

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, March 1, 2025

Scott McLaughlin

Colton Herta

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We welcome Colton Herta, starting second in tomorrow's race. Another front row start in what is his 100th start in the NTT INDYCAR SERIES.

Your thoughts? Pretty tight, still 2/10ths. A good way to start the season, correct?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, no, solid start for us, especially like when you look at where we were in practice. Really wasn't gelling well. Wasn't extremely happy with the car, but I wasn't driving well at all.

To kind of come back refreshed after practice two and practice one, have a car that could compete. Thankfully I put everything together that time.

Yeah, it's tough. It's tough when you have these Firestones that last one lap. It makes qualifying interesting. It's going to make the race interesting tomorrow. But it makes our job very hard inside the car to get things right for that one lap.

THE MODERATOR: Saw different things, cool down lap, different strategies. How did it affect you? Something you talked about in the engineering meetings?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah. Ultimately at least for us it was only going to be ever lap one. Even with a warm-up lap then a push lap, tires were falling off at the end of the lap.

It was fun. I like it like that. I think it's very challenging for the drivers to put everybody on the spot. I think it mixes it up. So yeah, you need to be able to perform well under pressure when you have tires like this. I enjoy it. I think it's fun.

THE MODERATOR: Also we welcome in Scott McLaughlin, his 11th NTT INDYCAR SERIES P1 award, second here in St. Pete. It is the 12th for Team Penske here on the streets of St. Petersburg. For the organization, it is their 699th pole position.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: My 70th. Pretty cool. I know my stats, don't worry (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Not bad. Congratulations. No better way to start 2025.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Great start. Thanks, Dave. Just super pumped with that. Basically from the Q1 group one that we did, really felt like the car had it in it. In Q2, we sort of scraped in, just sort of missed the balance.

Once we centered the balance up again for Q3, knew in the first run it was going to be pretty good, I could sort of lay it down as much as I could. Full commitment lap, as everyone else was. Certainly felt like I had a lot more confidence in the car.

Credit to the team because ultimately I gave them a bit of work last night. They were here till 8:30. To come back and put it on pole... I don't want to keep doing that, but ultimately if I do that and do pole the next day, that makes up for it a lot.

We'll keep working, hopefully convert it tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Quite a story the last 24 hours. I think I saw Kyle Moyer with pizzas being delivered late last night.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Kyle is sick. He likes that. He likes fixing car. He's a handyman.

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

Q. Scott, the car this morning, any extra work or changes on it after the fix?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it was an improvement on yesterday, for sure. But we still had to keep working at it. I thought the best the car has been this weekend was in qualifying. That was the main thing. I was really happy with it. Only in Q2 was where I wasn't happy and we turned it around.

Q. I think Colton, you heard Scott say it was probably

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a three-stop race with these tires. Do you believe that? Are you surprised there's as much falloff as there is?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think it was more extreme than I thought it was going to be. Usually when we have deg races, we deg on the red tires or soft compound, it's more so like you can maybe get a second lap in in qualifying. It was interesting to feel that.

I think tomorrow is going to be interesting because of that. For sure no doubt in my mind a three-stopper. There's no way anybody takes these tires to 30 laps or whatever it is to do the two-stopper. How long can you make them last? What is that going to look like? Is it going to be five laps? 15 laps? It's all going to be dependent, at least for us, on what guys do behind us. We'll kind of pit from there.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I agree (smiling). Honestly, there's not much to add. I think it's going to be a bit of a see what you can do. Obviously you don't want to lose too much time mucking around on a set of tires if you're getting hammered on the under-cart or vice versa.

Interesting warm-up to see where we're all at.

Q. The two of you finished second and third in the championship last year. The importance of this race is getting off the season to a fast start. How important is it to leave here with a fast start?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, look, payday is tomorrow. I can't speak on behalf of Colton. I'm sure he's the same way. We just want to get a good race under our belt tomorrow. Ideally a win. But you try to get away from here with a podium or a top five and you just sort of run away with it. It's a nice feeling to take those points and get going.

For my circumstance, I need a stronger start compared to my last few years to make sure I'm not chasing my tail halfway through the year.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I mean, I don't think it's necessarily like you need to. When you look at the championship, you can't really have that many bad races. Maybe one. If you kind of blow it here, you're putting yourself in a hole for the rest of the year.

Yeah, like Scott said, my mindset always is going into the race to try to get top five here. Ideally get on the podium. If there's a chance to win, take it, but don't force anything.

Yeah, just get the momentum going for the boys.

Q. Scott, first pole as a dad. What would it mean to be

able to celebrate in pit lane with a new member?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I said to Karly, if I do get pole, run from the bus to pit lane because I want to get a photo with her for that moment. Hopefully we can do it from Victory Lane tomorrow. Ultimately it was super special. She was awake, too, so ideal timing.

THE MODERATOR: Pretty good luck charm there.

Q. (Off microphone.)

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: It's just nice. I've told her to stay away as much as she can.

Q. Scott, I'm sure this probably isn't as big of an accomplishment as your first pole as a dad. Given the circumstances of the last 24 hours, what does it mean to you to be able to pull out a pole?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, for sure. The hit that I had yesterday wasn't as bad as it looked. The theatrics were pretty crazy. Ultimately you hate giving the team extra work, go over the garage hours and whatnot. Anything you can do to repay them. They always just say go out and get pole, do whatever. The team composure just... They love working on it.

Long hours suck, but it's kind of a passion. It's just nice to repay them in some ways. The only way I can do it apart from maybe a Coors Light after the race or something like that. That's probably it, so...

Q. Scott, you signed a new deal with Team Penske. How long was this in the works? When did it get over the line? How does it feel to get it over the line?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, just over the off-season, man. Was a simple sort of conversation we all had. It was done pretty quickly, I guess. So yeah, pumped to do that. Good security for me and my family moving forward.

Yeah, it's something that takes another focus off what I've done. Focus and get going. Yeah, I was pumped to get it done.

Q. Your fifth season in INDYCAR. You beat your Penske teammates last couple of years, won on every type of track. Have you given time to reflect on the rise you've been on?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it's crazy. I'm proud of the opportunity to come here. Never thought I'd probably be here. I was talking today to a friend. Seven years in the main series in Australia. Now I'm in my fifth season in



INDYCAR. I'm not far away from being longer in the professional INDYCAR, as a professional driver in the INDYCAR SERIES, than the Super Car Series. It's kind of crazy how my life has changed.

But love it. Love every second here. Enjoy America. I love it. I love it here. Don't really see any plans on leaving. I'm really enjoying it.

Q. For you personally, psychologically after what appears to be a massive off-season, to come back this strong straightaway, that's a great way to kick-start the season?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: I'm just glad I'm a dad now. I haven't lost 2/10ths like everyone says (laughter). I had a 2/10th game plan on Colton.

Having Lucy in the off-season, probably the best thing that ever happened to me in my life. There's more to life than racing in some ways. I said to many people throughout the week that I feel like when I go home, I've got a home. I'm worried about my wife and my daughter, my family. Then when I go to the workshop, I'm refreshed, I'm excited. It's not that I don't think about them. I'm so focused on work because I know when I get home, I'm going to be too busy changing diapers, whatever.

I'm really happy with the work/life balance I've got going here. It's a credit to my wife and my family. Yeah, just really enjoying it so far.

Q. During the off-season, Lucy, the Rolex. When you get back, do you feel this is the time to get the season going again? This is game time again now?

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, for sure. What a place to start. St. Pete is a track that always provides so many great memories and vibes and people here are so passionate. There's so many people that are probably not race fans but just enjoy the theatrics, the racing itself, just enjoy it. It's such a different demographic you see here. It's really cool.

Yeah, it's a great way to kick off the season for us in INDYCAR.

THE MODERATOR: Maybe the good vibes will continue tomorrow. Thank you, Scott.

SCOTT McLAUGHLIN: Immaculate.

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