

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, May 31, 2025

Colton Herta

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Also joined by Colton Herta, driver of the No. 26 Gainbridge Honda for Andretti Global with Curb Agajanian, his first NTT P1 award of 2025, 15th of his career, back-to-back on the streets of Detroit, sixth all-told on street circuits in his career. Quicker than the pole speed last year. Tell us about it. Just your thoughts on another one here in Detroit for you.

COLTON HERTA: I was worried about that because I was like, oh, man, after Friday I was hoping nobody broke the track record because I had it, and I've still got it.

No, I was happy with it. Friday was pretty bad from us as far as what we're used to on street courses, just the feel of the race car. So it kind of -- Friday night to go over everything and turn everything around. The engineering group did a great job with that, and we saw this morning's session felt a lot more comfortable and felt a lot more comfortable on the reds, also, or soft greens.

Yeah, happy with how it went.

Q. Colton, Firestone improved or changed the compound; is there any big changes in driving behavior, and can you feel it?

COLTON HERTA: No. I think it's going to be very similar to previous races on street courses. It's going to be difficult strategy-wise just because of the amount of yellows that you get here. I think we saw a lot of guys that were able to start on blacks in the past and finish really well, and it's going to be a lot harder to do here. It favors the people at the front, I think, so I'm glad that we qualified well.

Q. What can the pole do as far as either kind of motivation or just kind of psyche of your team after kind of a rough Indy?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I mean, ultimately we have been really strong on Saturdays and we have not on Sundays. I think that's the goal of this team. We need to put together Sunday.

I think it's been frustrating for everybody just to have so much pace and have no results. I think our best finish is a fourth, which I think we should have the ability to have some wins this year. We have a good chance right now.

I think this is a place that promotes pretty good passing as far as street courses go and crazy strategy, and we've seen the past two years with a lot of yellows. So anything can happen.

But I think we're really just focused on doing the right things for ourselves, and if we get screwed some way or another, that's the way it's going to go. But we've just got to put together a good Sunday from what we can do.

Q. Do you view the execution on Sundays more as self-inflicted, or is it strategies just gone wrong?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think we can all do a little bit better, and I think we've been taking it really seriously in our post-event stuff, too. Not make the same mistakes twice, which I don't think we have. But either way, I think it's something that we all want to do better with.

Q. Because there's been so much mayhem here in the first couple of races on the streets, how important is it for you to be on the pole so if that mayhem breaks out you're seeing it from the rear view mirrors?

COLTON HERTA: It's great, but we've seen these races with a whole bunch of yellows that just turn strategy upside down. So we really need to be on top of every scenario that's going to happen and really understand that tonight.

There's 15 cautions in the last two years, so maybe that's a little bit less with the hybrid from what we've seen this year, but maybe not, and that could definitely be a killer of races. You could get trapped in some yellows.

So we just need to understand the best way to go about that and protect ourselves.

Q. Also, it's a little bit cooler this year than in the past. How much does that change the grip level on the track? We saw a lot of guys slipping and sliding in practice this morning. Do you think some of that will

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carry over in the race?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I think this is probably the most difficult street circuit and maybe the most difficult circuit to create tire temp. So what does that do for the race? I think the undercut gets a little bit harder but not impossible. But it always changes in the race, so it's hard to say exactly yes or no and that sort of thing.

But I think we understand what we want to do, and we have an idea. But like I said, this race is crazy. You just never know what's going to happen.

Q. Obviously this is a pretty technical, tight, bumpy track. Can you talk a bit about the challenge of it and also how it compares to the other street courses, as well?

COLTON HERTA: It's just very different. As far as the 90-degree corners, they are proper, proper 90-degree corners, whereas you look at a place like Long Beach, and even the 90-degree corners aren't exactly 90 degrees and the exits and everything are shaped a little bit different.

This is definitely like a very true downtown street circuit, and the bumps, it's very similar to where we were at in the past at Belle Isle. It definitely gives it character.

I think without the bumps, this place wouldn't be as much fun, and it wouldn't be as much of a challenge, so we kind of need those Detroit streets.

Q. Is there anything about the track or I guess street courses in general but here obviously being different to other street courses that you feel as suited your driving style? Obviously the Andretti cars are quick, but specific to your style?

COLTON HERTA: I think I just put it together better. I qualified second at Long Beach, and I think I was in the top 3 or top 2 in St. Pete. I think we've been doing good, but I don't think I've put it together completely in the Fast Six like I did today.

Q. Obviously interesting to hear about the track record given there is the added weight this year. The kind of question that's asked at every track, how does the hybrid feel here compared to the other tracks that we've visited for the first time with the hybrid this season?

COLTON HERTA: The feeling is similar. I don't get a sense of it being slower anywhere, and obviously we have a really long straight, so the power output of it would have a bigger effect than, say, like St. Pete or even Long Beach

just because the back straight here is so long. So I feel like it closes that gap up a little bit.

I think the tires that we have are probably softer than what we ran here last year and are activated a little bit quicker.

Q. On the rear you have 45 kilos more; what about the perfect setting of the car not for today, from yesterday, because obviously the weather on track is different?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it is different. It's a little bit cooler than yesterday. It typically promotes a little bit more rear sliding and a little bit more of a quicker front end. But also, everything works better, the downforce, the wings work a lot better, the engine runs a lot better.

I think there is a big gain from that just even without a balance change.

Q. Colton, just wanted to ask about the deg, especially with the cooler conditions versus what we've seen before. The strategies have been pretty straightforward on the street courses this year. Do you think that's going to be much different with maybe some cooler conditions?

COLTON HERTA: It could be. Not in the sense that you're going to do 30 laps on a set of reds and make it a two-stop still, but it could open it up to maybe 15, 20 laps. That would open up the race a lot and be really interesting.

I think that's where you want that dropoff to lead you is, like, I could stay out five more laps, but I might lose six or seven seconds here, but then I can keep up with the two-stop and do the two-stop, whereas right now I think we have a little bit too much deg for that opportunity. But I do think that this track, like I said before, the tire temps are coming up so slow and that's really the killer of the tires, so with it being cooler, yeah, you could see -- I don't want to put a number on it, but you could see a lot more laps than we have in the past.

Q. Later today we have the IMSA race, 100 minutes. Do you think the track will maybe have a different grip level tomorrow when the IMSA cars have raced with a different tire manufacturer?

COLTON HERTA: It can for warmup, but you have to think, before we race we have a 20-minute warmup and a 45-lap Indy Lights race, I believe 45 laps, both on Firestone tires, so that should clean up anything that they've done.

Although I don't know if I typically see Michelin rubber disagree with Firestone rubber like other championships. I'd have to think back to Long Beach. I don't remember it

being that big of a deal either way. I don't think so.

THE MODERATOR: Colton, congratulations. We'll see you on the front row tomorrow.

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