough. It took me about 80 percent of the day to manage to get it to wide open through 1 and 2. 3 and 4 I did it right before lunch, I said, what the heck, got to try it. Helio took about five laps to run wide open. I remember he had like 15 laps just to settle the car, and at lap 5 he was flat, and I'm going, great.

THE MODERATOR: You're in a unique position because you're one of the drivers that has tested here or raced here in another series in NASCAR and then soon in IndyCar. What are the differences in racing

lines from that driving experience to this?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Well, Sunday it's going to be a little tougher. NASCAR runs on that apron on the back, and we can't. That big jump, we won't be able to do that, so you've got to keep it on the racetrack, where the actual racetrack is. It's going to be interesting.

I think the big thing is who's going to be best in traffic. That's always -- it's a tough place to pass. Everybody seems to be really close together, very competitive. I think if you look at both aero kits, it seems like the cars are really close together again, so it's just going to -- qualifying is going to be harder, racing is going to be harder, because everybody is going to be a lot closer together.

Q. You mentioned how important it's going to be running in traffic. Were you able to learn much about it last night, and what about tonight?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: It was good when I managed to finally run with Andretti cars, actually. It was my best race running yesterday. It's hard because when -- you've really got to be patient with all the team to be organized and say, okay, we're going to run together, get on the racetrack together and then we run, because we tried it and the first guy went through three-run speed and went flat out. By the time the fourth car was leading, he was like half a track behind. It's kind of crazy.

Q. On the short ovals like Milwaukee and Iowa and then this track, I assume it's going to be similar like if you're trying to pass somebody it may take a number of laps before you can actually get by them. How does this track compare to those other two?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: Milwaukee is very different because Milwaukee is a place you have to brake or release lift a lot. Iowa you have to keep it in the groove so there's a little bit of a mixture in between. I think by yourself it's going to be very hard to pass if you're going behind somebody, but I think because it's so fast, I think the traffic is going to be a key thing, who is the best car in traffic. I think that's going to define -- whoever nails whatever you need for this traffic is going to be the guy that's going to win this.

Q. What about running close with the other cars? I

think you had to do a little of that last night. Is the amount of disturbance from the car in front the same as last year or different?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: It's hard because the Hondas and the Chevys react very different. Like for me when I follow a Chevy or follow a Honda, my car handles very different.

Q. How long are the tires lasting? What's the longest run you've managed to do so far?

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA: In a row, I've done quite a few runs on laps where they've lasted about 15, 20 laps, and the idea today is to really do quite a bit more in one run.

But the problem is if you're not in traffic and you're limited in tires, sometimes you're better off stop and wait for the traffic. You look more -- the opposite that you look on the racetrack -- on a racing pin, you're looking for clean track; here you're looking for the messiest place you can be, or at least that's what I'm doing.

THE MODERATOR: Juan, thank you very much. Good luck this afternoon.