

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Friday, August 19, 2022

**Sting Ray Robb**

**Hunter McElrea**

**Colton Herta**

**Alexander Rossi**

Press Conference



Like Hunter said, we were trying to get in traffic to see if we could get some passing done. This track is so different from Iowa. I think it will be a little bit different racing here, as Hunter said, with the different aero packages that can be run. Obviously a different strategy. Everyone is anticipating something a little bit different from what we had at the last oval race.

I like the track a lot. I've done a lot of races here now. This is my second Indy Lights race. This year will be a little bit different. The field is a bit deeper, seems a bit tighter from the testing.

THE MODERATOR: Driver of the Bainbridge Honda in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES, Colton Herta.

Colton, hard to believe it's already the final oval for the season of 2022, isn't it?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's a little sad, but excited for the weekend to come. We've had strong cars here in the past, all across the board, INDYCAR, Indy Lights.

THE MODERATOR: Alex?

ALEXANDER ROSSI: A mixed bag is a nice way of putting it. We've been on the podium here. We had really good cars last year, and we're hoping that translates. We haven't tested, so that will be a little bit of a mystery later on today.

Ultimately I think this is a very different place than Iowa, so I'm not worried about our short oval car transferring from one place to another because we certainly wouldn't have wanted to bring that car here.

I think the team has done a pretty good job and we'll be in good position come the end of the weekend.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it for questions.

**Q. Alex and Colton, the last month we've been to some venues where the promoters have been active in promoting the INDYCAR race. Big crowds at Iowa, Nashville, this weekend. What are your thoughts on that? Obviously if all the track promoters did that,**

THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to World Wide Technology Raceway on behalf of everyone the INDYCAR and the INDYCAR SERIES. We begin with Andretti Autosport.

Joining us this morning, the driver of the No. 27 NAPA Auto Parts AutoNation Honda, Alexander Rossi.

From the Indy Lights Series, Sting Ray Robb.

Also from Indy Lights, Hunter McElrea.

We'll begin with you, Hunter. Five podiums, you won the last oval we were on, Iowa Speedway. Your thoughts about racing here tomorrow and practice, qualifying today?

HUNTER McELREA: I think it will be good. It's difficult to pass, but I think it's possible. There's a funny rule they do now, they basically impound aero settings. I think what Brabham did in Iowa was slow in qualifying, but in the race he drove to the front. I think it's going to be a little different this time. People are going to be thinking ahead more to the race.

It should be good. Hopefully no issues like last year, the tires and stuff, things like that. I think it's going to be a bit better this year. There were no issues this year, touch wood.

THE MODERATOR: Stingray, behind Hunter in the points standings, second at Nashville. How was the test for you last week? Looking forward obviously to a big day tomorrow, as well.

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, the test we had here was good. Nice having everybody here, we could see where we stack up.



**we'd probably have big crowds everywhere.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, I mean, I think you're absolutely right. I think it provides a template for others. It's a case study, right? It shows what is possible.

Most things in life require capital and investment to grow. I don't think an INDYCAR event is any different. We obviously have a huge amount of support and gratitude to our current and existing promoters for what they do. We wouldn't have a championship without them.

However, we all want to see this series grow, see it continue to evolve and invite a new fan base in, introduce them to our sport. That requires, like I said, time and money to do that.

We have a template for what has been successful. Hopefully it's a roadmap for other promoters going forward.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I mean, same. It's important in our sport, right, to have good promotion, these sort of things. We have seen that in the crowd count for the last few races.

Yeah, everybody here at Gateway have been really good promoters. We've always had outstanding crowds whether that be a day or night race.

**Q. What do you think of a Wall of Smack?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: What is that?

**Q. Smack quotes and put them in the turn two wall.**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I didn't know that.

**Q. Born out of the Newgarden and Grosjean deal.**

COLTON HERTA: He probably knows more about that, too.

**Q. Actually he has a quote over there.**

COLTON HERTA: Perfect.

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Mine was just defensive. It wasn't smack related. I would never talk smack to Jenna. I like her too much (laughter). I probably know more about it because I crashed there.

**Q. Alex and Colton, you mentioned you felt it's a very different short oval track, maybe you have a lot more potential than you guys have shown at Iowa. What is different about this track that you feel like really jibes**

**well with what you can bring here? Do you feel like what we saw last year can carry over a year later without the testing?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I think it can carry over, yes. I think the biggest difference honestly is this surface is from the 21st century. I think Iowa, the bumps are part of what makes it what it is.

I think we as an organization really struggle with the ride control, maintaining kind of a good platform over the bumps where you really don't have to deal with that. I think that would probably be the biggest.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, same. It's honestly really a fun track, too, because of how different it is. So the balance is quite different on each end. It makes it very tough, especially in qualifying, where you have to be on the limit, understeer and oversteer (Indiscernible) undone.

Like he says, it does seem like the bumps are kind of what we struggled with in Iowa. A completely different racetrack. The angle of corners is completely different, different speed, so yeah.

**Q. Sounds later on today trying to work in the second groove with the group of nine cars that we have, if we don't have rain, having seen what that did at Texas, do you feel like that can have a potential into the race and how long can that last?**

COLTON HERTA: I hope it helps. I'm not too sure, to be honest. I don't think you can go off of Texas because the PJ1 stuff completely ruined that place.

We don't necessarily need a full lane. If we can get like half of a lane, get the outside of the car out there, that would make a huge difference passing into three and four.

When you're on new tires in the race, you can almost get through three and four flat when you're behind cars. That's important for getting a good run. It's not really necessary there, it's more in one and two.

I don't think we'll get a full lane in one and two, but if we can get the half lane, that would be good going into three.

**Q. Maybe not so much being in the title race here, particularly at this track where passing is such a commodity, if you are up against some of these Penske cars or Ganassi cars, do you take a little bit more of a risk knowing they have more to lose in a potential incident?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: Yeah, 100%. I think you can take



advantage of that. That's one benefit, I guess, of not really -- you don't have to think about points. For us, it's about the individual racers, and they have to be a little bit more cognizant of that.

We definitely know that in the back of our heads and we'll try to use that to our advantage.

**Q. Six guys in the championship race. Do you race around them any differently? Are you aware of their stakes?**

ALEXANDER ROSSI: I mean, yeah. I think it's interesting. It's kind of a double-edged sword. I think you're more aggressive with them because you know they probably have to back out. At the same time certainly you don't want to be the guy that hits them.

You're almost more aggressive and more cautious. It's hard to explain. But, yeah, I think you're very aware of who they are and what they're doing around you.

**Q. Colton, your thoughts?**

COLTON HERTA: I guess, yeah, similar. I don't really change the way that I race them. I like to think I'm not, like, smashing people off all the time so it shouldn't really matter. I shouldn't have to change anything.

But it is always a balance. You definitely don't want to be the guy that takes out the championship leader with three races to go. You kind of maybe keep that in the back of your mind.

At the end of the day if you have to go for something, you have to do it.

**Q. For the Indy Lights boys, getting to run on an oval, most of your schedule is all road courses, how big of a thrill is that for you? How important is it because everybody's goal is to try to one day be in the Indy 500?**

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, no, I think it's a really good thing to have. It's kind of the same schedule as we've had in the lower levels as well. We went to the short, bumpy oval in Lucas Oil Raceway, then we came here to Gateway.

I think Iowa is the substitute for that in Indy Lights. Two different driving styles are required for both those tracks. Even more so to the Indy 500. The Speedway there is going to be a different animal.

I guess we're just going to take as much knowledge as we

can from this. When we get to INDYCAR, hopefully we can apply it there.

HUNTER McELREA: Yeah, it's good. I like oval racing a lot. When you're a foreigner like me, you come over here, it's very new. It's probably I think like my sixth oval race ever, so still not that many races under my belt on an oval.

Good at Iowa to get first pole and a win, albeit very lucky. I think it will be strong. A small race called the Indy 500 which is one we all want to win. Probably should get a few ovals under your belt before you try to tackle that.

THE MODERATOR: We appreciate you guys getting up early and coming in this morning.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

