

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Monday, January 17, 2022

Helio Castroneves

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: The four-time Indianapolis 500 winner, Helio Castroneves.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That's awesome. I've been introduced several times today. It's just music to my ears, I have to say.

THE MODERATOR: What do you think? Is a five-timer in the cards?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Absolutely. I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't have a chance. Going to be fighting for it.

However, a few things first. Starting the championship with new people again just because the part-timers last year weren't able to continue.

However, Mike has a talent to find great quality people. Really, really, really looking forward to St. Pete. When you have that kind of preparation, imagine what we did last year without any preparation, now you can only imagine having everyone in sync.

It's just going to get better.

THE MODERATOR: I'm going to ask you a tough question because I love you and all.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I know.

THE MODERATOR: Your road courses and street courses, move up? What do you think?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Street course was doing pretty well, weren't they? Starting third last year in Long Beach. But the strategy unfortunately didn't work out the way we wanted.

Road course, yes. We weren't finding the sweet spot like we did in Long Beach, for example. But that's not worrying me right now. We just got to go through the process. We went through the process and we feel having Simon now with the team, which is going to be a great teammate as

well, working together to understand what we need. That probably going to put us on the next level.

THE MODERATOR: How do you and Simon complement each other?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: You know, Simon is an amazing talent. Very particular. Understands what he likes. Looks for small details. When we're together, one complement each other. He might like some things that maybe not suitable. However, there was things that works really well.

I really like it. He understand the team process, working as a teammate. We hopefully carrying that over to MSR, which not only going to help us, me and Simon, but help the team to elevate.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How did the test go last week at Sebring from your point of view?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Very good. As I mentioned, new members on the team were able to do some simulation of pit stops, were able to try some things in the race car. The weather unfortunately my side short a little bit. We end up having little issues on changing something in the car. Didn't finish quite the way you want to.

However, coming back again and having the communication and being in the car. Sebring is always very tough place. We were able to run a lot of laps in the morning, which went flawless. So it was a good start.

Q. Did you and Simon pick up right where you left off when you were at Team Penske as far as camaraderie?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, no, we definitely working on it. Like I said, we're in the same room, same truck, we're able to discuss what we feel that we can.

I just feel the communication is going to just get better. That was our first session together. He was just learning obviously the whole new process, as well, understanding the team. It was great. Certainly we're in the right direction.

Q. Busy week for you because don't you have to leave (indiscernible)?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That's correct. Now back, me and Simon, to the Acura Meyer Shank Racing team, looking forward to it, looking forward to the race next weekend. Yeah, it will be fun.

Q. If you had your choice, which two races would you like to win this year besides the 500 and why? What tracks are you hungry for?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, no question, Belle Isle is one place that last time we're going to be racing there. That's where everything started, winning my first-ever win in INDYCAR. That would be a special place for sure to come back.

St. Pete is always a place I enjoy coming over because of the history that we have there. It's always been great. It's the beginning of the season. Every time beginning of the season, everybody's excited. Not only myself but the team. We're pumped.

Texas is a place going to be different this year for me. We're going to be doing doubleheader, sharing the weekend with IMSA in Sebring.

There are few places. Mid-Ohio, it's becoming part of my home now with Meyer Shank Racing being from Ohio. That would be cool to carry the flag for many, many years that I won there, great to go back there and do it again.

Q. You're very kind of engrossed with MSR. How beneficial is that with you working on both the sports car side and the INDYCAR side?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Repeat that question, please.

Q. How beneficial is it to you being both part of the MSR team and then being into the INDYCAR team as well?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Look, I spent three years with IMSA. Actually the year before in 2020 ended up winning the championship. Last year we won not with MSR but I won the Daytona 24 Hour.

It's not that I'm just there filling a seat. This car is basically the car they ran for three and a half years because last year doesn't count, did only two races. It's something that you still there to develop, to improve.

Let's face it, we want to win the Daytona 24 Hours. With that, it's an opportunity for us to do well. We have two

teammates, Tom and Jarvis. Jarvis worked for Mazda for a long time. It takes a little bit of time to adapt.

It makes sense for me to be there. It's not that I going to be there, as I said, just to drive around. I want to win as much as anybody. Make sense to help the team to keep and organize Simon, another driver that drove for Acura. We understand each other.

This is going to be good for us, for the team, as I said, when I mention 'us'. To continue the distance races. It certainly helps.

For me, since we don't practice anymore or much with INDYCAR, it's great always to be behind the wheel driving, racing. It just open your driver skills or improve your driver skills anything that you drive.

Q. You mentioned Detroit. It got me thinking, if you were to go back 22 years ago when you climbed your first fence, if you were to look back on it, what would the Helio of today tell the Helio of then?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Keep it going, my friend. You're going to have a bright future. That's what I would tell (smiling).

I tell you what, it's amazing all these years being able to accomplish obviously everywhere we be able to go. It's always a challenge. Racing is challenging, right? When you love your sport, when you love what you do, you want to always improve. That's where I'm at right now. I want to continue improving and pushing hard.

It's fun when you prove some people wrong. I do that all the time with my wife. I don't get the credit anyway, so...

Q. The last couple years it's been interesting for you from running the personal schedule to Penske, moving over to Meyer Shank, winning the Indy 500 last year, now back on the schedule full-time again. What do you feel you've learned about yourself through those times where it almost seemed like your career in INDYCAR was coming to an end almost?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Right. I really enjoyed everywhere I went, learning different process. Through the Acura program I was able to relearn again 10, 15 years ago when you did have different manufacturers developing the car engine and stuff like that, which fascinates me. Obviously in the car all the engines are regulated, the rules are different.

However, you still learn something. That's why people sometimes don't understand, those small details, whether

it's outside talking to different engineers because sometimes you have different lingo talking about that, but it actually translate to something you're doing within the car which you can explain a little bit better and improve what you were doing.

This is what I enjoyed over the years. That's why I'm so, so pumped for 2022 because now we going to be able to go to all the tracks again and try different things and keep it going.

It's a constant learning process. I always say the quote Rick Mears told me, You never stop learning until you're six or seven feet under the ground, depends how tall are you. It's true. You always keep learning.

Q. A question about sports cars. Would you consider increasing your involvement in this category maybe full-time?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Okay, can you repeat the question slowly, please.

Q. As a sports car racing will enter its new era next year, would you consider maybe increasing your involvement in IMSA racing?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Whew. Let's go with 2022 first and then we will see how the process goes (smiling). As of right now that's where our focus is. But it would be great because LMDH would be awesome to be part of it, would be also awesome to learn something different with those different engines. I would love to, don't get me wrong. That's not my decision.

My desire is to do that, but unfortunately it's not my decision. We will go through 2022 for sure. Thank you for the question.

Q. Right now are competing in full-time season. You are a four-time INDYCAR winner. In which race do you stay focus in winning the fifth Indy 500 race or do you prefer to stay focused in winning the championship, which you don't have the opportunity to win?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Let me tell you one thing. To win the championship -- winning the Indy 500 will make that path less difficult. Thank God Indy 500 is in May, probably the fourth or fifth race. That would definitely help to keep pursuing the championship. That's the goal. We're definitely here to do that.

THE MODERATOR: I'm not surprised you won an Indy 500 a fourth time, but now you have a patch that says that so you don't forget.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, even my name is over here. Look at that. I love it. This guy must be worth a lot.

THE MODERATOR: I'm shocked that she got you to move out of Florida. How did that happen?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Let me explain about that. It was a glimpse of a pandemic scenario. I end up selling my place, going to Georgia. Now I'm back, going back to Florida again. I'm going to be most of the time in Key Biscayne, which is great. My little girl is going to be kind of like back and forth. It's kind of like Plan B, why don't you come over the weekend, sunshine here and everything.

Let's see how long that going to works. But again, I like to prove wrong. Hopefully I'll prove what we did was a different direction.

Q. (No microphone.)

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yes. He got it. He got it.

THE MODERATOR: I saw in a winter parka the other day when you called in.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Oh, my God.

THE MODERATOR: I thought you were in Alaska.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I thought, too. It was snowing two days ago. I was like, What's going on? I saw once in Atlanta snow. Wow, that was cold, yeah. That's another reason. I do feel buying that place in Key Biscayne was the best decision I ever made, so...

Training will be great, right? Weather. Yes, relaxing will be good, too.

THE MODERATOR: Inviting your pals down.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: There we go, yes. More than welcome.

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