

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Friday, July 25, 2025

**Christian Lundgaard**

**Colton Herta**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up practice ahead of Sunday's Java House Grand Prix of Monterey, joined now by Christian Lundgaard, driver of the No. 7 Arrow McLaren Chevrolet, best finish of fifth here at WeatherTech Raceway at Laguna Seca, currently fifth in the NTT INDYCAR Series points standings. What did you learn in that practice session today, Christian.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: If I'm going to be honest, not much. We were, I would say, a lot slower than we were anticipating, and we seemed to lack some pace, so we've got some work to do overnight to find that for tomorrow.

But I always enjoy coming here, so having a very frustrating practice 1 is not really how I want to start my weekend. I know I'm fast around here, so I'm sure we'll figure it out.

**Q. Looking ahead to tomorrow, obviously a second practice session is going to be huge, but when you get to qualifying and set this field where obviously passing is difficult, how important is that second practice tomorrow?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I feel like the second practice is obviously very important, but I think ultimately qualifying is more important, and that's all being set up through P1 and P2, and we didn't really get off to the best start.

Obviously Pato was extremely quick. We have some good data to look at, and I think we need to investigate it on the stand and analyze the differences there and make sure we get out on top for tomorrow.

This is one of those tracks, if it's a clean race, it's going to be a fun race because the degradation around this track has always been very fun from a race perspective, and it looks like the track is kind of degrading in that way as it was in 2022. I think we're all pretty excited for that.

**Q. If I remember correctly, the temperatures were not so hot like the previous years. Do you think the secret for a quick lap is also (indiscernible)?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, yes. I think the -- I mean, yes. At the end of the day, the cooler it is there, the better the engine is, the better the downforce will be. From a tires perspective I think when they get too hot, yes, it has an influence, but I think once -- kind of the temperature that we're in, they don't mind that, I would say.

**Q. Were you surprised at the struggles in practice or were you trying something that you thought, well, is it going to work or is it not?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: No, I'd say I was very surprised, very frustrated at the moment. Yeah, I don't get pissed off very often, and this is one of the moments where I definitely am. I think we need to take our time this afternoon and tomorrow morning to try to figure out how to make it better for tomorrow.

I don't know if we missed something completely or if something is wrong. Obviously we'll investigate that.

**Q. You're in the booth for the INDY NXT race tomorrow, so I'm curious, what do you hope to add to the telecast?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: I mean, obviously throw some laps at it, watch some cool racing. I think I'll be able to understand where the passes are being made, how the track is different from last year, different kind of things.

THE MODERATOR: Also joining us, Colton Herta, driver of the No. 26 Gainbridge Honda for Andretti Global with Curb Agajanian, quickest in that group 2 session, of course a two-time winner here at WeatherTech Raceway at Laguna Seca with nine career NTT INDYCAR Series wins and a podium finish at Detroit as well earlier this year. Feel pretty good about things after that practice session?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, car felt great. I think there's a better lap time in there for us, but just didn't get everything out of it. When that happens and you're still up near the top, it feels really good. Gainbridge Honda is fast. I'm

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

happy.

**Q. Colton, coming into a track where you know you're going to be good every year, how much confidence does that really give you to try some things and stay that much further ahead of the game?**

COLTON HERTA: You never know if you're going to be good year to year. This is definitely a place that has been really kind to me in the past, but it's too competitive to have the arrogance that you think you're just going to arrive and be just as good as last year.

I'm happy to see that we seem to be very quick still, and the car seems to be very good. So that's nice, but it's always evolving. It's always changing. The track feels incredibly different to what we had last year.

It's an interesting one. It's one that it's fun to come back year after year because it always changes. It always changes definitely.

**Q. When this race was in September that tends to be the hottest time of the year in this area. How much more consistent is the track now when the temperatures are in the low to mid 60s?**

COLTON HERTA: I don't know, I think it's -- I don't really know yet, to be honest. I think the tarmac is a lot lighter, so that plays a huge role in how the track heats up and cools down. It's also rougher and has less overall grip, so that plays a huge role in how it affects the tires and how it feels on the track, so it's hard to compare year to year.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I agree with what Colton said.

**Q. Can you share some thoughts about alternates and primes here and what you learned so far today?**

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's looking a little bit more like older Laguna Seca, which I like. I think it opens up the passing a lot more, and the raceability of the racetrack is going to be a lot better. It seems like there's more deg than previous years by a good chunk. But it's nowhere near the extent of what a 2019 or 2022 race would have been like here. Blacks, reds, I don't know, it feels very normal to me, like the pickup on grip and how they are reacting. So there's nothing new to report on that.

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I honestly think I agree. My first race here was in 2022, and that was the last year with the old pavement, and I do feel like we're seeing more similarities to that.

But I do feel like the tires feel pretty normal. There's just more degradation.

**Q. What we've seen in the support categories and we saw it in that session as well is if you drop a wheel off the edge of the track, the surface tends to drop away in the gravel. Is that enough to pull you right off the racing line or off the track?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: Yeah, I mean, I think the track is very known for that, right? If you do dip a wheel in, the next five, six cars that come by are going to have a hard time going into the next corner from the dirt that's on the track. But I feel like it's a lot lower grip this year than it was last year, and I think we saw a lot more mistakes from drivers due to that.

But I think a lot of us are going to make mistakes this weekend because we are trying to squeeze everything out of it, and it seems to be a little bit lower grip and just more penalizing this year.

**Q. Colton, what we've also seen is the introduction of more stringent track limits here, particularly pitting. Does that make it more difficult coming into the pit lane in particular?**

COLTON HERTA: No, I think it's pretty straightforward, and we all kind of decided what was best. I think it was pretty unanimous on the decision to do this. We all agreed pretty heavily to go the direction that we did. So yeah, it's straightforward.

**Q. I asked one of the other drivers what he thought the surface was, and he said he thought it was pretty slick out there. Did you experience that? Is that why we saw so much spinning?**

CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD: The surface? Yeah, I do think we're all a little surprised with how much lower the grip was, for sure.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, it's much lower than previous years.

**Q. Colton, you talked about the deg being up this year. Specifically with the alternate tire, what's the window looking like right now?**

COLTON HERTA: It's too hard to say. If you asked me at Thermal if the red tire was going to be usable, I would say no way, and then so many people -- like you made the used red work. A lot of guys made the used red work.

I think we could be in a similar scenario, but it's too hard to



say. It could definitely go either way on you put the reds on and maybe they last eight laps or maybe they last whatever it needs to, 22 or whatever the number is.

**Q. What would you expect the track progression is going to look like through the course of this weekend?**

COLTON HERTA: I don't think it's going to change too much, to be honest. I think how this place was before, like the track progression compared to a lot of permanent road courses is slim to none. I think it will stay somewhat similar. It'll get faster, but it's not going to be a huge change.

**Q. Colton, I think you used only reds in the group session. Is that the new way for you to do --**

COLTON HERTA: No, there was a few people that did. Louis also got laps, Felix got laps. But that's kind of been the way that we've treated these sessions. We all year haven't gone out first on blacks and then to reds. It's not like -- I don't think there's a right or wrong way to do it. It's just how we've done it, and it's worked out in that sense.

**Q. Colton, you just said earlier the track is much different than last year. Do you mean by different the grip level?**

COLTON HERTA: Yes, the grip level is down quite a bit. This track, it seems like a northern California thing where it's like Sonoma and this place, they just get chewed up. It's like they have a pack of rottweilers out on the track in the off-season just tearing up the track.

It literally, the apex, the corners, it just looked chewed up and beat up. It's kind of needed here because I think the racing is very stale without tire deg. I think the races in '22 and '23 before the repave were better races -- sorry, '22 and before that were better races.

I think it's going to be more catered to that type of race.

**Q. Do you think last year's data is useless then?**

COLTON HERTA: It's always useful. Obviously it's less useful than if we went back and it was very similar, but it's still somewhat useful.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports