

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Colton Herta

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Attention turned towards our race winner, Colton Herta, the California sweep. Third win of the season, sixth of his career.

Big pass on Josef further back in the field, got in front of him and stayed in front the rest of the way.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, what a good car that we've come here with. We've actually done numerous changes this weekend, but one very minor change that stuck on the car. It just shows what kind of car we brought do this race weekend.

Yeah, it was perfect. Without the muff-up in qualifying, I think we could have had a great shot at pole, have another dominant race. It was fun to come from the back. A little bit more stressful, but it was a lot of fun.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Colton.

Q. How big of a deal is it for you to not only win this race but to finish this season with back-to-back victories?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, this is the biggest race for me outside of Indy. I said previously that this is the first race I ever was able to come to, being from Santa Clarita. I was two weeks old when I first came to Long Beach. My father was driving in 2000. It was the only race I could go to because I was so young and I couldn't fly yet. Lucky enough that it came around.

I remember growing up around here, coming to this race every year when I was five, six, seven, all the way up until I was racing in INDYCAR in 2019. I can't believe I won it on my second try. I'm super happy. This is a big one for me.

Q. I believe there's a famous quote that races are often won and lost at the race shop. How much preparation did you do with your engineers? What part did you play in coming up with the perfect setup?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah I think we always have a clear

plan of what we want coming in from the engineering side. They do a lot of work to make sure that the car is prepped properly. Looking back at previous years of setup, what we can expect. For a race like this, it was the first for us with the aeroscreen here at Long Beach. There's a lot of unknowns coming in. I think we brought a tremendous car.

Yeah, a lot of work does go into it. It's definitely worth it when you can get a result like this.

Q. You were on the black tires at the end. Everybody behind you were on reds. How stressful was that?

COLTON HERTA: I was pretty focused the whole time. Not really stressed, just focused and trying to nail corner by corner, just focusing to the next one. It was a big ask to keep guys like Scott and Josef behind when they're on new reds. I guess Josef was on used, but Scott was on new.

I knew it was going to be tough. I thought when the yellow came out it was kind of game over for us and we were going to be swallowed on the restart being on the blacks, but it worked. I think it just shows how good the car was. We were kind of all in tune, in one, fast on blacks, fast on reds, didn't matter. We were just fast.

Q. What were some of the difficulties driving from 14th to a win?

COLTON HERTA: I think we kind of proved that long today. If you have a great start, you start in the back, you can pass here. We were one of the cars that was trimmed, we were able to brake pretty less, which was a big thing for us. It was a lot of fun, too. I was kind of surprised how quick we were at the start. I was very surprised when we were able to keep going after hitting Ryan in the year after Jones spun Pato. We had a little bit of damage to the right front, but luckily it wasn't enough to kind of take us out, we could keep running around and be quick.

Q. You talk about your focus in the race. Can you talk a little bit about your emotions from starting so far back. Was that a thing where you were angry or were you eager?

COLTON HERTA: I mean, yesterday I was pretty upset at myself for making that mistake of hitting the wall in



qualifying and kind of taking us out of contention when I think we really should have done well.

But in the race, it's just fully focused on trying to get the best result out of it. You kind of know by maybe lap five or six what kind of car you have, if you have something that could be good in the race. I kind of knew. I got by a few guys, car was feeling good, I kind of knew. I didn't think we had a shot at winning, to be honest. I thought a podium would be a reach, but possible. I thought that was going to be the maximum.

I was very surprised by how much pace we were able to have. When I saw by like lap 15 or something we were in fifth, I couldn't believe it.

Q. Third and fifth in the championship the last two years. What do you need to do to win the championship?

COLTON HERTA: Just need to clean it up a little bit. We've been so close. I think there have been three or four other times we should have won and we didn't for different reasons. I'm not too worried about that right now. I think give a month and then look at it afterwards, kind of into the off-season, debriefing on 2021, what we need to do better to kind of be in Alex's position coming into the final round in 2022.

THE MODERATOR: One thing you haven't talked about is the final restart. Nice jump. That helped in the end.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I wasn't sure how far I could go from the start/finish line, and they would let me. I was kind of happy. I got a good jump out of nine. I don't think Josef was expecting me to go that early. I think that was enough of a buffer that the first few corners on the blacks are stone cold and trying to get all the rubber, all the debris off the tires, get some heat into them. It gave me enough of a buffer that I could do that without being under too much pressure from Josef.

From then on it's about managing the gap. I was still having to make a little bit of a bigger fuel number than Josef because he was able to pit one lap later. I had to sacrifice a little bit in the brake zones lifting, coasting, stuff like that. I'm happy with how everything played out.

Q. The setup compared with Nashville. Is there a fairly basic street course setup that you keep nailing?

COLTON HERTA: There are some major things that we do keep, then there's a lot of little things that might change, yeah. I'd say depending on the circuit, some stuff might be pretty different. There are a few, two or three, major things

that they found in the maybe last five years that we'll keep on the car for pretty much all street courses, and vice versa, the permanent road courses or the short ovals, superspeedways, stuff like that. We have these certain things that just work no matter what and are pretty much go-tos. We test them by taking them off and replacing them with stuff we think could be better, but it never really is.

Q. The nature of the damage, how did it affect you or the car?

COLTON HERTA: Sorry, the damage?

Yeah, the steering wheel was pretty right hand down for most of the race. I thought it was getting worse. Every time I would turn left, I had a lot of understeer. But versus, when I turned right, the thing would chuck it in. It was really fast. I needed to get a little bit used to that. Once I did, it wasn't that big of a problem.

Obviously the grip level was still the same as probably what it normally would have been. It's not as nice when you have to drive like this instead of what is your normal straight.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on the finish to 2021. We'll see you in St. Pete where you're the defending champion.

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