

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Colton Herta

Alex Palou

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon as we wrap-up qualifying today. Colton Herta will start from pole position.

Colton, driver of the No. 26 Gainbridge Honda. Seems like Andretti usually does pretty well on street courses like this. Turns out to be true once again here on the streets of Detroit.

COLTON HERTA: No, it feels great. A lot on my mind after the Indy 500, so it's good to just get here and get a race weekend underway. That's the best way to kind of get over it.

Happy for the team. This is an extremely difficult place to drive for qualifying. It's probably the bumpiest track, even more bumpy than Belle Isle. When you hook up a lap, it feels really nice inside the cockpit.

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

Q. What is your approach when you're out there, you have something going on, you miss an inch or two it could be a bigger bump? What is your mindset qualifying here?

COLTON HERTA: Just take it corner by corner. You gain so much info by the time you get to the Fast Six that it gets easier to produce a quick lap. Obviously finding that last little bit is very difficult.

Like I said, this is probably one of the more difficult places to qualify. When you hook up a lap, it's really good. It feels really nice.

Q. Based on what happened at Indy, did you have to fight the thought of being too aggressive this weekend?

COLTON HERTA: It's so difficult. That's the great thing about INDYCAR, is you never have a worse feeling in your life inside a race car than going from Indy to this place. It's

just a handful. You're used to the smoothness and the speed. You get here and it's a completely different road course.

It's easy to isolate the things. Obviously the things that were on my mind were just a lot of disappointment after the weekend before. Once you get in the car, that's not what you're thinking about. You're thinking about how to go the fastest you can. Luckily we did that.

Q. You just said it's a very difficult place to qualify. Is there a possibility technically to make it easier for you, to make the car not so stiff?

COLTON HERTA: I don't think you can make the car soft enough to make it nice here. It's inevitable. What you're giving when you're doing that is giving up a lot of performance.

I think everybody will agree that they'd rather take lap time and be uncomfortable in the car. That's kind of what you have to do.

Q. Tough course, tight track. How strategic is to start up front?

COLTON HERTA: It is tough to pass. Similar to Belle Isle. It was very tough to pass here last year. Just the nature of the back straight, how you kind of snake down to the inside to avoid the bumps. Everyone is just kind of defending the whole time. It does make it difficult.

Starting up front not only makes it easier. It's so much less stress going into the race morning meeting, trying to figure out a strategy that will get you to the front because of how difficult it is to pass here.

Q. Restarts, there were a lot of contact last year. Do you expect the same tomorrow?

COLTON HERTA: Luckily up front it was pretty clean. As long as I stay up there, we should be all right. It does kind of breed a crazy restart. You're coming out of a second-gear corner onto a back straight, going up to 180 miles an hour, then coming down to a 45 mile-an-hour hairpin.



It's a massive difference in speed. It's very easy to get caught out, especially when you kind of have that chain effect of guys slowing down more and more further back in the pack.

I can see it going that way. Hopefully there's not too many restarts, it will stay green. That will be the best scenario for us.

Q. Can you talk about the Honda engine performance here. You have a slight advantage against Chevy?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I mean, I'm not too sure. I think the drivability was good. Everything about the car felt nice. The biggest thing that you want out of the engine here isn't necessarily top speed. You want it all. The most you find is with traction and drivability, which I think Honda kind of excelled at compared to the Chevy this weekend so far. Hopefully it continues.

THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Alex Palou, driver of the No. 10 DHL Chip Ganassi Racing Honda.

Your thoughts on qualifying here today.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, my qualifying was good. Really good, yeah. Car was really good. Easy to drive. Was really fast. Just a shame that red flag in Fast Six didn't allow us to see the best lap times of the cars. Don't know what Colton would have done on that lap.

Still pretty good. Car has been really good since practice one. Looking forward to tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: More questions.

Q. Colton, a little bit of a contentious practice this morning. Did you have any more words with anyone at Foyt, Santino?

COLTON HERTA: I don't have a problem with anybody at Foyt except for one person. Everyone there is lovely besides one person.

ALEX PALOU: Who is that?

COLTON HERTA: What do you think? You know. Look at him smiling (smiling).

I'm not the leopard. It's not only me.

Q. Alex, Colton just said earlier it's very difficult to pass, it's bumpy. When you follow a driver, is patience a very important key, not to risk something crazy?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I think it's tough here, especially because, I mean, it's really tight. I would say the only passing point is probably turn three.

Having said that, I got overtaken last year when I was leading. Maybe I can do the same (smiling).

I would say it's more about not trying to follow the car in front. It's so tight, you start following the car in front, instead of doing your own line, you start going slower and slower.

Let's see what our race pace is tomorrow. Yes, patience is key, especially with all the yellow flags, restarts that we're going to have.

Q. Alex, after your win last year, you qualify second today, you said you like the bumps. Is it a mindset going into it or just a matter of not making a big mistake?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, I would prefer if it was a bit smoother. Still you need to get used to it. I think having a really fast car just helps me, obviously. Like, there's moments in some street courses where we struggle a lot more in terms of speed. But here for some reason we're really good.

Yeah, I'm just happy to be here with a fast car.

Q. After qualifying, Santino was interviewed and he apologized for his actions and his words to both you and Kyle. He said he likes racing with you guys. Do you have any reaction to that?

COLTON HERTA: No.

Q. Colton, how hard is it to refocus after all the emotions and the fatigue associated with the 500? How do you go about managing this congested period of races?

COLTON HERTA: I mean, luckily, unluckily for me, there wasn't a lot of fatigue because I didn't do a lot of the race.

Unfortunately it sucks. What really sucks is having to go out there and watch everybody have fun, race for position. You're just in the back trying to pick up spots.

Overall, what I said before, the best remedy for it is getting back to the race car. It's nice to have a nice back-to-back weekend. For me, it was personally because of having a bad 500. It's nice to get back with the engineers working on something brand-new and get going on a new weekend.



Q. Alex, how hard is it to make that transition from the 500 back to street course racing? How do you go about approaching that transition?

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, it's what makes this series so special, so different. Like, we go from the smoothest place to the bumpiest place on the calendar. Yeah, it's totally different what we do at IMS to what we do here for Detroit.

Yeah, I would just say that it puts a lot of extra difficulty on the drivers, but especially also the teams having to prepare cars completely different, engineers having to switch from just thinking about tons of drag and downforce to just like ride heights and bumps.

That's what's so unique of this series. That's what makes it so special to be part of.

Q. After the red flag situation, would you have both benefited from having two laps and a hot lap? How much pressure did that put on you?

COLTON HERTA: I think the biggest problem was the tires weren't ready. A lot of dust, especially in pit lane. Whenever you're running around concrete slow, there's quite a lot of pickup.

It does take a little bit of time to get all that off, then get the tire temps back into the window. I just think everybody was struggling with the same thing.

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, I mean, I think everybody was going to improve a little bit before that red flag. I don't know how much. Yeah, the car was a lot better there. Just waited those two minutes to put a little bit more fuel, get the clear track. Yeah, I was just a second off. I was sliding everywhere. I was trying, but there was no way I could make it happen.

Q. If you had one more lap instead of just one and go...

ALEX PALOU: Yeah, it would have helped. Maybe we still would have needed two laps. Still when I went through turn six and seven, finishing the qualifying, I was still sliding a lot. I would have needed two more laps, I think.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. We'll see you tomorrow.

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