

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Sunday, July 21, 2024

Colton Herta

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Colton Herta joins us after leading 81 of 85 laps. His first win since May of 2022. That's some 41 starts ago. Eighth career win. Led every session, which is remarkable. I believe to be the first time that has happened. Climbs to fourth in points. It's a perfect weekend.

COLTON HERTA: It's awesome. Well, I did not lead round two of qualifying. But I did get the pole.

THE MODERATOR: Room for improvement there.

COLTON HERTA: We can do better next week (laughter).

No, it's amazing. It's disappointing when you have success in a series, then you don't get it for a long time. So two years without a win is very tough on everybody: on the team, on me, on the guys. We all kind of demand the most out of ourselves and we demand the most out of each other.

For whatever reason, it just hasn't gone our way. We've had speed. We've had plenty of podiums. We've had a lot of poles, top fives, but no wins. It feels great to finally get one back.

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

Q. Obviously winning is good. Having it be so long, are the emotions more relief?

COLTON HERTA: Yes. Just finally get it done. I don't think I had any self doubt in myself, the team, or anybody that we're working with, that we couldn't win again or anything like that. But it is difficult to take weekend after weekend. It starts compounding into years. It's very difficult to be happy about a performance when it's not a win after that long of a time.

Q. Do you think this kind of sets up for an opportunity, could this kick-start a push for a title?

COLTON HERTA: I mean, it's possible. In testing we

were quite a bit better than Alex at Milwaukee. That's not to say that they're not going to find more speed when we go back. That's a big points weekend. That's basically double points with two races there.

We've had success at Portland. We were onto basically win there last year until we got a speeding penalty. We've had really good cars at Gateway. Qualified second there.

There's a lot of tracks that we've had success at in the past coming up. Yeah, I have never put my head down and said the championship is over at any point just because you never know in INDYCAR.

It will take a little bit of help. He might need to have a few heartbreaks here and there. But we've been gaining points on him, so hopefully that can continue.

Q. Do you plan to celebrate this here, go back home?

COLTON HERTA: I've got simulator tomorrow, so I'm going to Indy tonight. So no celebrating until maybe a few days. We've got meetings. I have simulator. Maybe when I'm back home.

Really I don't need to celebrate. I'm just happy that we finally did it. It kind of reignites me. We have a four-week break coming up and that sucks. Even after three weekends back to back to back, I just want to go race again and have a chance at another win.

Q. You talk about relief, now the crew gets some vacation...

COLTON HERTA: It's difficult. I think people don't realize on these back to back to back weekends, these cars get stripped down and taken apart, and they're basically rebuilt from bare chassis in about a day and a half until they're put on the haulers and shipped to wherever they are. That means 12-hour and 13-hour days.

Wednesday comes around, you have to fly out, then go to the race weekend. Set up on Thursday, practice on Friday, qualify on Saturday, race on Sunday. Fly back Sunday night. Usually get back 2, 3 a.m. for them on the team charter. On Monday morning you're back in the shop doing

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

another 12- or 13-hour day.

For them it's a lot more relief than the drivers. Obviously we get more sleep than they do on race weekends and off race weekends.

Everyone has a family and whatnot. It is good for them that they have a break. Although, like I said, I think we have simulator days, they're going to be working on the car. It's not really a break. It's just you don't have to leave home on the weekend. You don't need to do 12- or 13-hour days a week every day for the last three weeks.

THE MODERATOR: I'm assuming victory tacos are in order?

COLTON HERTA: For sure. I just have to figure out when and where.

THE MODERATOR: Not tonight?

COLTON HERTA: Maybe in Indy. I'm sure people will give me recommendations.

THE MODERATOR: I'm sure that will happen. You know where to go in Indy.

COLTON HERTA: There's a few places (smiling).

Q. During the second stint, do you feel the guy behind you was faster than you?

COLTON HERTA: Yes and no. I wasn't pushing 'cause I knew they said I would do a certain number of laps. I knew what that number was. I didn't know what the tire was going to be like, so there's no reason for me to push. Kyle was fine sitting there and riding at that point, also saving his tires.

I think both of us could have gone quite a bit faster but didn't feel the need to a lot of the race and didn't feel the pressure to.

As soon as Kyle told me that he was getting pressure, the team told me, then I would pick up the pace a little bit. Yeah, we were able to control the race, and we didn't really need to show our full pace and go win by 10 or 15 seconds just 'cause the cars were so solid.

Q. Coming into the pit together is kind of strategy to keep the third guy behind you?

COLTON HERTA: I'm not sure. If I was Kyle, I would try an overcut or an undercut. But I think the team wanted this 1-2 so badly that I think it was maybe partly that.

But there were no instructions from anybody that we weren't allowed to race or we had to pit a certain way or anything like that. That's just how it turned out to be, but I'm not sure why.

Q. How did you stay composed throughout this race which had a lot of restarts? What was the mental during the red flag?

COLTON HERTA: I feel like I never get the 85-lap full green races to win. It's always like red flags and yellows at the end. But it's good. It makes you work a lot harder for it, so it feels better when it happens.

It was crazy. It was a crazy race. I was not able to watch it but I saw a little bit on the screens at some points. I don't know how great the passing was or whatnot, but I felt like you could pass. When I got up to some of the slower cars, got by them super easy. All around it was a fun race.

Q. After your win at Long Beach, 2021, I asked you if it was the right time to call you the best Herta in INDYCAR history. I ask the same question again.

COLTON HERTA: I don't think I get to make that decision (smiling). Somebody else will have to make it for me.

Q. If you track Long Beach, Detroit and now here, Honda has swept the podium in all three races, two of those big pre hybrid obviously. Can you speak to what's there for the street courses.

COLTON HERTA: I think it's a lot of things. I think typically we have had really good cars. I think Ganassi has brought really good cars to street courses.

On the engine side, it plays into our hands a lot more on the lower-end stuff. Once we get to the higher-end stuff, we don't have that competitive edge. On street courses, we do have an edge. It kind of flips and changes throughout the season.

It is kind of surprising to see that happen. A lot of things go into it. Long Beach was a fuel race. Maybe Honda makes a little bit better fuel. I'm not 100% sure. It sure does seem that way. They're definitely more competitive on the low end, I think.

Q. What about the Toronto track suits your driving style, maybe the team style?

COLTON HERTA: It's definitely a team thing. We bring rocket ships here. It makes it so much easier on us. I think if it was driving style, you would see maybe just me or

maybe just Kyle up at the front consistently, or Marcus. We're all up there.

I think it kind of shows that the guys have a really good street course package at pretty much every street course we've done to this year. That seemed to be consistent the last few years.

Q. It seemed like quite a release on the way back into the pits with some impressive donuts. Can you describe that celebration.

COLTON HERTA: I love doing donuts. This engine's getting ripped out after this race, so I could destroy it as much as I want, although Honda won't like that because they like to rebuild them and keep them in cycle. That one might be destroyed, so apologies for that.

I hate when I don't get to do donuts. This is the perfect race to win because this engine is coming out, so I got to do them.

Q. Can you explain what happens to your mindset after a period so extended without a victory? Does that become a burden? How can you avoid that frustration getting the better of you?

COLTON HERTA: It's not frustration. It's just eagerness almost. For me it was hunger. I never got down about it. There were times maybe frustration at places I thought I could win and it didn't happen.

But I think over the season, you just get hungrier for it and you want it more. It does make you work harder. I think that's a good thing. But I'd prefer it if we just won a lot more.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports