

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Helio Castroneves

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Wrapping up day one of the Indy 500 Open test with Scott Dixon leading the way, 225.1. Kyle Larson is on his way, he was 11th quick, so Kyle will join us.

Joined now by Helio Castroneves, who was seventh quick, 224.447 miles an hour, his best speed, driving the 06 Meyer Shank Racing Honda, obviously the four-time Indianapolis 500 champion who finished 20th last year. He was one of nine Hondas to finish in the top 10 today.

How would you describe your start to this Indy 500?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, the Cliffs machine was actually running pretty smooth. In all consideration for brand new car, brand new team, all the guys just getting into the rhythm back together, they did an amazing job. I can't thank enough MSR for putting this program together for just one race, and you guys already been here so many years that you understand how hard it is. Even though you have teammates, it's still a brand new program, so we went through without any issues. Some electrical issues, but they were able to resolve that during the break.

Yeah, so now we are just getting back on the wagon here, and myself, as well, with the hybrid, this new system, so we understand many times in the beginning I forgot to press it because you're just so focused on what to do, and obviously muscle memory kicks in and you keep doing what you're doing.

Overall it was pretty good, and I feel that I think Chevy is playing some game here, so we're just going to continue to do our thing.

#### Q. How comfortable were you in the seat?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Pretty much right away. That's the beauty when you have a car that you know, the seat that's yours for a long time, so you understand what you need to do. In that sort of environment I didn't have to go it through not knowing what to do, like Daytona 500, for

example. I had no idea what I was doing in the beginning.

But yeah, this year it's back to my normal environment.

#### Q. You've worked with drivers that used the hybrid, but this is the first time that you got to use it. Did the weight feel -- did you notice the weight difference?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: We had some moments out there. I'm not sure if it was the weight or not. Watching the St. Pete race and some of the racing comments what they did on the road course, maybe that's what I was feeling but quickly made some adjustments on the car. We've just got to continue doing changes and improving what we feel is best.

But yeah, the only thing now is finding when to deploy and when to recharge and things like that.

#### Q. This morning when we had the bullpen, some drivers like Alexander Rossi said the hybrid doesn't give any boost, and other drivers said they felt a significant boost. What did it feel like to you?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: I felt a difference, no question. I think it's when I tested here a long time ago, October, it was .7 miles an hour, so it's not like 10 miles an hour, but it is something. It definitely can move you a lot of rows if you need it.

#### Q. Did you say that you were using a brand new car for this month of May this year?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Correct.

#### Q. Was there anything to that? You guys just wanted to try a brand new car after last year? What went into that decision?

HELIO CASTRONEVES: If I'm not mistaken, you'd better ask Mike, but I think we're about to retire that car that we won the Indy 500. They did many other ones, and it's about to move on and get something new, and this is the opportunity to do it now.

#### Q. Helio, you mentioned you were comfortable in the

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**car right away. Is it just the years of experience you've had, like I've done this before, or was it something else?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: That certainly helps, no question. But as I said, again, you can just go out there and you understand what you need to do. Getting used to the speed -- as I said, we have the hybrid now, so getting used to that. So using experience to adapt quicker helps. But every time I started here the month, it's always reset button, start from scratch, and keep moving forward.

**Q. Helio, obviously a new partnership with the team this year with Ganassi. What was it like to have the expertise of Scott Dixon and Alex Palou in your corner today?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, we still haven't had a chance to talk yet. However, speaking on the side of the team, definitely you'll see the improvement. Both cars, 66 and 60, were able to have incredible qualifying and races, as well, and they're showing a very strong performance. Yeah, and I notice. Just working behind the scenes in St. Pete and Thermal, I didn't go to Long Beach, but interacting with engineers, you can see just a different style.

I think with Andretti it was great all those years together. They had their own fundamental ways to work, and now you're just adding to another group, and for us, it's been great. Definitely a lot of work in the off-season to adapt to their system, but as of right now, for me it's the same.

So far, it's a great partnership.

**Q. Just evaluate the new add to the team, Marcus Armstrong. What's it been like to work with him?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Yeah, he's great. He's a young talent, as well, along with Felix. Not young as much, but Felix is still showing incredible speed, and super happy with both guys.

**Q. In this case it's Palou and Dixon that get to work with Castroneves.**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Ah, my man. See? Hold on, let me put you the money here.

**Q. In your long and illustrious career, you've had rain delays, you've had weepers, had a variety of things that happened --**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: And last year racing at night, 8:00.

**Q. Did you ever a lengthy delay because of connectivity issues? That was our delay this morning. They couldn't connect race control --**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: No, that was a first one. But I'm glad they fixed it.

**Q. Were you getting a little bit antsy there wondering, hey, what's going on, when are we going to start this?**

HELIO CASTRONEVES: Well, yeah, I'm sure they will adjust like they did with the time, and yeah, it did not hurt the program, so far that I understand.

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