

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Friday, April 14, 2023

**Pato O'Ward**

**Colton Herta**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Wrapping up day one with NTT INDYCAR SERIES practice. Pato O'Ward, the NTT INDYCAR SERIES points leader, quickest. Colton Herta third quick for Andretti Autosport.

Pato, we heard you talking about the new pavement. You like it, feels pretty good?

PATO O'WARD: It's a lot better. I think what's made it a little bit trickier is where the new asphalt meets the old one in turn eight, it reminds you of turn three in St. Pete. It's smooth moving in, but it's a smaller scale, not as quick, but there's definitely a bump there. I think that will be something to watch just throughout the weekend.

Yeah, I'm happy with it. We got into the window. It's tight, man. I think qualifying is going to be as tight as it's probably ever been. I think it puts a lot of emphasis on just the little mistakes you can make.

THE MODERATOR: Colton, nice day today. Last year's pole winner for the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach, the 2021 winner. Good way to start the weekend?

COLTON HERTA: I'm happy with it. It's as good as you could expect. A really solid lap. Didn't have much traffic, which is nice. We got a clear read of the balance throughout the whole track.

Yeah, making small adjustments, getting in there. The car to start off with was really nice, so...

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

**Q. Pato, you said it's super tight. You're a quarter of a second quicker than P2. That's a lot in this series. Where did that last bit of speed come from?**

PATO O'WARD: I guess I nailed down the lap. Yeah, it felt good. The little changes that got done to the track maybe not completely changed the setup, but I think it

allows you to do a couple different things. You can get away with a couple more things that you couldn't years past.

But where did it come from? I don't know. I guess, yeah, I was just driving (smiling).

**Q. Colton, he mentioned the bump in turn eight. How upsetting that is to the car? Is that something that could grind or is it just in a bad spot?**

COLTON HERTA: You could probably grind it out a little bit. I don't know how much it's going to help.

It's manageable. Has a little bit of character. I would prefer it if it wasn't there. It's a little bit of a difference. You obviously have to slow down. I imagine our apex speed there compared to last year is going to be quite a bit slower just because it moves the car about a foot off the apex.

I'm sure INDYCAR will be looking at it tonight. I think the IMSA guys were complaining about it. Probably quite a few of the INDYCAR guys were talking about how big of a bump it was. So they'll look at it tonight, I'm sure.

**Q. Pato, it's usually in the 70s here in Long Beach around this time. Today it was 62. Did the weather have any effect at all on what happened out there today in the session?**

PATO O'WARD: Beautiful day. I haven't really seen what tomorrow's going to be like. Is it going to be similar?

**Q. Colder.**

PATO O'WARD: I thought today was beautiful. The track is definitely quicker than what it was last year. There's not as much rubber down, but the track is fast. I think the more cars laying down rubber, it's just probably going to gain and gain and gain.

Yeah, the tires and the engines like the colder temperatures rather than it being really hot.

**Q. Colton, race strategists changed after St. Pete. How is the transition going for you?**

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COLTON HERTA: It's been really smooth. Scott has been very similar as far as talking to me. I'm pretty easy to strategize for because I don't like a lot of information. I don't like to be talked to unless it's necessary. It's a pretty easy transition to make. Just give me the info that's absolutely necessary and that's it.

But he's been solid so far. I don't have any complaints.

**Q. Pato, it's only Friday, but how much confidence does that give you going into the rest of the weekend?**

PATO O'WARD: Things can change really quick in INDYCAR. It's so competitive. So I think what we'll do now is just try and make it better. There's always things you can improve on. Come tomorrow, go out there and just execute. I think that's the most important part.

You can have the quickest car, but if you don't get the lap together, you're looking yourself at a harder Sunday than what it should, I guess.

Yeah, I think tomorrow will just be about getting the laps down and not making the silly mistakes that can put you back.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for coming by. Appreciate it.

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