

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Marco Adretti

Helio Castroneves

Scott Dixon

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Continuing on with Row 7, starting 20th, the only four-time Indy 500 winner in the field, back for the drive for five, driving the No. 06 Cliffs Honda for Meyer Shank Racing, it's Helio Castroneves.

Making his 19th appearance in the Indy 500, 52 years and counting with Andretti in the field for the 500, driving the No. 98 for Andretti Global, Marco Andretti. Also joined by the driver of the No. 9 PNC Bank Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, it's Scott Dixon. There's a ton of experience in this row. Are you kidding me?

Scott, how has your week been so far?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, it's been okay. It's been busy. Lots of sim days, unfortunately. Yeah, prep for the next couple races, then a bit for Le Mans, as well.

It's been okay. Obviously trying to find more speed, see what we can come up.

THE MODERATOR: Like everyone else.

Helio, the drive for five continues. How is the race car?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: The race car looks good. We had to stop a little early on Monday with a little issue with the left rear suspension, but all fixed and ready for Carb Day. We need to do a little massage still on the car, readjustments to be even better.

Looking strong. I feel great. Cliffs MSR team is doing a phenomenal job. Did some pit stops, surprised me how incredible everybody went in for one-off. We're really, really excited for tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Marco, you were saying the race car feels pretty good.

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, as happy as I've been in the last five to eight years honestly. I really struggled here in the races, just drove so uncomfortable for 500 miles the last few years. Definitely Monday felt very, very comfortable. It was the most productive two hours I've had in a decade here.

I definitely am more happy than I've been in a long time here at the Speedway. I'm just bummed with no track position. If we wrung everything out, we should have been top 12, which is disappointing. We were lined up to go back out, but we miss-timed it and I didn't make it back out.

Coming from the back, but the car feels good.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. Helio, if I told you you were starting in the same row as Marco and Scott, how stunned are you you're back in Row 7, all three of you?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Look, the competition every year it's becoming crazier. We thought we did a good job over the winter. I guess the other ones did a better job over the winter. That's why they end up a little ahead of us.

But that doesn't intimidate me at all. The good news, we have good experienced guys in the row. Interesting situation in front of us, we have an inexperienced guys. But that's what it is in the Indy 500. Always have ups and downs. It's a long race.

I feel very, very good. I understand what I need to do. Yeah, hopefully all three of us will go to the front.

Q. Scott, the trust factor that you have knowing there's all this experience, you're in the back of the pack, but with three guys that really know this place. There has to be a really good trust factor.

SCOTT DIXON: Hopefully the row doesn't take each other out (smiling). That would be interesting.

No, yeah, the starting position is one thing. I think the way we look at it, even after last year the first stint, our tire



issue, we were 28th or something. Ended up to getting back to the top five towards the last stint. Anything is possible in this race.

I think people always have issues. I think for us with where we're starting as a group, you definitely need to have no more issues from the outside part of what happened in qualifying.

Yeah, hopefully we all move forward. Maybe this row will be fighting it out for the win.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That would be great.

Q. Scott, same question as last year. Today you are running with legends. How to concentrate and be ready to start?

SCOTT DIXON: Yeah, I'm just trying to keep up with Helio. I think that's what it comes down to. I'm sure it's just a fact that we love what we do and we're very lucky to do what we do. We're obviously in a sport or in a job title of having to win all the time. It's fun, especially now with the competition.

There's definitely been some young groups coming through five years ago, 10 years ago. It's interesting to see how the sport has changed some.

It's fun, man. The competition is tough. I really enjoy it. Helio is, what, 50 next year (laughter). I've still got a little bit of time.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Thanks, Scott. I appreciate it.

SCOTT DIXON: Happy birthday.

Q. Helio, with your wins and runner-ups, doing so well here, do you have years sometimes when you come in and are expecting to do that? Is this year one of those where you know you have it?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, no question I come to a race here to think about just going to participate. I'm always expecting to do better. I can only trust in the work that goes behind the scene with the mechanics and the engineers and engine manufacturer. It's teamwork.

Sometimes one little bit that goes off, it's very easy to find an excuse and say it. We just have to keep doing a better job.

Qualifying, again, I believe because we were a little behind, it was just one off. Some of our situations was because of the rain delay. Step behind.

In the race car I felt very, very strong. I was able to use a lot of things that I did in the past with the setup numbers. So, yeah, I am. My expectation is high like always. Looking forward to a very challenging day, without a question. 500 miles is not easy. But looking forward to a very fun day.

Q. When you were younger a generation ago...

HELIO CASTRONEVES: First, Scott is calling my age (laughter).

MARCO ANDRETTI: The geriatric room (laughter).

Q. There were typically four or five Brazilians in this race. Helio, now you're the only one. There don't seem to be a lot in the pipeline coming to INDYCAR. Do you have a feeling for why that is?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I think the stockcar in Brazil became a very successful series. Open-wheel in Brazil, kind of like slowed down a lot. For those Formula 1 has become very popular obviously the last few years, and the ones, the generation now, looking to go that direction.

Again, Formula 1 is big politics, as we know. Some of them are turning around. I would say because of that we have a little bit of a lack. Plus we don't have a race in Brazil like we used to do as well.

All these details and aspects that we had in the past makes the generation a little later. That's why I'm still here. Hoping to inspire the new generation to come around and come to Indy.

Q. Helio, Tom is driving your 2021 winning car. What was the decision to not continue to run that car like last year?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I just want to change. The last years, '22 and '23, still a pretty good car, I just want a change. I want to start fresh. That was the reason.

Q. Helio and Marco, you've known the guy sitting next to you for a lot of years now. There's a marketing campaign that calls him brilliantly boring. Do you agree?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Marketing what?

Q. A campaign that calls Scott brilliantly boring. I wonder if you agree with that? How would you describe Scott sitting up there?

MARCO ANDRETTI: You should get him a few beers (laughter). No, he's not boring.

SCOTT DIXON: I think it's more about the process, right? Some of the things we find boring, the training, the data that all of us go through, it's about the process, right? Some would find that the process is kind of boring. But it's a necessity necessity and something you need to do.

What PNC has done with their marketing campaign about banking, because some people think banking is boring, but if you do it well...

Bit of a twist on it.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Pretty much the same, yeah (smiling).

Q. Marco and Helio, this is your first INDYCAR race of the season, might be your only race of the season, how do you go about preparing for this when a lot of other guys you're competing against are out there every other weekend racing?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I think you see a lot of rookies fast at Indy because you have a ton of practice here. I don't feel behind the eight ball. In fact, Day 1, him and I were 1-2. I didn't feel like it took me much time to get going.

But just like them, the competition from the drivers to the teams is completely wrung out. You have to drive these things so on the edge to be fast. That's something I'm working really hard on.

But yeah, I mean, I don't know, I feel so at home at this place that it just doesn't take me much time to get going.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Pretty much as Marco said. It was because of the practice time. Even with the rain we had that took a lot of laps from us, it felt right in the ballpark. For me even better with the team that I'm running. I remember in 2021, I was about six months without -- actually about a year without being in an INDYCAR. I jump in, new time, new people, that was actually even harder, and we still ended up being able to execute.

Yeah, this place, it brings the best out of everyone, including us with experience. We're always learning, as well. In these conditions, I feel as well very, very comfortable.

Q. Do you feel like you're able to jump in relatively easily because you've raced this track so many times?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I was just going to add in there that I think the old-timers should probably be looking at Row 7 more than we should be looking at them.

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I feel we don't have any difference from the others. I believe experience in this place counts as much better scenario than any other drivers. So far we feel home.

Q. Helio, your first 500 as the shareholder in the team. You've said before that you were a bit waiting for this moment because you were going to be more driver than part owner. Do you have to manage both or are you more in the driver role?

MARCO ANDRETTI: I've been obviously in connection with Tom and Felix. We joke around if we got in a situation between three of us battling for the win, I'm coming on the radio and say, okay, you guys want to renew your contract or not? Joke around. I'm sure they're going to disconnect the radio at that point (smiling).

This is a place that change people's life. Doesn't matter who it is, it definitely change their name after Sunday. But yeah, it will be fun. It would be great to be winning as an owner, as well. It would be something completely different and new.

Q. Marco, you said the last few years were a bit more difficult. You know more than anybody else what you need. What were you lacking in the last few years?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Just the characteristic that I didn't like. Like a behavior in the middle of the corner with this setup. We made some pretty big strides on Monday with it. Cautiously optimistic.

Q. Helio, last year you said you were the only one on the planet that can do something, you talked about five. Another year, you're the only one on the planet. Do you smile about it? What is that state of mind?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: How can you not, right? Wake up in the morning, have this amazing opportunity first of all to be already with this incredible gods of racing, Rick Mears, AJ and Al Unser Sr. I'm honored and blessed to be in this position.

Now having this opportunity to do something nobody ever did. People are saying records are made to be broken in any sport. Why not?

I'm sure a lot of fans wants to see that. I want to see that. I'm sure those guys here, they want to try to stop that. But that's life.



Q. (No microphone.)

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I do. In the end of the day you can only thinking about the end. It's a process. You got to work for it. You got to prepare for it. If it's mean to be, it will be.

Q. Marco, you're from Nazareth. You were born into the spotlight. Being from Nazareth, small town, how do you get away from everything? How do you connect with the fan base? Are you a Phillies fan? Eagles? Cheese steaks?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Oh, man. All I can say, first off, is that home is always home. When I live here, I always miss going to Nazareth. When I lived in Miami, same thing. I always knew that eventually I wanted to be permanently there.

I'm very, very based with my home, my roots there. Invest in real estate in the Lehigh Valley and stuff like that. Apartment buildings.

As far as sports teams, I'm a little weird. I'm not loyal to a particular team. I like to follow players more than teams. I bounce around a bit. I'm not a bandwagon jumper, I just follow certain friends and stuff.

Q. Starting back in Row 7, do you let the race come to you or is there an urgency to be aggressive and get through the field?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, you got to read the vibe at the beginning. You can't just do something. That's normally how I would approach at this point, not knowing the racing of those guys in front of me. I got to see what the situation's going to be and see the restart.

I know it change a little bit understanding the rules. We going to have sort of like a line that you're not supposed to pass before turn four, whatever area this year, right?

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yours is in turn three (smiling).

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I'm just going to read the race and go according to it.

MARCO ANDRETTI: Yeah, I mean, you have to be methodical. The first two-thirds, I drive it more like a marathon rather than a sprint. In order to be in that position in the end, you have to be smart in certain scenarios that present themselves. Do you take it, do you not? I'll read Helio's vibe at the beginning and follow him through.

No, I don't know. I just have to be smart about it. If you have a good enough run, you take it.

SCOTT DIXON: I'm trying to get all 20 in the first lap, man (smiling).

Yeah, I think I agree totally with the others. Read the situation. It's a long race. Obviously to be in it, you got to be there at the end. We'll see.

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