

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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### Colton Herta

### Alex Palou

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by second- and third-place finishing drivers, Colton Herta and Alex Palou.

Colton, great to see you back on the podium. Take us through your thoughts on today.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I mean, it was a tough race. I still don't completely know how Dixon made it to the front. I imagine he pitted on yellow and did 34-lap stints, 33-lap stints. I mean, that was pretty impressive.

From where we were, we thought the best option was staying out there. I think we made the most out of that strategy. I was happy with how the car was. We were super fast.

Yeah, sometimes you need a little bit more than just speed in INDYCAR racing. We saw that today. It's always a tough one to lose at the home race, but I'm happy with second. Can't complain too much.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, obviously completing a Honda sweep here, HRC sweep. Your thoughts on another podium for you in your young career.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I love it. I mean, it was a tough race I think for everybody. Different strategies. We also thought that the best thing was to stay out. I think it was the best thing for the 10 car. I don't think I could have made it work like Scott did. I was not surprised that he took it because he knows he can make it work. I don't know how. Yeah, I'll study that probably tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Were you surprised to see Dixon win this thing?

ALEX PALOU: Once he took it, I was like, He's going to make it work. I don't know. It's super tough if you know the numbers he has to get, what he has to do driving-wise. You see other people did it. Power I think is the second driver that did it.

It's tough, man. I don't know how. Probably he's cheating and he has an extra fuel cell that I don't know yet (smiling). Yeah, that's it. I'm joking obviously, just in case.

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

**Q. Colton, I know afterwards on TV you gave your side of the story about what happened with Josef. Were you expecting him after the race to discuss it with you?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think he had the right to. I mean, I wouldn't have been happy if it went down... Yeah, ultimately it is what it is. I just misjudged it. I apologized to him, yeah.

**Q. I think you said on TV that he had gotten a little high, then came back into the lane. If you could explain that.**

COLTON HERTA: I mean, ideally you want to exit the corner as straight as possible to get the best run onto the straight. You do that by opening up the entry. But it slows down your speed so much on the entry, if you're not doing that every lap, it's tough to kind of gauge on how fast he was going to be going there. He opened it up.

Ultimately it's his right to do that. It's my right to not run into the back of him there. But that's why he did it. He went wider. He did a different line to get a better exit to hopefully get a run on to Scott. In doing that he was a lot slower mid corner.

**Q. Basically what did he say to you?**

COLTON HERTA: I won't say. He wasn't happy, but...

**Q. (No microphone.)**

COLTON HERTA: I mean, he wasn't happy. Would you be upset if that happened?

**Q. (No microphone.)**

COLTON HERTA: There you go.



**Q. Were you expecting a penalty after the contact? Do you think it was fair to not get anything coming away from that?**

COLTON HERTA: I would have been surprised with a drive-through or something like that. I would not have been surprised if they moved me behind him. It was borderline.

The problem wasn't the hit. It was when he landed, he went into anti-stall. That's what killed it. If he doesn't go into anti-stall, nothing happens, we all stay in the line. I may have a chance at the end of the front straight. Really no difference.

Yeah, a penalty, I would have been surprised to see something like a drive-through. I think you could call to rotate back, but then that would mean Alex would be second, so c'mon. In this sport we don't need him doing more (laughter).

**Q. You guys are on different strategies than Scott. How much inside the car do you like to know what's going on or is it something you like to be left alone and focus on your own race?**

ALEX PALOU: No, I mean, you need to know. I mean, we had to go fast, the last stint especially. We had to go 100% to try and catch him, to try and make him use more fuel and try to overtake him.

Yeah, that wasn't the case.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, super necessary. Especially when you get into that mode of having a two-stopper or a three-stopper. It was kind of like that today with guys taking the early yellow. You're passing people you haven't seen before on the racetrack. You have no idea why they're there, what's going on.

It's important for the team to relay what you're doing and also what other guys are doing, how they think it's going to play out for the last stop. It is really a mix-up until you get to the last pit stop, and everyone has pitted that you know. This is how it played out, now we have to figure out how to win from here.

**Q. It's early in the season, how much are you looking at points right now knowing we have a stretch of racing coming up? Is that a thought in your head?**

COLTON HERTA: Doesn't matter. You just have to keep doing what you can do. When you're having an off day, finish in the top 10, top five, if you can. When you have a

car to win, you need to be able to try to win it, finish on the podium, so...

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, it's early. We haven't started yet, so yeah. Even at the end I don't think in INDYCAR nowadays you can do anything differently because of the points. You need to get every single point you can every single weekend because it's so close.

A win gives you so much. A win gives you so much that you never know what can happen at the end, the last couple of races, especially with the amazing calendar we have now.

**Q. Colton, I think some of us were surprised that you weren't able to close on Dixon. Is it because he had that much left in the tank or because your tires were shot?**

COLTON HERTA: I think my tires were pretty much done. I was close a few times. But, yeah, I didn't have enough. He still had one push to pass. Exiting the corners, it was hard to get a run on him because he could use it, kind of sprint away, have nice big lifts at the end of the straight. It made it hard from my perspective to choose what time to use my push to pass and what time to save it.

Yeah, like Alex said, it was a pretty impressive win to have to do that many laps. We know the fuel numbers that he was doing because we're in the car doing two laps less than him. It's impressive, for sure.

**Q. Alex, there was a slightly adjusted start procedure today. In the end, it looked like everyone was going single file. Do you think the new start procedure worked compared with the previous couple years at Long Beach?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, I think it worked. I don't know how it looked, honestly, from outside. It was good at least where I was, I believe. We were where we had to be. I don't know about the rear.

**Q. Anytime you get on a podium is a good day. What does that mean for you and your team?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's a confidence booster. You want to maximize every day that you can in INDYCAR. Like Alex said, last year I think his worst finish was seventh.

ALEX PALOU: Eight.

COLTON HERTA: It just shows you how competitive it is right now. You can't really have off days. Podiums needs



to be fairly normal in order to win the championship in this series.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it's amazing to be in the podium. It's not easy. Yeah, I'm always happy when I'm on the podium, unless obviously you could have won and you made a mistake and suddenly you're third. Then it's not such a sweet feeling.

But yeah, how we started today and the pace we had and how the race developed, I'm really, really happy with third today.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I mean, they enjoy it just as much as I do. They're just as big of a part of it also, all the work they do off the track, but also during the race with all the pit stops.

Without them, it all would go south. It would be a lot tougher of a year for me. So, yes, I think they'll enjoy it a lot.

**Q. What did you think of how well Theo did today based on not driving the car before practice?**

ALEX PALOU: I don't know. It depends on how he finished. If it was by pace, pretty impressive. If it was by strategy, maybe not as much.

It's always impressive to first finish the race, then make up some spots. Almost top 10, it's pretty impressive, for sure.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's impressive, for sure. Yeah, like Alex said, he's doing a good job all weekend, though. Just to kind of keep it out of the wall is the most important thing.

Yeah, this is one of the easier ones, so I think he's in for a rude awakening for the arms when he gets to Barber. Be interested to see what he has to say about it.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

COLTON HERTA: Similar for me. Yeah, no different. Same.

ALEX PALOU: You said?

**Q. (No microphone.)**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it was same. It was good because we had more airflow. But same stuff, yeah.

**Q. Colton, did you think anybody but Dixon trying to pull that strategy off, you had this race won?**

COLTON HERTA: I think it depends. You need to be good at fuel saving, but you also need a good car to do that.

I think there's a few guys in the series that are probably capable of doing it, but they need a lot of things to go right, a lot of things for their car to be able to handle saving fuel.

I think it's possible. Obviously seems like Dixon is the only one that goes for these things sometimes, and they always work out.

Yeah, I mean, obviously if he didn't go for it, we would have won the race. That's the great thing about INDYCAR, is there's so many options, so many different things that can happen, so...

**Q. Do you still think you were on the right strategy today?**

COLTON HERTA: No, we lost. So it wasn't the right strategy. It would have been tough in our position where we were on track to make that call, especially with the tires that we were on, at least from my perspective.

Yeah, it was tough. I think when you're further back, although Dixon was eighth or sixth.

ALEX PALOU: He was behind me, sixth.

COLTON HERTA: Sixth. It was pretty brave to make that call. Same with Will up at the front.

I knew it was doable from my pre-race strategy. I thought it was going to be, man, 16, I think they pitted on lap 17. That's difficult. That's very early.

**Q. Colton, obviously the team put a lot of work in the off-season, you had a difficult year last year. Looking at the first two races, are you more optimistic for the rest of the year?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah. I mean, INDYCAR is always evolving. It's such a difficult championship to hit it right on the head because it's a 10th here, a 10th there. That's the difference between finishing in the top five or 15th.

Anytime that we can make developments, whether that be aero-wise, with the dampers, I always love it and it's always great to see.

I assure you the guys are working as hard as ever. I think



we've had a good start to the year. We have good cars at the moment. We need to keep that up. We have seen racing, it is always progressing forward. We need to keep going.

**Q. Newgarden, Dixon start of the year, do you think defending your championship will be a bit more difficult this year?**

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, as always. It's always tough. He's able to do things like he's done here, Indy road course last year, Gateway, Laguna. He's done the same thing. It's always tough. He's always fast. He's always smart. It's great to be his teammate so I can see what he does, and hopefully I can learn someday.

**Q. Will was penalized, he had to take primaries at the end because he used his alternates twice. Do you feel it penalizes you from qualifying into the race?**

COLTON HERTA: I don't think he did anything different.

ALEX PALOU: He did two runs on greens Fast Six.

COLTON HERTA: It's his choice, right?

ALEX PALOU: I mean, we didn't because we wanted to use it on the race.

But yeah, I would like if we could have an extra thing for Fast Six. But it was his choice this time. I mean, he was not put into that position.

COLTON HERTA: We did that last year where they gave us three sets. They need to make it so it's just for the Fast Six if they want to do that because everyone uses it in round two or something like that. Half the guys get in from using two sets of reds in round two, so...

**Q. That's just part of the strategy, a weekend-long strategy?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, congratulations on the podium.

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