

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, July 13, 2024

Colton Herta

Scott McLaughlin

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by the pole winner for today's race, Colton Herta. The second NTT P1 award of the season, 13th of his career, first on an oval.

Your general thoughts?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's awesome. Kind of get the monkey off the back. First pole on an oval. Yeah, car seemed good in all conditions yesterday in practice. Should have a fast race car for tonight and tomorrow afternoon.

Yeah, a little bit of a bizarre one. We got it there at the end.

THE MODERATOR: What was it like to get one on an oval, a goal of yours?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I've been close. I've started off pole maybe two or three times on ovals in the past. But just have never had that last little bit.

It's cool to finally get it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What happened with the hybrid and what were the thoughts about going back out the second time?

COLTON HERTA: Well, it never worked, so it never deployed, never regen'd. As far as I understand it, it wasn't a mechanical thing.

I think the idea of going back out was it's going to be free lap time to go back out there and run again in similar conditions that we just did.

Obviously it's 60 extra horsepower for whatever, four or five seconds, it's big around this place, especially with a field so tight.

Q. Would you have had to pull your previous posted speed?

COLTON HERTA: I still don't know what happened. There's a lot of confusion. A lot of people saying different things. I haven't even talked to the team yet, so...

They told me run again. I got in the car. They said, We're not running again. I don't really know what happened.

Q. How is this track coming together? You can hug the low line. How are you feeling about this track?

COLTON HERTA: I mean, I think for the last few years, we wouldn't even think about getting a pole here, so it's a step in the right direction for everybody here.

I think the repave had a big play in that. I think it suits the car a lot better for us now. We have a lot more competitive package.

I guess in the long runs we think we're in a good spot. I think I'm in a good spot after practice. I guess we'll have to wait and see. But yeah, track position's going to be key for this race. I'm excited to start up front.

Q. How does your race car feel?

COLTON HERTA: Yesterday didn't really feel that much worse compared to anybody I was running around. It is going to be hard to overtake, so it's hard to kind of find that last little bit and get runs.

I think it could be kind of compared to what Indy races like in the mid and back of the field, it's hard to get those runs. You have to wait for a tiny bubble and then you can attack. I think the race might play out a lot like that.

But yeah, I think at the front it's going to be tough. It's going to be really tough once we get to lap traffic. An interesting part of the race for the leaders.

Q. You said you felt the repaves were coming your way. Was the pole a surprise?

COLTON HERTA: I thought Scott was very fast yesterday

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in practice. I didn't think that I could do the time that he did. I thought I could get close. Still half a 10th to three quarters of a 10th off, which is quite a bit around a place like this. But we did make some changes overnight. We were struggling a little bit with balance in traffic on our new tire runs yesterday.

THE MODERATOR: Joined by tomorrow's pole winner as well, Scott McLaughlin.

Nice afternoon. Starting up front tomorrow.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, solid start. Can't be unhappy with two front rows. Yeah, little bug is a little bit lighter than me, so probably a little bit faster on that first lap.

We were watching Love Island together the last couple nights as well. Not a bad start, Love Island boys. Excited for what's ahead. It's fun. I love this place.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Scott, most drivers did their faster lap first lap. A lot of folks struggled second. You did the second. Good luck, quick tuning in the cockpit?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: A little bit of both. I think the car has been really strong since we started testing here. Even on the other compound. Doing the lap later in the run, that's sort of how it has been in the race as well. Hopefully that bodes well for us.

Thankfully we were able to put a big enough time up at the start. Yeah, it's nice, it's a good feeling going into tonight, especially where the track is probably going to be a little bit cooler and whatnot, tomorrow when it's a little bit hotter. Have a car for both ends. See what we got.

Q. Most teams had to pit lane with the ERS fully charged. Did you have that 60 horse to start or regen during your run?

COLTON HERTA: I didn't notice it until kind of turn one of the warm-up lap. It was at zero at that point. I don't know where we started. I imagine it was at zero and stayed there the whole time. It was just kind of unresponsive from then.

Q. When y'all do get back into traffic, what is your confidence level of the passing with the new repave now?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We will wait and see, man. Yesterday it proved a little bit harder. I think in the race,

everyone starts on similar tires. Everyone is on the same program obviously. I saw in the Indy Lights race the outside lane was actually working. I can't see why it won't work on ours.

Ultimately if you get 20, 30 laps, everyone running the same line, it's probably going to ruin that top lane. That's just the name of the game.

I imagine people in the back, people that haven't had the best qualifying, are going to want to make some moves. You can definitely use it. It's just a matter of it being clean or dirty.

COLTON HERTA: I don't really have anything to add. Same thing. Like he said, it's going to be the guys at the back that are going to make it or break it for the second lane. Guys are going to have to go somewhere and pass somewhere. I'm sure guys are going to try it. But it needs to be consistent or else it's not going to work.

Q. Do you believe strategy will play a bigger role into getting track position or keeping that track position?

COLTON HERTA: Especially with how the tires are, the deg is nowhere near what it was before. You're going to be able to go a lot deeper in stints than you used to be able to. You're not pitting for fuel, you're pitting for tires. It could turn into the opposite.

That's going to be an interesting way for it to play out. Just like every INDYCAR race, I think the most important part is going to be the pit cycles.

Q. Colton, the second lap showed the deficit between you and Scottie. Was that where really the lack of the hybrid played a big role or was it across the entirety of the run?

COLTON HERTA: Let's go with that, yeah. That's all it was (smiling).

No, I think my warm-up lap was pretty fast. A lot of the guys that I got to watch outside of the car, they were struggling on the first lap, going quite a bit quicker on the second lap. My idea was to try to make the warm-up lap as fast as possible. I think it was maybe a little too fast and that may have hurt us for the second lap.

Ultimately the balance was there for the first lap. On the second lap it kind of got away from us. It's so fast, right? Qualifying is done for us in 32 seconds. It's hard to make those adjustments going under the second lap and you're kind of unsure.

If I were to do it again, which I almost did, I probably would have adjusted a little bit more for the second lap.

Q. How much of an effect and where did you use the regen and the deployment of the hybrid?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: We knew that the hybrid, you couldn't regen until you crossed the start/finish line of your warm-up lap. I pressed it in the middle of one and charged basically through one. I'm not going to tell you where I deployed it. Ultimately I thought we deployed it in the right spots when we needed to.

I knew it wasn't going to work until that point. I don't know what actually happened. Yeah, might have been a miscommunication on some part, as well.

Q. Colton, this track has not treated you well the last several years. Given the run you have been on, was there any additional emphasis you placed on this race to turn things around?

COLTON HERTA: No.

Q. Clarify for me. The second race is setting the pit lane selection for Toronto?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I hope so.

Q. You didn't plan that, then?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Absolutely not. You plan to go as fast as you can. I was just thinking literally that 10 seconds ago. Thank you for clarifying (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

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