

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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### Colton Herta

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Month of May begins this week with Saturday's GMR Grand Prix on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway road course. With the rain last year, it was a crazy race, six different leaders, 10 lead changes, all sorts of action throughout the pack, before it was eventually won by Colton Herta. Colton joins us this afternoon.

Colton, thank you. After watching episode two, my first question is, do you have furniture in the house yet?

COLTON HERTA: I do. We're getting it sorted. It's a lot longer of a process than I thought, what I thought it was going to be, but we're getting it going now.

THE MODERATOR: Good to know. A nation has breathed a sigh of relief.

What do you remember from last year's rain race, maybe outside of the rain? It was a crazy event.

COLTON HERTA: It's hard to remember everything because so much was going on in that one.

If I nitpick, I would prefer a little bit of an easier time and hopefully a win that's a little bit more straightforward.

It was an interesting race, a lot going on. Split strategies almost the whole time. Guys not sure if they could be on wets or slicks. Luckily we made those calls better than everybody else, we were able to take the win there.

THE MODERATOR: I happened to look at the forecast. Guess what? There might be some more rain coming this weekend, so...

COLTON HERTA: We know we're good (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: What do you make of your season so far? Couple top 10s, Long Beach. How important is this month for you and your race team?

COLTON HERTA: It's important. Everybody kind of talks about setting the mental right in the first weekend here for

the 500. This race, it's so important. So much history at the Speedway. Starting out the month of May like this, I always enjoy it.

So, yeah, it's important to start it off right here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. How excited are you firstly going into the month of May, but also given the fact that the team have done so well recently, what does that give you in terms of your confidence level going into the Grand Prix and the 500?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's always been a great race for us. Two podiums and a win there. Obviously have had strong cars in the past. We've always qualified well.

Like we saw, usually is a pretty straightforward three-stopper, unless there is weather, which there might be. But, yeah, looking forward to getting back out there.

**Q. Given the dynamic of this season with your dad now calling shots for Kyle, how much of that has made you grow as a competitor not having your dad on your side but somebody else on the radio?**

COLTON HERTA: It hasn't changed too much. Scott has been very similar as far as the way he speaks. It's very clear and whatnot. So it hasn't been too big of an adjustment with how things have gone so far. It really hasn't been too big of a difference, to be honest.

**Q. Can you put into words what it's like to win at Indianapolis Motor Speedway?**

COLTON HERTA: I mean, it's great. It's amazing. I haven't done it the right way yet. I've only won the Grand Prix. I'd love to win at the end of May.

Obviously it's such a rich history. Even though you're going the other way around the track and it's not for the big win, it still means a lot.

**Q. I used to host a punk rock show back in the day. I'm familiar with your band The Zibs. Are you still**



**playing in that band?**

COLTON HERTA: Somewhat. It's a little bit more difficult. Obviously I'm in Nashville. During the season we don't get to do much anyways just because it's so hectic. In the off-season, a little bit more.

**Q. I guess if we take Long Beach out of the equation in terms of the points standings, you'd be pretty happy with where you're at in terms of form. If there's any way you could improve, what would you choose? Looks like using your tires on the road courses is an area that Andretti has been a little bit harder on than some of the other teams.**

COLTON HERTA: Maybe a little bit. The big factors are going to come in later in the season when we go to Iowa and Gateway. We're looking at mostly testing at both those places before we get there. That's kind of the real question mark for the whole season.

We know we have great cars on road courses and street courses. Indy, Texas went fairly well for us. The big questions are the short ovals and if the improvements we kind of made in the off-season carry into real life.

**Q. Anything tire-wise that has been a problem for you on the season?**

COLTON HERTA: I don't think it's been terribly a problem if you kind of look a little bit more into it. Obviously St. Pete wasn't great for me or for Kyle with tire wear. Other than that, it's been fairly straightforward and fine.

**Q. I would like to ask you about the team in general. After Rossi left to McLaren, you are the guy who is on the team for most time. I would like to know if the responsibility of being the veteran on the team has affected you and how it's going?**

COLTON HERTA: No, it's been fine. It's been great to have Kyle and Devlin and Romain there. They pick up a lot of the pieces, right, that people kind of I guess before the season have expected upon me. But they're really savvy with setup and whatnot. Just brings a whole different team dynamic to it that has been great.

Obviously we're doing the right thing with fast cars that we've had so far. I hope we can just keep it up.

**Q. I would like to know about this weekend. Do you think this is the weekend if a good result came, a podium, a win, this is the weekend that can turn around the championship?**

COLTON HERTA: I sure hope so. Like I kind of touched on before, we've never been slow here. We've always had great cars here. Most of the time we've been in contention for at least a podium. It's a place that I feel very comfortable coming to.

Like I said before, it's just a great event to kick off the month of May, get to Speedway testing on Tuesday.

**Q. This is your biggest win drought in INDYCAR. How annoying is that? Do you feel sad because of seeing guys like teammates Grosjean scoring poles? How annoying is this drought?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I mean, it's obviously less than ideal. We've been in the hunt. Obviously we know how to win races. This weekend's the best place to start it. Hopefully we can get a win here.

But it is annoying to have basically a year without a win.

**Q. What have you seen so far in terms of Honda versus Chevy? Seemed that at Barber Honda had better fuel economy. Also whether there's a difference in power and whether you also noted that in the test?**

COLTON HERTA: No, I haven't noticed anything as far as power. I think it depends. Maybe the Hondas are a little bit better at saving fuel. Maybe the numbers were a little bit off. I think after the race, if you look at it, a three-stopper was the right choice. If they had numbers or ideas that we didn't have, I'm not sure.

If it would have been fully green, I still believe the result would have been the same and maybe even more tilted toward the three-stoppers.

**Q. Do you feel like the Speedway almost owes you one especially after last year?**

COLTON HERTA: I sure hope so. I sure hope it feels that way. It would be great to obviously double up here this weekend and get the momentum going for the season. We really need to start hammering some good results outside of the few top 10s that we've had.

It's tough to say that it owes you something, but it is a place that kind of has eluded us the past few years as far as strong results. I think we've only had one or two top 10s here. Definitely aren't as bad as the results show, but minor tweaks here and there...

This place is so difficult, five, six stops, whatever. It's such a long race compared to what we normally have. There's so much more that can go wrong in the track evolution. It's

so much bigger than everything else that we run with.

There's a lot to know, a lot to go over. Obviously we have a long month to go over everything.

**Q. I had one of Andretti Autosport engineers saying that it was your arrival at the team that enlightened them that their setups for INDYCAR road course weren't crap, that you spurred everyone on that there is a different way because the team as a whole had struggled on road courses for a while. As you say, you regularly qualify well there and race well. Is there something about the IMS road course that particularly suits you?**

COLTON HERTA: I'm not too sure. I found something within my driving style the first year I was there that I was able to find quite a bit of time on my teammates. The year following it, it seems they picked up on it, right? Alex, he's had a few podiums there, as well.

Yeah, I don't know if that was all me or if it just took them longer to figure it out. But definitely 2019 I think everybody got knocked out on the team in first round qualifying, made it to the Fast Six. I've always been comfortable with the car there at the track.

It's a weird one. You typically see a style, it was hard to match Jack Harvey when he was our teammate, which wasn't the case everywhere else. He just had a knack for it there and was very strong there. You see that with a few guys. Lundgaard has been very good there, as well.

I don't know exactly what it is, but a little bit of a strange place.

**Q. Two of your teammates already went to the podium, Kyle won and Romain had podiums. How has it been, the relationship between you and your teammates? How does it correlate to the track? How important is it, the relationship, to the performance on the track?**

COLTON HERTA: It's good because the last thing you want inside the team is to get to the point where people are hiding stuff from each other or whatnot. I never really have been part of anything like that.

Everyone is happy. Ideas are flowing always inside the truck. The biggest thing is everyone is open with each other. They're transparent. If you ask them a question, they'll answer it to the best of their ability that they know how instead of leaving some of the good bits out.

It's been great team dynamics so far this year.

**Q. What do you like about the road track there at Indianapolis Motor Speedway? What is the section that you like the most?**

COLTON HERTA: Before NASCAR came, I really liked eight, nine, ten. Because NASCAR came, they had to put in these big kind of concrete blocks on the inside of the curb. You can't really take as much curb any more. It kind of ruined that section for us.

I think the biggest thing is it's one of the last races where the red tires are the best. It's a very fast race. There is no fuel saving ever. Yeah, it's just a flat-out race, which is so enjoyable.

I wouldn't say there's one particular section of the track that I love more than the other. It's just a great track to have a race at.

**Q. How is it going into turn one, especially at the start of the race? What is going on in your mind?**

COLTON HERTA: Try not to break the front wing basically. Seems to be a pretty easy thing to do there. Obviously you have this massive wide front straight going into a second-gear corner. It's a very slow corner. Obviously the field is all bunched up. It's a great place to make opportunities and make up places, but it's also a very easy place to ruin your day.

**Q. The fact that three of the drivers on the team have been so fast this season, yourself, Romain and Kyle, do you expect maybe the second half of the year that your team could pretty much be the dominant team in terms of race victories and maybe challenging for the championship?**

COLTON HERTA: Sure hope so. It seems like we're in the position to be able to do that. The first few weekends we've shown pace everywhere, or at least one of us has. It's been a great year for us so far pace-wise. We just kind of need to tighten some things up hopefully for the races and all of us will be up there.

**Q. You mentioned about your teammates. The dynamic personality-wise working with these guys, Kyle is a young kid, Romain is fast with a lot of experience, but what is it like, you and your three teammates, the dynamic?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's been great. Like I said before, everyone is very transparent and open about what they feel and what's going on in every aspect, whether it's tires or setup or qualifying. So it's a good place to be at for

me right now. Everyone's so open and really happy to work with each other.

**Q. You're 23 years old, so by definition you're a young driver. You've been in the series for a while, so by that you're a veteran driver. In your own head, what do you consider yourself at this point?**

COLTON HERTA: I don't know. A little bit of everything, I guess. Definitely feel comfortable in INDYCAR, feel like I've been in a lot of situations. I guess in that aspect you can say it's a little bit of a veteran. But then I'm still fresh on a lot of things. Always learning. Always evolving. You have to be like that in this sport 'cause you're never solidified here for too long. You always have to be on it.

**Q. If you are able to make a great performance this weekend as you did last year and get some good points, will you consider contending for the championship?**

COLTON HERTA: For sure. That's the goal. But it's so difficult in this series to win a championship without wins. You have to be aggressive, and when there is an opportunity to win you have to really take it. It's probably the hardest championship in the world as far as going from race to race.

Everybody has an opportunity to win. The teams are so freaking close, especially this year it seems like obviously Andretti and McLaren have taken a step up. Now there's really four teams that are just constantly in the fight. You add in all the stragglers that have good cars on the off weekends and whatnot, it makes it super competitive.

**Q. Last week you tweeted a sarcastic comment about Brad Pitt. Are you still thinking about trying to drive in Formula 1 and maybe with Andretti?**

COLTON HERTA: I would love to have the opportunity. Made me laugh when I saw that tweet that ESPN put out. Even though it was false, I had to take advantage of it (smiling).

**Q. A question regarding the new additions on the IMS. How do you like the new pole with screens, should be brighter? Are you going to use them for the Indy 500 for your help? Also what do you like better, the circuit or the oval?**

COLTON HERTA: As far as the upgrades go, I don't know about them so I can't really comment on that.

But it has to be said that the oval for sure takes the cake, not only because it's the Indy 500, and obviously that

whole part of it, but it is a very unique oval to anywhere in the world really. Four true corners, all different to each other. With low banking, it's a very difficult track.

THE MODERATOR: He might be referring to a couple additional big screens around the facility. Do you ever check out what's happening on the video boards when you're going around?

COLTON HERTA: I do. I always do. At most of the places. It kind of lets you know when guys are pitting or whatnot. Gives you a feel for the racing, what's going on. So yeah, I try to use it all.

**Q. The GMR Grand Prix features a unique track layout that integrates both a road course and an oval. How do you balance the different skill set required for each part of the track?**

COLTON HERTA: That's a good question. Obviously it's more of a road course than anything. Even on the oval part, if we did use like the turn one of the oval, it would be so easy flat compared to what we're used to doing.

Yeah, obviously you have the long straights. You have the wall right next to you. Down the front straight, gives you more of a feel of a street course than a road course at times.

The biggest thing for us is finding out the trim levels, how much wind you want to use, to take out, because you obviously have these long straights and hard brake zones.

**Q. The GP is also known for its unpredictable weather conditions. How do you and your team prepare for rain or changing track conditions? How do you adjust your strategy on the fly?**

COLTON HERTA: That's the most difficult part. There's really nothing that you can do to prepare for these situations from the team's aspect. Obviously I can watch video on races in the rain or I can watch the onboard from last year and kind of get an idea of where you want to be out on the track when it's raining.

As far as the strategy, you really have to go on the fly. The weather systems are great, but they're not always completely 100% reliable, so you can't fully go off of that. You need a little bit of intuition when it comes to it.

**Q. Talking about the Grand Prix of Miami, looked around and saw Gainbridge, some other signage. Long time sponsor that you've been a part of and expanding motorsports.**

COLTON HERTA: First and foremost, they're just big fans of a racing, particularly INDYCAR. Obviously Dan, the CEO of Gainbridge, grew up here in Indianapolis, is from here. He has a big love for INDYCAR racing. Really jumped at the opportunity to get involved with it, then furthermore to get involved with the Speedway, with the race itself, the 500.

They're all in on racing. It seems like they're here to stay for a while, which is always great and you love to see in INDYCAR.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously it's called the Indy 500 Presented by Gainbridge. That's all part of it.

**Q. I wanted to ask about the save you had in the race last year. One of those things that when you're in the grind of motorsport every week you don't necessarily always appreciate the things you see, but when you see something like that, it reminds you why you watch motorsport and take part in it. Do you ever look back at things like that, do they kind of help you in difficult moments?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah. The one thing about that is I've never had this feeling in the car ever, or been able to remember a feeling from a specific time in racing, especially one from a year ago.

I can tell you exactly how everything felt when it happened. Obviously we talk about how we feel everything through our butts. I know that same feeling in my butt right now, which is so interesting. Not to be weird talking about butts (smiling).

It's so interesting. I still have that same feeling. I can feel that motion, which I've never been able to feel in any moment of my career, like remember it so clearly.

So it was something that I don't think I'll ever forget. Obviously we've all seen it a whole bunch of times now. I hope I don't have to replicate it again because it definitely wasn't the fastest way to go through that corner.

Yeah, it happened, it was interesting, and that's that.

THE MODERATOR: Were you completely off the throttle or did you try to stay in it?

COLTON HERTA: It was a little bit of both. I was using the brake and the throttle to balance the car. We talk about cars kind of on a pendulum. So when you hit the brakes, the front moves forward, the rear moves up. When you hit the throttle, puts a little bit more weight on the rear.

It was a little bit of footwork, obviously a lot of handwork, and also of course a little bit of luck.

THE MODERATOR: It's one of those moments that obviously people are still talking about a year later and probably will for a lot longer than that.

**Q. You had a moment at Carb Day at the Indy 500, a crash. How is it for you as a driver to recover mentally from that, get back into the car, when you close your visor you're flat out again or you have to think a little bit?**

COLTON HERTA: No, it's fairly easy, at least for me. When you love something so much, it's hard for it to deter you or drive you away from it.

For me, it's something that happened. You understand it in the sport. We know the risk of it happening. But obviously I was perfectly fine after it and felt ready to get right back in the car. It didn't affect me too much.

**Q. 100% excited to get the win in the Indy 500?**

COLTON HERTA: Yes, ready to go.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Colton, that will wrap it up. We'll see you in a couple days.

COLTON HERTA: Cool. Thanks, everybody.

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