

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, August 14, 2021

Romain Grosjean

Colton Herta

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up today's race at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the Big Machine Spiked Coolers Grand Prix. We'll be joined shortly by the champion, Will Power, and second place Romain Grosjean. Third place Colton Herta has already joined us here to wrap up his day. Third podium of the season for Colton. There was one point in the race you were kind of reeling in Will. Tell us about that and your day overall.

COLTON HERTA: I think it was only because -- it was really only because he had a little bit of, I think, pressure from Hinch and stuff. Hinch was in front of him. That was the only point I was really able to catch him. He was on rails today. I couldn't really do anything else any other time. He was just better, a tenth or two each lap. So yeah, we lacked a little bit to him.

I think Romain was probably a little bit better than us, too, to be honest, but we held him off for as long as we could until he got back by us on the restart there.

Yeah, no, it felt good. Great turnaround from practice. We really didn't have any sort of pace. We finished P26 there, and that was pretty much legit pace.

Yeah, happy to get top 5 in qualifying and move on with the podium. A lot stronger in the race than what I thought we were going to be, so that's a nice surprise.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously Romain Grosjean also joins us, second straight second-place finish here at IMS road course, second career podium in the NTT INDYCAR Series. Clearly there was something you enjoy about the road course here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, I guess. I've got the key to the speedway, so it feels like home. I'll give them back, you know. But I have the key, so it's home.

No, I mean, we've had a good car here. The truck was quite different from when we came first, so we had to adapt

a little bit the setup to make it work. Yesterday I think we had pole, but I made a small mistake in Turn 8, 9, 10, which is probably where we were the weakest this weekend compared to where we were the strongest in May, so the track did change a little bit with the curbs. So we can analyze that, but definitely the car was good today.

We know we are very strong on the brake, and in the restart I gave it a go on Colton. I've been racing him for some time, and I know he's a super fun track and it's one as a driver you can go and you know he's going to leave you the place just for a good fight. I wouldn't do that with anyone, but with Colton it works, and I was hoping to do the same on Will on the last restart, but he went early and just couldn't quite keep up with him.

But I'm happy, happy for the team and looking forward to tomorrow.

Q. Romain, I was going to ask you, you kind of touched on it, where was Will the strongest out there compared to your car today, especially on that last stint?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, I think on the last stint we were stronger than he was. I believe we catch him quite a bit, didn't we. Yeah, we did catch him quite a bit. I think where he was better than me on the first stint, on the blacks. We pulled away, we had a very slow first pit stop, and I think those first three stints, as well, he made a gap. The last two stints I believe we came back on the game, and he had 70 something amount of Push-to-Pass left when I was on zero for the last few laps.

I knew it was going to be tight and tough. But I think we were a touch faster during the race than he was.

Q. For Colton, you're out there pounding around there and stuff, but how frustrating was it today when you just kind of consider what you've got and you've got to just take what you've got? You know what I'm saying?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's really frustrating and hard to accept that you just can't be the fastest sometimes, that you just don't have the car on that day. Fortunately that day was for us, but it wasn't far off. We still had good pace and finished on the podium, so we weren't that far off. We



just needed a little bit here and there to kind of make up the deficit to Will.

THE MODERATOR: Guys you thought had a good car yesterday maybe didn't happen today and vice versa. It was difficult to kind of predict what was going to happen in this thing.

COLTON HERTA: It was also really weird how many guys struggled that were really quick here in May and then vice versa, where the McLaren cars were nowhere in May and they were really good -- yeah, I don't know, really weird. Strange weekend.

Q. For Romain, the family is here still, watching you race in person, which was a rarity, I believe, overseas. This is not the first time this has happened now; does it have a deeper meaning as you go along? It's pretty cool to have the fam here, right?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: One thing that is easy to forget when you do that as a job is that you started doing racing for fun, and that's why it was your passion, and then you get into that big washing machine and pressure and so on and you forget the fun about it.

This year really what I've found in INDYCAR is that I take it seriously but with some lightness, and that works well. So having my family around is amazing, bringing the kids everywhere. But then when it's time to go to work I go to work and I do it seriously, but without taking myself seriously. That's a great combo for me. For me and every day, it's a Sunday, race day, I'm happy. We're going to go racing. In INDYCAR the beauty of it is that you don't need to be on pole position to have a good race car and come back.

Maybe Nashville was a bit extreme, but you know you've got a chance in the race, and it's just cool to go there knowing that everyone has got the option to win.

Q. Romain, there was some chatter maybe that you were thinking or possibility you might do the Cup race here with the association with Rick Ware, and did you ever talk to him about it and/or have you talked to him about getting in the Cup car in the future?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, I wouldn't do it in the same weekend, that's for sure. I think it's pushing -- it's hard enough if you want to be competitive in INDYCAR; you need to focus on it. I don't think you have time to go jumping in another car.

Obviously they look good on track. I was surprised yesterday, I wanted to watch them -- even though it was

only -- it was Xfinity, but they were good. They sound great and they could be fun, and then I actually drove one in Austin with Tony Stewart back in 2018, and Kevin Magnussen and I, we had a lot of fun. It was cool. It's heavy. It's got a little downforce. But it was fun. Again, never say never.

I'm also tempted by a midget. I want to see the dirt track down there, and who knows, I may give it a go eventually.

Q. BC39 is in a couple days.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, Conor Daly is doing it, and he says, well, I can get you a car. I'm in New York City with the family so I can't make it, but I'm not ruling out.

Q. Romain, we saw that you used your Push-to-Pass early. Was that by design, and did that hurt you in the end?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: It didn't hurt. It didn't make us any favor to try to go for the win, but I needed to go through some back markers early on, and I did use it quite a bit with Chilton, and he used it to defend. So you burn it for kind of not much. Colton was really good in traffic. He was just going by. I need to go there. I need to pass, as well, and probably on some races it just goes faster than others. Some races it's been very easy to keep some, and some other races, like hey, yes, I was down 25 laps to the end or so.

Q. For both of you, some drivers were having trouble following other cars. You kind of get stuck at that one-to-two-second gap. How tough was it to close up and actually make a pass?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, if you're pretty similar on pace, it would be very difficult to pass. You kind of have to sit there and wait for a mistake, and also on the red tires, on used reds at least, and you have to do 25 laps, it's easy to overcook them, and if you're battling and trying to stay under a second behind somebody you can really cook the tires and destroy them.

It's definitely tricky. You kind of have to wait and see what tires people start on, and when they go to the blacks, because the blacks are so far off at this track, way more than any other track that we go to, that it makes a huge difference, and if you're on the blacks you're pretty much a sitting duck.

Q. Romain, Nigel Mansell won a one-mile oval in New Hampshire, beating Paul Tracy, Emerson Fittipaldi. He called it the purest form of racing. You're going to race on an oval; what is your preconception of racing

on ovals?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: You know, obviously I did a test day end of July, and there was so much to learn. It's so different from every type of racing I've done before. So next week I'm a rookie, a proper rookie. I've been named a rookie all year long. I don't feel like one. Next week I am one. I just want to gradually go for it, improve myself, learn about it.

It's a weird one. The cars drive itself. People are telling you that'll be fine, and you're like, what are they talking about; I drive my car. On the ovals I think the car does the work and you control the speed, and it's quite a bit of a strange feeling.

Q. How much are you looking forward to next week?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, very much. I think it's just going to be a great experience. I want to see how it's going. Everyone seems to be enjoying ovals there. I still prefer road courses, but I like braking late. But I'm looking forward to it and seeing what we can get out of it.

Q. Colton, Andretti Autosport has been chipping away at it all year. How close do you think the team is to getting back to where it was?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it was a really good step this weekend. Jack and Alex were in the top 5 for most of the weekend, and yeah, so I think it just shows. This is one of the weekends where I got a lot of help from them switching over because the car is diabolical in FP1, so we switched over to their setups and found a lot of time with that.

Yeah, it helps a lot for me, but also it's good for them that they're chipping away at it and close to where they want to be.

Q. Romain, you had a whole new neighborhood show up this week of some other drivers; did they infiltrate your motor home area or did they just put up their own subdivision, the NASCAR drivers?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yes, they took a lot. It's not acceptable.

COLTON HERTA: They ruined our curbs, too.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: And they ruined our curbs. It was nice and smooth and now it's bumpy.

Q. Where did they move you, and is it kind of a mixed neighborhood with NASCAR drivers?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, obviously they took the main lot, but I think generally it's cool to have NASCAR and INDYCAR on the same weekend. For the fans it's amazing. For us it's cool to see them. I guess for them it's cool to see us. We're all passionate about racing. We do different categories.

But at the end it's cool there's a place for everyone, and I think some of the drivers may come and watch the race tomorrow, and just a great weekend for the fans. Indianapolis is a place you expect to see INDYCAR, but now you can see INDYCAR and NASCAR on the same weekend.

Q. Did it take a little bit of getting used to where the INDYCAR paddock was this weekend?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, it changed, but every track is different, and that makes you feel it's like not the same one.

Q. You're now two points behind Scott for Rookie of the Year; is that something that you knew you wanted to fight for once the season got going?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: When you miss four races it's not easy to fight for a championship, but definitely it's cool to be back in the game. Saying that, Scott is really strong on ovals, so he may be strong next week and score some good points.

I think generally I've been impressed with Scott this season, coming from V-8 Supercars, jumping in INDYCAR, sitting in the seat and doing what he's done, it's been very impressive. So yeah, it's cool to be catching up back. I think we could have more points if it wasn't for Nashville and Detroit where we didn't get very lucky.

We just go racing, we have fun and we do the best we can. I think for the team it's important to stay in the lead, leading second, and if I can get Rookie of the Year it would be nice, but if he has it, he would deserve it because he's probably having a better rookie season than I am.

Q. Romain, Formula 1 is on their summer break; have you been in contact with any of your friends from F1 about coming over here while they're on vacation and taking in a race?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: We've seen Alex Albon in the paddock here, ex-Formula 1 driver. I congratulate Esteban Ocon for the win obviously in Hungary, which is a big thing. But I haven't heard much from Formula 1. It's a very different paddock and you don't get so much relationship than you do here. I texted Colton after the pole in

Nashville because he kick our ass badly --

Q. I've heard other people say that, that this paddock is a lot friendlier.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: It's an incredible paddock. I can't explain it, but hopefully it's not changing because it's beautiful.

Q. Quick question for Romain. Obviously you've been on the podium here in Indy twice, but particularly this weekend, how much confidence does that give you going forward to next week given that you've never raced on an oval before?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, as I say, it's very different, and it's been different. It's going to be a different type of racing. Coming here we knew we kind of had our favorite bibs to defend, just because we had the pole last time out, and we were probably the fastest if it wasn't for the blue flags traffic.

We came here straight from FP1 and realized that the track was very different. The curbs were a bit different, it was a bit different, so we had to do some work and not just the setup, but next week is a brand new thing, so let's see where it goes.

Q. Is there any nervousness on your part going into next weekend or are you just excited about the whole experience?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I'm excited and also I think you need to respect ovals like street courses. There is not much room for mistake, and that's something you need to keep in mind rather than just trying to go balls out straight away.

Q. Romain, I think it's seven cars you're ahead of now in the points that have done the whole season, whereas obviously you haven't. Does that give you any kind of extra motivation or any kind of intent for next year to really give that full season a go?

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Well, you know, I'm doing my first oval next week. That's going to give me feedback of what it is and what I'm waiting to do in the future. What can I do, but I think my family and myself, we feel very good in the U.S. We're very happy here. We've had an amazing summer. We'd be willing to come over and give it a little bit more time to INDYCAR.

Q. Colton, last weekend not too many positives, but you needed a bit of a rebound this weekend. How quickly did that come for you? Were you kind of over

last weekend as soon as you got in the car for practice or did it take a little bit longer to kind of feel your way in this weekend?

COLTON HERTA: No, I mean, once you're in the car I was fully focused on this weekend, but it did kind of take a while to get over that. Yeah, I was pretty frustrated at myself for the next few days. But yeah, this is the best thing that you can do to forget about it is get back in the race car, especially when you have a good weekend after. It makes it that much more enjoyable and forgettable, I guess, for Nashville.

Q. Last weekend's kind of ending just was heartbreaking. You had to try to chase down Marcus Ericsson. What did you learn from last weekend to translate into today to try to chase down Will Power for the lead?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think it's easy to say like, I guess, just sitting second and that's all you're going to get, but on a weekend like that with how much speed I got, I couldn't see the race going any other way than me winning. I had tunnel vision with that, and I just got frustrated in the car. I think I just overdid it.

And then yeah, it didn't make me any happier after I crashed out.

This was good for a nice little reset, and great job by the team for giving me a great car to kind of get it done this weekend.

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