

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

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## Colton Herta

Andretti Autosport

## Alexander Rossi

Andretti Autosport

## Ryan Hunter-Reay

Andretti Autosport

### Post-Race Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the Honda Indy 200 Race 2 post-race press conference. We are joined by our second-place finisher Alexander Rossi today. Alexander, thanks for joining us. Two podiums in both races, one-two-three finish for Andretti. Talk about the day today.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I think you already said it. One-two-three for Andretti is pretty spectacular considering the year that we've had as a team, especially on the 27 side of things. So to get two podiums this weekend is obviously a good boost for us.

But yeah, just I'm so happy for Michael and all the guys at Andretti Autosport and Colton and the 88 guys. Yeah, it was a big day for us. It's something that we've needed, and it sets us on the right foot for the rest of the year, and hopefully we can build upon that and put this year behind us and have a much better 2021.

**Q. Alex, how important -- this is a great bounce-back weekend for everybody at Andretti Autosport, including yourself, but just for the whole team to get this podium, how important is that for this year to kind of show what you guys -- what it's been like for you guys this year? You still have the speed, it's just things haven't worked out quite well.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, it's been a combination of a lot of things. I don't think we've had the speed that we should have had at a lot of events. Obviously there's been bad luck. There's been some mistakes. It's kind of been one thing after the other. But I think the big thing is everyone on the team has stayed motivated and

committed.

There was never like a lack of self-belief, if that makes sense. It was just trying to reset each time and come back and try and put your best foot forward. Yeah, I mean, it's great for the whole organization. It's the first time Michael has had a sweep of a podium since 2005 I think I heard. It's awesome. I'm really pleased for him.

Yeah, on our side, on the 27 side, to get two podiums in a row after the year we've had is welcome. Obviously it's not a win. That's okay, I guess, and we'll just keep going forward and see what we can do at the Harvest GP here in a couple weeks.

**Q. When you've got a teammate that you're chasing and a teammate chasing you, is that fun because you can really trust each other a lot because you're all on the same team, or is that a little bit hair-raising because of what could potentially happen?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: It's tough just because you're all on pretty similar stuff, right, so you're all kind of able to do the same lap time and you're just waiting for somebody to maybe make a mistake or go through the tires a bit quicker or whatever. But ultimately it was one-two-three, kind of a second-and-a-half gap through the three of us through that final stint.

We had to save more fuel than our teammates, I think, so that maybe hampered us a little bit, but ultimately Colton was on pole and he controlled most of the race, so I don't think we were going to be able to get him.

But yeah, it's good because you know that if it comes down to it, you'll always give each other a little bit more space than other guys that aren't your teammates. It's comforting when you're coming down to it that you're with guys that you know.

**Q. You've got three chances to get a victory this season, two at Indy on the road course and the season finale at St. Pete; do you feel like you're getting that much closer to getting a win this season?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: You know, Indy GP is not great for us, but we're really strong on the street courses. We're going to try and do our best in Indy. Obviously there's two



opportunities there. We already had the race there this year, so we have a bit more of an understanding of the baseline that we need. So we'll try and obviously get one done. That's our main focus at this point. We've just got to get a win before the season is up.

**Q. Alex, you mentioned that the organization has done a good job of keeping good attitudes. How have you personally been able to do that in what's been a disappointing season for you?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I mean, you just take it one day at a time. There's nothing you can do about the past and things that happened, so there's no point dwelling on it too much. It's been important for us to keep focused and to keep the drive and motivation to just keep fighting and improving every time we show up at the track.

For me personally, it's not that big of a deal. You just do your job the best that you can and hope the pieces fall into place come race day.

THE MODERATOR: We have been joined by our third-place finisher, Ryan Hunter-Reay, also of Andretti Autosport. Talk about the one-two-three finish for Andretti today and your race specifically.

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, like Alex said, it's a good day for Andretti Autosport, finishing one-two-three. It's been a pretty rocky season for the team overall, so it was nice to get that in.

For me, just missed opportunities kind of all weekend, qualifying, and we had good pace, just feel like we could have finished up a few more spots every day.

But all in all, ran a good race today. Was running hard with Dixon there, got hip-checked off the track. That's when Rossi got by me, and we finished in line from there.

Yeah, I haven't had an all-Andretti podium since I've been with the team, so it's nice to get that for Michael and the rest of the team.

**Q. Alexander, there's been obviously a lot spoken about your season, and I guess you're just enjoying getting into that second half and sort of rebounding from getting that first half of the season out of the way, I guess, but how much has the calendar affected you guys this year and how much is that to blame for kind of the form because we've lost quite a few circuits that Andretti has been strong at in the past. Maybe St. Pete will be coming back towards that, but how has the calendar affected things for you guys?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: You know, having double-headers at short ovals is not great for us, but I'd say really that's the only thing that's been a negative. I mean, losing the street courses obviously, as I kind of mentioned, you mentioned, that's also -- it's doubling up on our worst type of track and it's taking away our best type of track. That's obviously in play.

But at the end of the day we've been good at Road America, we've been good at Texas, obviously we've been great at Indianapolis and we still didn't get it done this year. There's been a lot of things going on. The calendar is not to blame for it.

I think it's been a challenging year for everyone for obvious reasons on and off the track, and it's just been a lot of different circumstances that we just haven't had our way. It's not necessarily the fault of anyone's. It's just the way things go sometimes in racing and in life. If you look at the 88 car, like they're having a pretty good year, I guess. But yeah, for Ryan and I, it's been just relentless, one thing after another.

But like I said, it's behind us now. There's nothing we can do about it. All we can do is focus forward and do all we can to close out the year on a high.

**Q. How much has that given you the ability to kind of free yourself up a bit now? You're not fighting for that championship at the moment. Does it give you the ability to take a few more risks with the setup direction you're taking each weekend and approach things with a little bit more of a fresh approach than you would normally?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think what it's done is this year has given us a very good kind of way or ability to identify our weaknesses and really try and rectify them kind of starting really after Indianapolis and all the way through the year and really use this off-season to our advantage to fix the things that are obvious that we're struggling with so that next year we're not doing the same things, having the same problems and having two years like this. At this point we've chalked up the year. We're just doing our best to get results, but really we're trying on and off the track to develop what we're doing as a team to just improve, and I think this is a huge confidence boost for the guys at the track and back at the shop in Indianapolis. To get a sweep of the podium justifies their efforts when it's all been in the s---, honestly. It's good for them, and it'll reset everyone, I think, and the mindsets going into this little gap that we have before the Harvest GP.

**Q. With the momentum that you have this weekend, do you wish that there were still a few more races left**

**in the season other than the three that we have coming up?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Not really. I kind of want it to be over, to be honest with you. I mean, I'm not going to lie. It's been just one of those years. It just is waiting for the next shoe to drop, honestly.

But no, I think it's good that this weekend went the way that it did. We knew Mid-Ohio was going to be a good track for us. It has been the past couple of years. So the fact that, like we've said, we were able to get two podiums is great, and we'll just do our best to keep making small steps forward through the rest of the year and make sure that our off-season is very productive so we can come out strong in '21.

**Q. Ryan, you said that it's a little frustrating this career from today and yesterday, or just today from the very good missed opportunity that you had with -- not to be very good in qualifying. Do you think it's frustrating just for this day, or is it just all this year who has been very bad for your team?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: No, I think we were actually really good in qualifying this weekend. That's not what I meant. The 28 has been the highest qualifying car of the year so far, it's just we haven't been able to put it together for one reason or another, but this weekend we picked -- being fastest on Friday, we picked our group -- or practice Saturday morning. We picked our group, and it ended up being the wrong pick. Obviously that dictated pole today, being that the group that was on pole was Colton's group, was on a drying racetrack. Just the wrong call. We couldn't foresee that coming, though.

But yeah, all in all, it's just -- qualifying is an absolute premium on these shortened double race weekends because so much rides on qualifying, and without the extended practice time as we would usually have to get ready for qualifying, it all comes down to that at some of these tracks where it's very track position related, like Gateway, for instance. Once you settled into a rhythm, that was where you ran.

But yeah, we've had the speed this year, just haven't been able to put it together, like Alex said, for a few reasons, across the team.

**Q. I see that it seems like you are a little frustrated from today. It seems like you have a lot of opportunities to go up and it doesn't seem to get in your way. What is the reason do you think?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: I don't know. I'm just a little

frustrated today, was running second, went around the outside of Dixon. I think Dixon and I have raced each other clean hundreds of times, and I've never been hip-checked off the track by him and I've never hip-checked him off the track, but hey, that gave Alex the position and I finished third.

I'm okay -- I'm fine. It's racing. It's all good. It's a little frustrating, that's all.

**Q. With everything that went you guys' way today, particularly this weekend, was it just a case of not having any bad luck for Andretti Autosport as a whole today, or was there anything in particular that you felt like you guys had come into this weekend that was fixed or better than it had been?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, I mean, I think at Road America and Mid-Ohio, those natural-terrain road courses we've been really fast. The whole team has been fast. We put our cars in a good position to have a good weekend at these, unlike maybe some of the short ovals are not our strongest point right now. So I think we just -- yeah, I think the whole team ran well all weekend, put ourselves in a good position, and obviously finishing -- us finishing one-two-three, us from eighth, is a good day. Nothing really went wrong, like you said.

**Q. What can you do for this type of race finish as a team just with three races left? Is there any type of momentum that you can pick up from this with a couple more race weekends left in the year?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, it's good. I mean, it's a good thing for sure. It's a positive for the whole team. We needed it after some challenging times across the board for all of our -- I can't keep track how many cars we have anymore. Five. So it's been some frustrating times, especially the 500, things like that.

This was nice to get in there, but from my perspective, the 28 side, I'm not really happy unless we're winning. We still have work to do there, and we need to get on the top step.

THE MODERATOR: We've been joined by our race winner, Colton Herta. Great day for you. You won the pole, you won the race. Talk about your day today.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think overall, a fairly simple day. It wasn't easy, but it was fairly simple in what we needed to do. Obviously starting first, it made it a lot easier for us.

You know, just kind of clicking away at the laps and trying to decide when to pit was important because with how the



tires were, you could really undercut or overcut, and you weren't really sure what the right decision was going to be.

But no, overall a great day.

**Q. Ryan, obviously we're coming close to the end of the season, but how much momentum does this give you going into the last three races of the year but also looking ahead to 2022? Where do you think you guys stand in the pecking order for the rest of the season, and as I said, into next year?**

RYAN HUNTER-REAY: Yeah, good momentum for sure. I think as a whole we all believe in ourselves that we can get it done. We just need to iron out a few things and need some things to go our way. But yeah, it's good momentum. Looking forward to Indy GP. It hasn't been one of our strongest tracks, but we've found some things we think might apply there that might work, so I'm optimistic to keep this momentum rolling, go out and have a good weekend at Indy GP and hopefully finish at St. Pete, which has also been a good track for us.

THE MODERATOR: Ryan, thank you for joining us today and we'll see you at the Harvest GP in a few weeks. We'll continue with questions for Colton.

**Q. Colton, congratulations. I remember talking to you last year; even though you're not a son of Ohio, your father has got deep roots in Ohio, went to Ohio State. How did the story go about you, your father and your grandfather every year getting in arguments over the Ohio State-Michigan football game? How did that work out? And as a Herta, what's it like to win at Mid-Ohio?**

COLTON HERTA: Well, yeah, obviously my dad lived in Ohio for a long time. My sister was born in Columbus, and obviously during when he was driving for Bobby, spent a lot of time out here.

I'm sure Ohio means a lot to him. It's always nice to come out here. We know a lot of people out here because of that, and it's always nice to come to Mid-Ohio.

But for the -- I think, well, the Michigan things is more my grandpa and my dad. Obviously my dad went to Ohio State and my grandpa for a long time lived in Detroit, so he was always a Michigan fan. So that's more there. I just kind of like dig into either side, whichever side I think is going to get a funnier reaction.

And then lastly, it means a lot to win really anywhere in INDYCAR nowadays because it's so competitive. When you have a perfect day like that and you can qualify on pole and pretty much lead every single lap, it makes it so

awesome. So happy for everybody on the team and especially to myself for getting the job done, and yeah, it was a great day.

**Q. And you're kind of turning into a modern-day Rick Mears; if you win the pole, now you're going to end up winning the race. You've done that a few times now in your career. What's it like to be able to just go out there and control the race?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I mean, it makes it easier, especially at a place like Mid-Ohio where passing is at a premium.

I think because of that, we were able to hit -- obviously we had stopped very early so we were able to hit a bigger fuel number in the second stint, and I think that really made the difference because we were able to hit that fuel number and not really worry about the cars behind because we could control the pace. Yeah, they couldn't really get close to us.

So I think for sure we were one of the dominant cars if not the most dominant car, and I think we showed it there.

**Q. I'm wondering how much did you guys need this as an organization, and also, I had asked Alex how does he stay motivated in this slump. How have you stayed motivated with the way Andretti has been running up until this weekend?**

COLTON HERTA: I don't think I really needed to because I'm always happy to drive INDYCARs. It's always enjoyable to get in an INDYCAR even if the handling isn't great or the handling is great. It's fun either way.

Obviously we were in a little bit of a slump there at the beginning of the year, and we didn't seem to have the pace. We couldn't figure out with the aeroscreen. We found a few things that kind of brought us more towards the front, and we kept finding little things, and I think for these last three rounds at IMS and Gateway and Ohio, Mid-Ohio, we've really been the cars to beat, I think. I think we really haven't maximized our potential except for today, but I really believe that we kind of figured it out and we've had really solid cars.

To finally kind of get the job done, it makes it so awesome.

**Q. Did you get a sense from Michael that this was a big day, going one-two-three?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I'm sure it was. Michael was very happy about it. You know, obviously the whole team only had two podiums before today and they were both

from Rossi. Not having a lot of hardware and really not having a lot to show for this year, it meant a lot. I'm sure we're coming home with more trophies today than the whole team has had all year.

**Q. I wanted to ask, as far as tire strategy is concerned, were those decisions made on the fly, or was it a kind of team collective beforehand that you would be running different tires at different times from what turned out to be Rossi and Hunter-Reay?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think generally we were thinking about going red-black-red. I think ideally we probably made the wrong choice, but it wasn't -- really didn't make that big of a difference because I think the blacks and reds were closer today for some reason than yesterday.

You know, I think -- well, what happened was we were actually in the carousel when they called me to pit, so they saw Dalton went off in Turn 1 as we were going through, right before the carousel, and then as I was in the carousel they told me to pit, so I had to shoot off really quickly, so we really had no chance to discuss what was going to be better. I think if we look back at it, it probably would have been a lot less stress if we were on reds, but I think once we got the blacks up to temperature, it really didn't matter because I think we were fast enough to keep them behind.

**Q. How tricky was it keeping Rossi at kind of arm's length when obviously you're also having to focus on tires and fuel consumption?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it was really tough the first few laps. I was very happy that Dixon was actually behind me. I don't think you'll really ever hear anybody say that again, but I was really happy he was right behind me because I knew he was going to give them a really hard time, and I knew I had a little bit of an advantage on the cold tires compared to him from what it seemed on the start.

I think using that and where the restarts take place, it's easy to kind of build up a little bit of a gap before you get into any of the passing zones. You know, it gave me that little bit more confidence to push and kind of push it in the corners and I could make a few mistakes on exit and still get away with it and not have the trouble of somebody breathing down my neck.

You know, I think if Rossi and Hunter-Reay were right behind me, they probably would have gotten me, but I think having that buffer to Scott really made the difference.

**Q. I know you've been one of the most consistent drivers throughout the whole series with I think eight**

**top 10s coming into today's race victory for you. To be able to break through, I know starting from pole certainly had to have helped, but was there anything else beyond just starting up front and a good qualifying run that you felt like allowed you to break through and get over the hump today?**

COLTON HERTA: I think pit stops, having a good race car. It always makes it easier. Strategy was on point. I think we made a great call to kind of over cut Rossi a little bit. We were able to save the fuel to go one lap longer than him, and the tires held on.

Yeah, I think it was a little bit closer than it should have been on that out-lap because I accidentally hit the pit lane speed limit coming out of the keyhole for the second time in a row. Did it to Scott yesterday and he ran into the back of me and then did it today and almost lost a spot. We've definitely got to figure something out so I'm not doing that.

Yeah, I think overall what makes it the easiest was just the team was on point. They did an incredible job for me, and it made it that much easier and gave me that much more confidence inside the car.

**Q. We've heard with how many cars that you guys have had this year when you guys haven't had as much success, it's made it a little bit easier to progress, but when you have five cars and have three that finish in the top three today, including a victory, does it make it -- does this start to become a day where you can start to take some advantage of all those cars running that well as you guys have a little bit of off time before the double-header at the IMS road course?**

COLTON HERTA: I think it gives us a lot of confidence. I think I'm probably at the foremost of that confidence with the win. But we've been running well all year. We just haven't had that extra boost to get up there into the lead, and today we had it. Luckily we had the rain, but you know, to be honest, I think I made a muck of qualifying yesterday, and I really think I could have been on pole yesterday.

Without that, I think it was a really solid day and something we can take forward, and obviously we've got a little bit of time until Indy GP, so it will be a nice ending, so I guess now having a little bit of gap and we'll be able to be confident going straight back into it at Indy GP.

**Q. Just wondering how kind of frustrated you are looking back at Iowa because people are talking about an Andretti slump, but you've been in the top 10 every single race apart from that weekend, and obviously**



**you got taken out when you had the incident with Rinus in one of the races there. How frustrating is it looking back at the Iowa weekend and what could have been for this season for you?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I mean, it was a tough one to kind of swallow, obviously. We kind of shot ourselves in the foot there because we crashed and then couldn't really get the car fully repaired or we thought we got it fully repaired but something was off because we were so bad on the second day. So you know, we finished like last on the first day and then like 19th or whatever, last of like the people that ran the whole race the second day.

Yeah, it was kind of depressing, but you can always take positives out of it. Now we know that's not going to happen again and we kind of got through situations. We had some little bugs to get through. I don't want to say I'm happy it happened, but it's kind of a good thing in some ways that it happened.

**Q. You've spoken a bit about recent races kind of being a bit of a breakthrough. I know you don't want to go into specifics about exactly what you've done, but is it more keeping the tires alive for longer, or is it more getting them in the right window to start with? Where roughly has your kind of breakthrough been over the recent few races?**

COLTON HERTA: It's finding out how to make our dominant setups from last year work with the aeroscreen and the weight that it moves. So we had an idea of what we thought it was going to do, and it didn't do that, so we've kind of been trying ideas on how to get our setups back to where they should be or back to where they were last year because we had a lot of really good race cars last year.

I think we kind of found it, this thing that works, so we can come to the track with our setups from last year and they're relatively similar and they work relatively well. That's not to say that that's everywhere. Obviously it changes different weekends.

But we definitely made a big breakthrough in the last few races.

**Q. Colton, following up on the setup topic, I know over the course of a weekend, especially with the double-headers, teams will go back and make a lot of changes overnight if they didn't finish well in the first race, so coming off a ninth-place finish yesterday, did you guys kind of make changes going into today or did you kind of leave it where you were at and just see how things went from qualifying?**

COLTON HERTA: We made some changes, but it's only for -- it was a good car yesterday. The only reason we made changes was the track was really green today. Obviously it rained, so all the rubber that was there yesterday was gone. We thought that would translate into having more oversteer, which I'm not sure that it really changed the track too much, which is actually very surprising because the track evolution here is the biggest that we go through.

Yeah, I think I had a little bit too much understeer today but nothing that kind of disrupted the car so much that we couldn't run with it.

**Q. I was wondering, Colton, what is the song that the Zibs play that would best summarize today for you?**

COLTON HERTA: I have no clue. The thing is I can't even remember our songs because I haven't played them in like six months through quarantine.

**Q. So you're rusty?**

COLTON HERTA: I don't know. I have no answer for you on that one. I have no clue.

**Q. Did the day seem like kind of a punk rock kind of day, the way qualifying went, et cetera? Not that you guys are punk rock, but how crazy was qualifying, and just throwing one good lap up there, how desperate were you at that point in that session?**

COLTON HERTA: It was important to get up to speed right away. You know, I've had plenty of practice driving in the wet from my time in Europe, but the biggest thing is this tire is completely different than any other tire that I've ever raced on in the wet. The amount of grip it has when you're braking and on acceleration is crazy. You know, I knew it was important to get on the braking full stop because that's where I think most of the time was for today, and obviously I had a little bit of a rabbit in front of me with Scott running in front of me, so I kind of picked my braking points judged on him, so that helped me out a lot, and I think that was the biggest thing is having Scott in front of me, I was kind of able to see what he was braking and then just probably brakes like 50 feet later each lap and just kind of get the feel for it.

**Q. When you're out in the lead like you were today all day except for the mismatch -- Takuma had the lead for a little while just because of the pit situation, but what are you telling yourself the last 10 laps of that race, hit your spots? What's what they call the inner monolog that's going on in your brain?**

COLTON HERTA: I think just trying to hang on at that point. A place like Mid-Ohio you're really worn out at the end of the race, and I don't really drink my water bottle when it's green. I only drink it under yellow. I didn't really get a lot of water during the race, so I was kind of hanging on at the end, so you just kind of tell yourself lap by lap, one more lap, one more lap, try to hit the marks every time, and obviously it's difficult, but I think when you're in the lead it kind of gives you the mindset that's like, you have to get through it, and it gives you that much more confidence and kind of it almost gives you more strength when you're in the lead.

I think just trying to get through it like one lap at a time and making the very minimum mistakes and trying to keep the car on the track and getting good exits so you're not giving anybody any runs.

**Q. Is there any exercise machine you've ever been on that duplicates driving around Mid-Ohio for 75 laps?**

COLTON HERTA: No, I don't think so. I don't think there's a track that has so many corners grouped together so often. I think you're turning more than you're going straight here, which isn't really normal. But yeah, the whole like 4 through 13 to the end of the lap, you're not getting a break. Even when you're going down through your valley, you're still turning. It's kind of always busy.

**Q. What can you take from the race like obviously your performance today going into the final three races of the season, and again, going into next year, how can you build on the result today going into kind of 2022?**

COLTON HERTA: You know, I think we have a lot of confidence obviously going into Indy GP now. I've got a sim day so I'll be on the simulator Tuesday so we can try and figure out some more stuff. But I think Indy GP is kind of one of those places that we kind of struggled as a team earlier this year, so we're still looking for some stuff to find, and that's going to be the big thing of the sim day Tuesday.

But I think just from a confidence side, yeah, I think you kind of try and roll with it as much as you can, and obviously going into Indy GP we're the guys to beat based on Mid-Ohio, so hopefully we can keep it going.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Colton, for joining us. Congratulations again. We'll see you in a couple weeks at the Harvest GP, everybody. Thanks and have a wonderful day.

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