

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Sunday, May 23, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

**Scott Dixon**

Chip Ganassi Racing

**Colton Herta**

Andretti Autosport w/ Agajanian

**Rinus VeeKay**

Ed Carpenter Racing

Press Conference



Yeah, like I said before, I'm happy that we just have the opportunity to make it to the Fast Nine. We had a fast race car this year, which you don't always have, so I'm excited about that.

THE MODERATOR: Let's begin with questions.

**Q. That run you made yesterday in the afternoon, how close was your car there compared to yesterday? Did that help you get the front row?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I mean, the biggest thing that changed was just the gearing. The gearing changed. We were using different gears. That seemed really good for the conditions.

Yeah, it was helpful. It was helpful to get the read on the downforce numbers, personally how it felt inside the car. It was fairly close. Probably a little bit cooler track temp and air temp than yesterday at 3:30, 4:00, whenever it was. Yeah, it did help.

**Q. You're very aware of the records you could break as a young driver. Did you know you could have become the youngest polesitter in Indy 500 history?**

COLTON HERTA: I didn't. Can I next year or too late?

**Q. Yes, you can.**

COLTON HERTA: There you go.

**Q. These are important to you. Is that something you wished you would have accomplished? Is that something you hope to accomplish next year?**

COLTON HERTA: It would be cool. I think more importantly than being the youngest, first off, just getting to that point of getting a pole. Obviously it would be cool. I have quite a few of those already, so it would be cool to have a few more. I think this is the last year I can do it, is become the youngest 500 winner. Why not do that?

THE MODERATOR: The previous record, Rex Mays back in 1935. You're looking at an 86-year-old record you could break next year.

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with Colton Herta, who will start in the middle of row number one, best starting position. Four-lap average of 230.655, P1 for all about five minutes until that guy Scott Dixon went out.

Tell us about your run.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, felt good. Obviously a little frustrated we didn't get there in the end. Happy to have the opportunity to qualify in the Fast Nine. Yeah, ended up just coming short. P2 is definitely not a bad place to start for a 500-mile race.

THE MODERATOR: You'll enjoy the view.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: But all told just waiting, watching it all play out. Obviously some guys busted off some big speeds before you were able to get out there.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, if I was a fan, I'd be really excited with that Fast Nine qualifying. Really, guys that just kept going faster every single run. It was actually really close for everyone.

It was cool to see how guys got there in the end different ways. Some guys have more consistency, some guys put up huge laps in the beginning and slowed down more. For us it was a more consistent run.

To beat Dixon, I think we really had to have that first lap and second lap just a tiny bit faster. We were so close.



COLTON HERTA: I'm up for it (smiling).

**Q. There were no fans here last year. Fans today. Big applause when you got out of your car. How did that feel?**

COLTON HERTA: It felt good. Probably a good thing that fans weren't here last year because I didn't make the Fast Nine. I was happy they were here when I was in it.

Yeah, obviously the fans are awesome. They bring out the energy so much. It's awesome to have them back. Really good show for the people that came. A lot of people did come. It was exciting to see that. A lot of people in turn four. Obviously on the frontstretch, turn one on the second deck. Yeah, hopefully put on a good show for them. I know we will in a week's time.

**Q. You're briefly atop the board, but you know Dixon is next. Do you take any time to celebrate or are you just watching Dixon's lap?**

COLTON HERTA: I knew I was first. I didn't know what time I did. I didn't know what Dixon was doing. I couldn't find a board to tell me. I ended up finding one later in the run. But, yeah, I wasn't really sure what was going on. I could only tell by what the crowd was cheering it was probably bad news for me.

Yeah, like I said before, it's really exciting for me just to have the opportunity to make it to Fast Nine. I know how disappointing it can be from last year to be so close and then not make it. So, yeah, excited to be second. Obviously we've seen guys struggle so much. It's really just a privilege to be in the race, so...

**Q. You said in your TV interview, second is a really great place to be starting. Did you allow yourself any brief disappointment when Dixon shot up there to one?**

COLTON HERTA: I was disappointed obviously. I was thinking about what could I have done better, what could we have changed that could have made it a little better. It's hard for me to think of stuff.

I think we really laid everything out there. I think we'll know a little bit more with the data, but it was so close. Yeah, I don't know what else we could have done. I thought we were really on it today.

**Q. What does "Havana, Havana, Havana" mean?**

COLTON HERTA: It's code. I can't say (smiling).

**Q. Having seen the pace drop off on other people's**

**runs, how much it was, it varied hugely, did you realize your car was capable of becoming the first one to go over 231 on your fourth lap?**

COLTON HERTA: No, I wasn't sure. Honestly, I didn't even know what I needed to do to go fastest, too. I wasn't really sure if the lap times were good, bad or what.

Yeah, it was cool to see that. I think if you do see that where you have a car that's, like, really consistent, you know that maybe you could have done some stuff with the towers or the ride heights or the wings to trim it out a little bit more. I'm not sure if that would have been the right play.

Like I said, I felt the car was fairly on the limit today. I don't know what else we could have done to find that really small amount of time. I think somebody said it was, like, he beat me by six feet over 10 miles. Yeah, it's pretty incredible, pretty crazy.

**Q. A really geeky question. On the warmup laps, is there a set target that HPD tell you to have your car at to get it in the zone? Does it vary according to ambient temperature?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, obviously temperature change. The ambient change increases engine temp quicker. I think as far as the actual pace of the lap, it's more down to what we think is correct for how much we want to push to get up to speed versus save the tires for the fourth, third lap. I think we did a good job. We found some good stuff that I don't really want to say, with how to save the tires a little bit, keep it so that all four laps were consistent, like you said, and it showed in my run.

Yes, they try to say like what would be best. In the end it's down to us for what we think is going to be the best to get out of the car for four laps.

**Q. Is there anything that you can take from today that you can bring into the race for next week? Are you kind of focused on what you can get out of practice later on today?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's going to be all about practice later on today. I don't think we can really take anything from qualifying, qualifying trim, qualifying boost to what we'd be like in the race. You kind of see who has car speed, that's probably about it.

Yeah, I think as far as taking stuff away from qualifying is probably irrelevant towards what people have in the race.

THE MODERATOR: Scott Dixon's first NTT INDYCAR SERIES pole position of 2021. The 27th of his career. His

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

fourth Indianapolis 500 pole, which ties him for second on the all-time list. Sixth front row start here at Indianapolis.

Scott, saving the best for last. What was it like?

SCOTT DIXON: It was pretty hairy. Glad it's over. It was definitely pretty tense. When I saw the first few cars run, it was pretty calm. I saw the ECR cars run. I was like, that's pretty strong, wasn't expecting that. I was able to watch Colton's four laps, too, wish I hadn't before I went out. I knew his consistency was probably going to be a tick better than the other two, and it sure was.

Yeah, for our car you're kind of just guessing. I could see the mechanics working on the car as we rolled through, adjusting the wings. I asked them not to tell me. I knew it was only going one way, and that was trimming out more. I knew they were going to be pretty aggressive because we had already started pretty aggressive.

Yeah, at turn one for the first lap was very loose, and I was already maxed out on all the controls. I knew it was just going to be holding on for lap three and four. Lap four was definitely pretty rough, especially through turn three. I think we did it 3/1000ths or some crazy number.

THE MODERATOR: Six feet over 10 miles.

SCOTT DIXON: Happy for the team, the amount of effort this team puts in, started off at the Indianapolis 500 last year to work on the pole cars. Huge credit to them. We had four Ganassi cars in the Fast Nine. Any team would dream of having that situation. Just so thankful to everybody that's worked hard in the off-season.

THE MODERATOR: Rinus VeeKay joins us as well, settling for the outside of row number one. Starting on the front row of the Indianapolis 500. How special is this for you?

RINUS VEEKAY: It's really special. Really, really happy. The four laps I did was on the limit. I couldn't have gone any faster really. I had a big moment in the last lap, first corner. Yeah, kept it on track, kept it flat. Very happy, very grateful for the team for all the sleepless nights, all the hard work. Definitely also big kudos to Chevy for giving me the great power to bring me to the front row.

THE MODERATOR: We all saw the wiggle in turn one. You kept it flat?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: No lifting?

RINUS VEEKAY: If I think back about it, I should have lifted but I didn't. I'm very happy. Yeah, I think that's all I could do.

THE MODERATOR: We have a lot of questions.

**Q. Scott, you mentioned nerves yesterday. Is it more nervous being the first qualifier of the weekend or the last?**

SCOTT DIXON: I'd prefer going last, for sure. But then I didn't after I saw the ECR and Herta run. I was definitely pretty nervous.

I don't know. It's definitely a roller coaster of emotions for everybody. I'm actually really relieved that that's all over. Now we get back in the car tonight, hopefully I don't do what I did last year when I went out on the first lap and spun the car. I'll try to keep that out of the way.

**Q. You make the hardest things look so easy, Jimmie mentioned. How difficult was it in the car on that four-lap run?**

SCOTT DIXON: I think the difficult part for all of us is just having that confidence. You got to remember last time we all drove the car was yesterday probably around a similar time. You've had a lot of time to think. Unfortunately most of the time it's not great thoughts. You're thinking of things going wrong sometimes, but trying to stay positive. Then you're trying to chase weather conditions as well. Definitely was a little warmer today, a lot more sun on the track than what we had. We were going more aggressive than what we had done yesterday.

You're just trying to stay as calm as possible. For me, I think probably for all of us, the best situation for us is actually just being in the car and doing what we really enjoy, what we love. The nerves are all about just that competition level is just through the roof right now.

**Q. Colton, starting second with this guy leading the field, Rinus to your side, what is it like? Two young guys against one of the legends in INDYCAR history. What will that be like at the start?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think most importantly it's like two safe guys to start alongside, guys that don't take too much risk, obviously know it's a 500-mile race.

I'm hoping that we can kind of work together. I don't think you're going to pull a gap with this car, how the tow works. But I think if you can work together and keep each other safe for the first little bit, it will be nice.

**Q. Kanaan had a comment, I think he was talking about Rinus. He said the guy starting in front of me was in diapers when I made my first Indy 500 start. With them talking about younger guys, how do you two feel being on the front row?**

COLTON HERTA: It's awesome. I remember when I was eating Cheerios at eight years old, and Scott Dixon was winning the Indy 500. Obviously for Tony, his INDYCAR start, we weren't even born yet in 1998 when he was in CART.

It is kind of crazy to see the guys you're watching on TV you get to race against now. It's incredible. Yeah, just can't wait for Sunday, see what we can do.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I think it's great. It's a whole new generation, two of us. The front row to start on for me, Colton has been an amazing driver. Well, I don't even have to start about Scott. He's definitely a legend now. Yeah, it's just very cool to start alongside them. It's not too bad to lose the pole to these guys. I feel very good, very happy, very excited to start the race with them.

**Q. Any responsibility or nerves to get the start right considering everybody is talking about these young kids at this race?**

COLTON HERTA: Just go when he goes. If it's no stop, I'm going to blame him.

SCOTT DIXON: That should be the easy part of the race. Get that out of the way.

THE MODERATOR: Colton, we'll cut you loose for practice.

Rinus VeeKay started third, best Indianapolis 500 start of his career, youngest front row starter in 500 history at 25 years, 254 days.

RINUS VEEKAY: That's very cool.

THE MODERATOR: That's not bad.

RINUS VEEKAY: I was the fastest teenager in 500 history last year. Now I'm the youngest front row. That's pretty cool, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: You only get older from here.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, that's a bummer. I have to watch out for gray hairs next year. As long as I look like Dixon in 20 years, that's all right.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

**Q. Scott, the 500 doesn't give you the wins or poles. Now that you have four, what does it mean to get a pole especially at a track like this and with crowds here cheering you on?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I think it was probably my wife giving me the hardest time for not getting a pole for a while. The last one was here three years ago or was it longer? Four years ago, wow. So it's been a little while.

As we all know, it doesn't really matter where you start, it's where you finish. That's going to be the focus now. We're starting in a great position. For us it was really the goal to get in the Fast Nine with the team, and they did that.

Winning a pole at the Indianapolis 500 is one of the toughest things to do. From a team standpoint, just how much work and effort goes into building these cars specifically for that pole run, it's a lot of money and a lot of effort that it takes.

We've been on the other side of it. We've had them before, but we've started well in the pack, too, where you can't figure out why you're in that position. Definitely feel goods for the team. I know the team is going to be proud of what we achieved today. Again, it's just the starting position. We have to work on the rest.

**Q. With such a quick turnaround, what is going to be key for the session coming up before Carb Day?**

SCOTT DIXON: I think for the Fast Nine, we probably won't see a lot of it. I don't know, there's a fair bit of work at least on our side to get the cars prepped for running. I know last year I think there was more of a break between the Fast Nine and the practice maybe by an hour or something.

I know they're back there. They're probably still in tech. That's the other thing. You still got to go through tech and make sure the cars are all legal and that kind of situation before we even get them. Then you have to go through setup change, then you've got to go through lots of different mechanical pieces that have to be changed.

For us it will just be trying to make sure we get back into a running configuration that we were happy with from last week, and do some traffic running. That's probably it, to be honest. Then we got to go on engine changes and all that kind of stuff, and then really try to nail Carb Day.

**Q. Rinus, how different was this year's run compared with last year's? Only one spot different. Obviously**



**you developed the cars. It's quite a bit quicker, isn't it this year?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, we're quicker this year. Well, it was quite a bit different. There was a big, big temperature change between yesterday and today's run. It's way hotter. I had the confidence that the car was going to be very stuck.

Last year the four laps were quite easy, like there was no loose moments or understeer. Right now I did my first lap and it was already quite neutral. Then the last lap, turn one, I don't know why I stayed flat, but I did it. I kept it on track. It was very close.

It was definitely very hard. I think that even made the car faster. We were just so on the limit, it was perfect for me. The team put so much work into it. I know that everyone at the team wants to return to the front row. Yeah, preferably pole. Was just not enough today. I'm over the moon with front row, super happy. I think we can definitely go for a 500 win from here.

**Q. Scott, I don't know if you were joking or not, did you really not ask Chris or whoever what the wing settings were when you rolled out? I remember he did that to you in 2017 as well.**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's Cannon now. Cannon and Chris work tightly together. Cannon is the engineer. I don't know. He makes me nervous a lot of the time. I sit across from him every day. He shakes a lot, which makes me shake now.

Some of the times when we're going through the process, actually last week, too, where we kept missing calculations by a little bit. He's like, Today we're going to change this, we're going to change that, change this. I'm like, Remember, our car yesterday was pretty good. Are you sure you want to change? He's like, I think it's going to be a bit better. I'm like, All right, I don't want to know anything else now. Don't tell me.

I knew they were going to monitor the other cars rolling up to go out, see if anybody made any changes. We felt we had a fairly good idea of trim levels. We were already starting fairly aggressive to some of the teammates. When they're adjusting, I knew they're only going one way, that was more out. I didn't hear the final number.

**Q. On your warmup lap, 215, 219, can you start to feel already?**

SCOTT DIXON: I don't know. At least with our cars, they feel even worse just because it's slow, right? There's not a

lot of loading on the car. Typically the front is even more positive. The real kind of estimate for us is once you get the speed into turn three, that's when you start getting into the 230s. Then when you're flat out, obviously turn one for the first time. Turn one actually used to be kind of the hardest corner on this track, especially in the mid 2000s and 2010s. Now it's kind of turn three and two. It kind of depends on wind direction.

Yeah, that first one at full speed after you turn the engine up out of turn two is kind of the real feel estimate.

**Q. Scott, on the radio broadcast they mentioned Helio's run. How critical with what the wind is doing and everything, the selection on your gear set before you go out, you're locked into it?**

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's one of the more difficult things, right? You got to get it right for the corners and then also the front straight and the back straights. Today actually there was quite a big spread. When I first got into top gear on taking the green, I got to the start/finish line, I was already on the limiter. I was like, well, that was a good sign because it was the same gear as yesterday, we didn't have that much limiter. When we got to the back, it didn't pull as fast. You know automatic really it's a wind direction change.

You're changing one gear, I don't even know, silly amounts, a hundred rpm here and there. It is a difficult part that's the simulation, the team works really hard on that. We have had a good amount of time here as well to fully get the understanding of it.

The weather conditions are the hardest thing to chase, gearing, aerodynamic levels of downforce and drag are a similar protocol that you dive into deep. The worst part is when you get too long on the gear, you've just got to slow down because it won't pull it. If you're a little short, it's probably a little bit better.

**Q. Rinus, you now got an average starting position at the 500 of three and a half, which is pretty good. Traditionally the outside of the front row is seen as a very good position to have if you want to take the lead going into turn one next Sunday. What are your thoughts there?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I definitely feel very good. We have a very strong car, especially in race trim we're very strong. I think also the Chevy power is great in race trim. Very excited for that.

Arie came to me after my run. He told me, It took me five years to get to the front row. Once I started third, I won the



race. Let's hope I can do the same as Arie.

I'm just very happy with how the car behaved. All the work from the team was very, very good. We have a very strong qualifying car, but also in race trim, especially with only two cars in front of me, it's going to be very good. I'm very excited to give it everything next week.

**Q. What do you think is the reason that you guys as basically the only Chevy team are able to compete with the best of them?**

RINUS VEEKAY: I think our car really suits the Chevy power band. The team just puts a lot of work in it. It was super close with Ed, very close. I did beat my boss, which is pretty cool (smiling).

But, no, it was very tough out there. I gave it everything I had. Yeah, just missed out a little bit on Scott and Colton. I'm very happy. This feels like a win, like a pole for us. Yeah, I told the team, my engineer Matt Barnes, If you trim out, please do not tell me. If you're going to make the car any sketchier, just don't tell me. I'm going to stay flat no matter what.

They did not trim, but yeah, it was on the limit. Really a perfect car.

**Q. Scott, obviously in your INDYCAR career, statistically you've had more wins than poles. The Speedway, it's the other way around. How important was it for you to kind of get a second Indy 500 win? You're always trying to win, but from a career perspective, how important is that to you?**

SCOTT DIXON: It's goal number one. I think it's the first goal that we set for the team all year first, then you focus on the championship. Yeah, that's never changed. I think the first time you step onto this place, come with one of the best teams, that's the obvious sort of goal for us to try and achieve that.

Yeah, I think we've finished second four or five times here. I can tell you that's the worst spot to finish. Last year was frustrating. Again, this place owes me nothing. We got to keep knocking on that door and hopefully one day again, one day soon, that opens up.

THE MODERATOR: We'll cut Scott Dixon loose. A busy afternoon of practice. Congratulations. Four-time pole winner for the Indianapolis 500.

We'll continue with goes for Rinus.

**Q. You mentioned beating Ed. Has he said anything**

**to you? Also, I happen to know you're quite superstitious. Anything you've done today that you're definitely going to do again on Sunday?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, well, it was very close with Ed. He came out of the car with his helmet on. He just gave me a thumbs up. The atmosphere on the team is great. The teamwork with me, Ed, and Conor was just amazing this week. Everyone put the best efforts in they had.

Super happy for me but also for the team. Yeah, for Chevy of course. I feel very, very happy.

Yeah, superstition-wise, I'm very superstitious, very. This morning my trainer asked me, Should we go for a bike ride or a run? It's only going to be at 3 when you go out. I told him, I don't want to do something different compared to yesterday. He thought I was a little weird, but it kind of worked out.

I think for race day I'm just going to take it easy, yeah, give it all I have.

**Q. No fans last year, being in the front row, what are your thoughts knowing there are going to be fans greeting you this year?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, it's amazing. I did not hear the crowds when I did my first lap, but I heard it was quite amazing. When I got out of the car, I waved at the fans. That feeling, there's goose bumps, then there's something else. Well, that's what I had.

It's amazing. You really feel like a rock star, like an INDYCAR driver now. Last week's win really helped with the fan base. I think today, too. I just love that the fans are out here. I try to make as much time as possible for them.

Yeah, the walk from Gasoline Alley to the garages are quite long, but I enjoy every minute of every fan that comes to me.

**Q. What is your first memory of the Indy 500?**

RINUS VEEKAY: My first memory of the Indy 500, probably my dad showing a video of Arie winning the race in 1990. I was hooked to racing as long as I can remember. I had two big fans, Arie Luyendyk and Ayrton Senna. I think they were the both best in the business in two different categories.

When I saw that, INDYCAR was something you dream of when you're a little kid. I'm living a dream right now.

**Q. After Arie was no longer racing, did you have a guy**



... when all is said, we're done.®

**out here in the series that you rooted for?**

RINUS VEEKAY: So of course we had Robert Doornbos, which he raced in Champ Car back then. I definitely rooted for him. For some part I wasn't really following INDYCAR that much. Then once I got to the United States with go-karting, that's when I found out about the Road to Indy. Yeah, then all that stuff happened.

I went to the Indy 500 for the first time in 2016. Since then I've been to every 500. It's been a big dream. I've been here as a spectator. Right now I'm starting on the front row for my second Indy 500, which is insane. I'm over the moon.

**Q. Is 2016 when you met Arie?**

RINUS VEEKAY: That's when I met Arie, meet-and-greet at the Union Jack's Pub. That was pretty cool. He heard about a Dutch kid trying to make it to the INDYCAR. Then in my first year I made some cool moves, I won some races. He was like, Well, I'm quite impressed. He started to get a little more involved. Right now I think he's as excited as I am.

**Q. I noticed in some of your videos you end with a Borat thing. Are you a big Borat fan?**

RINUS VEEKAY: I just think he's pretty funny. Kind of my humor. In the team there's three different drivers with three different personalities. You got Ed, the father. You got Conor, well, you know how he is. You got me. I'm basically the child. I'm serious when I need to be, but for the rest of the day...

It's a different atmosphere for me and the team. I'm quite busy and jumpy. I've seen some personalities change within the team with some team members who I thought I never expected you to be like that.

I'm just as crazy as I can be. I enjoy every minute of it. Everyone in the team loves it. I think it really keeps the spirits up. Everyone is the person who they want to be.

THE MODERATOR: Among those that celebrated or congratulated you after your qualifying run was Arie Luyendyk. He celebrated with you a little bit last week as well. It's got to be special to see Arie very much a part of your career now after looking up to him.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, definitely. It's already a pleasure to have him giving me advice. Sometimes it's a little tough because he's a steward, he's in race control. It's a healthy relationship we have. Whenever I do something wrong, I want him to give me the penalty I deserve because I don't

want something to be pulled out of context.

I just think it's a very healthy relationship with Arie. Yeah, I think I'm very proud of what he has done in the past. I think he's starting to get proud of me, too.

**Q. Are you confident with going fast with saving fuel?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yes. I feel very confident. We tried last week when we had all these race trim runs, I tried to run out front, tried some different fuel maps to see what pace I could be at to lead and not be passed, or follow another car without him pulling away. We felt really good with saving fuel.

Yeah, I don't know what the strategy is going to be for the race. I feel good while pushing 100%, but I also feel good while saving fuel and being conservative.

I think we really can give a big hit for the win for the 500.

**Q. By having new aero package, can you go as long as distance as last year?**

RINUS VEEKAY: I think it's going to be about the same distance as last year. It's not so much different. We felt some new aero things that were better. It's not that much different. The team really knows what to do. I'm just excited to get out there. Doesn't matter what happens, I'll give it all, like everything I have.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Rinus. Congratulations. Front row for the Indianapolis 500.

RINUS VEEKAY: Thanks for having me.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports