

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, March 4, 2023

**Michael Andretti**

**Romain Grosjean**

**Colton Herta**

Press Conference



MICHAEL ANDRETTI: We were very excited coming into this season for sure. Pre-season testing went very well. We did a lot of hard work over the winter. We felt pretty optimistic, but you never know what you have until you get it on the racetrack.

Seems like it's showing the way we hoped it would. Great start so far. Obviously we're here for the race, so tomorrow is the big day.

THE MODERATOR: Colton, another front row start for you here on the streets of St. Pete. You saved the best for last.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, just missed it on that last run. We were looking really good all day. Just a sloppy last lap. But it was still good enough for P2.

Two Andretti cars on the front row and two Hondas on the front row. Keeping those Chevys and McLarens back. Good day, happy with it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Michael, nearly had three guys fighting for the pole. Kyle has been impressive all weekend. How excited are you to be able to see what that 27 car is going to do this season?**

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: No, been very, very happy with his results and testing. Up until the last mistake, this weekend he's been doing a great job. They sort of made a mistake in the first session where he they sent him out behind a slower car, he didn't get a lap in. He had to use another set of reds to make it through because the red flag came out. Starting on the back foot anyway to make it a 1-2-3.

But very happy with the job he's been doing so far.

**Q. After a season like last year, how important is it to**

**start this season off like this?**

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: It's big for him, for sure, for his head and everything. One thing about Kyle, he has a lot of confidence. I don't think any of this is bothering him. I think he had a lot of confidence in himself coming into the year. He said that when he got in one of our cars, there was a big difference. He took to it right away, so...

**Q. Michael, when you guys announced Colton's extension, I asked Colton why did you sign so early, he said, I know what is going on at Andretti, but he couldn't really talk about it. All weekend all we've heard about is all the work you have done. What has been done to come out this strong?**

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: If I told you, I'd have to kill you (laughter).

**Q. I think a lot of people might take you up on that offer. So spill it, then you can off me for good (laughter).**

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: No, I'm sure we're doing like everyone else. We stumbled across some things that seemed to work for us.

**Q. Like what?**

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: I'm not going to tell you. Do I look nuts (laughter)?

**Q. Good dampers...**

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: I'm not saying.

COLTON HERTA: We finally attached the front wing.

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: Why did you tell them (laughter)?

All the simulation stuff, things we were doing, seemed to be showing. Again, you don't know where you stand till you get it on track. The pre-season testing has gone really well. That made us feel better it all showed up, what we hoped on the track.

**ASAP** sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

THE MODERATOR: Joined by the pole winner for tomorrow's race, Romain Grosjean. First pole here at the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Pete.

P1, what a way to start the season.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, for sure. As Mike said, we improved a lot from last year as a team. I was impressed when I came to Thermal, all the efforts. It was a good test. Sebring was another good one.

On track, obviously 27 cars, hard to get a lap. You never knew your best performance. Having three of us in the Fast Six, locked in the front row, is pretty impressive to start the season.

Thankful for the team. We worked really hard from a tough season last year. There were some better days, but today is a good one.

THE MODERATOR: More questions.

**Q. Romain, you said last year there was something not coming your way, you worked hard and found something. Can you elaborate?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Sadly, I cannot. It is a bit of front wing not added.

But yeah, the car felt much more alive. Nashville was the first step, Iowa was another one, Laguna Seca was the third one. 100% Sebring and Thermal we tried back to back to set up (indiscernible) the one I struggled to drive. 100% we found what I need.

There's always bits and pieces we can improve on the car, but this weekend as a team we've been very impressive and hopefully we can carry that out in the race.

**Q. You had trouble in practice.**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: A lot of people had issues on the brakes. You could see a lot of guys suffering. Even qualifying, two guys went off at the last corner. The wind has been playing a role.

This morning I spun, but no big deal. We worked on the car, made some small adjustments for quallies and it worked well.

**Q. Michael, seems like you're always fast in pre-season testing. Did you not trust it as much based on last year?**

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: Yeah, I mean, the other thing we

have to do, we did have many races where we had very fast cars last year, but we tended to do something wrong, shoot ourselves in the foot one way or another. That's another thing we've really studied and worked on. Hopefully our pit stops will be better and strategies will be better.

We feel if we just operate and don't make mistakes, we feel like we are in a good position for the whole year.

**Q. Colton: Useless as gum on a boot heel. Can you elaborate?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, that was a bad lap. I probably did just about everything wrong that I could have.

But I did a 5-5 in the run before. I didn't think I could really go much faster than that if at all. Even if I did hook up a lap, I think it would be really close with Romain.

But, yeah, I think in the 5s, that's pretty much the absolute limit of this place for these conditions. Yeah, that's a really good lap.

I was referring to myself driving, by the way, not the car. The way you said it sounded like I was referring to the car. Not yet at least.

**Q. Is this kind of along the same lines if it's a seventh-place car, we're going to finish seventh? You didn't overdrive it. Fitting with that mentality?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, qualifying is a different thing, right? I (indiscernible) struggle with qualifying. It's not something I've focused on. It's more the racing, taking it in as that.

Yeah, we'll try to get the most out of it. Obviously, we'll try to win, but if it's not going to happen, it's not going to happen. We'll finish third, fourth, 15th.

**Q. Romain, the last two polesitters have gone on to win. From racing here two times before, what are the difficulties you'll have to deal with?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Yeah, 26 other guys that are trying to do the same thing as I am tomorrow.

INDYCAR is super competitive. We've seen the lap times in practice have been very tight. Good thing is that we've got three cars up there, so we have good chances as a team to grab the win.

I'm going to do the best I can. I'm going to work on the car for the FP3 warmup to make sure we have a good race



car, then we're going to do our best. As Colton say, if the car is good enough to win, we win. If not, we finish where it is.

**Q. When you think back to your first pole in INDYCAR, any lessons from that race day you take into tomorrow?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: No. I think that race I did everything right on my side. The team didn't see Rinus coming through. Wasn't even on the radar. Got Colton's dad in Indy some years ago.

We have good strategies, great guys behind it, and a very good car today. Colton was P1 most of the session. I was up there. Q3, worked well.

**Q. Do we read too much into it when we see three guys in the Fast Six? Is there a different feeling this year? How are you approaching the race?**

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: For me, I feel a lot more optimistic. I think we really studied ourselves and got real honest with ourselves where we needed to improve. I think we've done it.

Obviously the race is going to be another thing. Hopefully we can have all four cars go through the race without making a mistake. If that happens, I think we have a great shot at winning.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I agree.

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: Thanks, Colton (laughter).

**Q. Michael, 'honest with ourselves', does that mean you got rid of some old processes and procedures, or you had gone down a path that wasn't working?**

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: Some of that. Also training and stuff with our pit stops, the way we do things. Yeah, there's a lot of little stuff. It's little things that catch you out. We really worked on trying to be a lot more detail-oriented, things like that.

Again, I hope it pays off.

**Q. In the early practice sessions with 27 cars out on the track, how difficult is that making life for you?**

ROMAIN GROSJEAN: I think I got really locked in practice. I never had too much traffic. There's some weekends like this.

Honestly so far it's been good. The weekend is going to be

a bit more complicated.

COLTON HERTA: It's been pretty terrible for me, to be honest. It's tough to get a lap even in some of the sessions. It is kind of a big accordion effect once you have this many cars backing off, going again right at turn 10.

I'm not really sure what can be done for it, though. But it is annoying sometimes.

**Q. Michael, as a team owner, this must give you a lot of confidence to know the series is this healthy.**

MICHAEL ANDRETTI: Oh, yeah, I'm very bullish on the series. I've always said that I think we have the best racing in the world. I think people are starting to notice it more and follow it more.

Yeah, I feel really good about the future of INDYCAR racing.

THE MODERATOR: We will cut Andretti Autosport loose. Congratulations.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

