

Indianapolis Motor Speedway Media Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Colton Herta Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Colton Herta, the driver of the No. 26 Gainbridge Honda. How did you do it? Everyone wants to know how you survived all of that today.

COLTON HERTA: Pure talent. (Laughing). It was really just the call for wets to slicks. Again, the call for slicks to wets that made the difference.

I think we gained 15 spots on that transition. We pitted on lap three. Everybody pitted on lap four or five. We gained 15 spots in that transition to go from 15th to first.

Yeah, it was really cool. Really cool to be a part of today. The team did a tremendous job. They gave me such an incredible car.

The most interesting thing is you never have a car that works in the wet and the dry. It's just not possible, but it happened today. It was very interesting. Felt comfortable in all conditions. Yeah, it was fun to do it.

THE MODERATOR: Is that the moment early on I know captured a lot of the attention? That full drift moment that you had. Talk us through that a little bit.

COLTON HERTA: I was on the rack stops, and I was shoving so hard to get more wheel, but I couldn't. It was a lot of -- I need to see the video of what happened, but what I think happened is it was drying, but maybe I went out a little bit wider on the entry of the corner than I had been and got that left rear on a damp patch or something. That's what it felt like because I turned in and it just lost everything immediately.

Yeah, I would have been upset if I spun there, but I would have been even more upset because I didn't know that was for the lead of the race. I thought maybe I was, like, 10th or 11th. Maybe gained a few spots from that, so I had no clue where I was on track. Yeah, I guess that was one of the only mistakes we made today.

Q. Colton, what was the discussion like at the end to go to the tires because I know they TV interviewed

your dad, and at first he thought, I don't know if we made the right decision. What was the discussion like? It was your decision.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah. What we were talking about is I said with the track conditions right now it's probably wets, but if you think it's going to get dryer or wetter, that will change my decision.

We thought it was going to dry out a little bit, so we went on slicks. Immediately when I got out there, I knew it was going to be tough, but I said if you guys think it's going to be dry, then we'll stay out here.

I think they saw something pop up on the radar that it was going to stay wet. We made the wrong choice, but luckily, everyone followed our direction and did the wrong thing also, so we didn't actually lose that much.

Q. The big race is coming up in two weeks, but still, to add the Herta name to an INDYCAR winner at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, that's got to be pretty cool to both you and your dad.

COLTON HERTA: For sure. It's very awesome. Yeah, he has won here as a team owner, so now he has won here as a strategist. It was awesome. It was really cool to -- obviously, I got to win here in Indy Lights, and that was awesome, but it's very different than winning in INDYCAR here, and I'm sure it's very different feeling to what winning the 500 would be. We'll keep trying. It's great momentum for us going into the big race in a few weeks.

Q. On one of the restarts you had to draft past Jimmie Johnson, I think it was, to get up to Pato who, fortunately for you, was on slicks at that point. How much could you see, and how determined were you to know both of them before the end of that straight?

COLTON HERTA: When I got by Jimmie, I could see fine because I was pretty far outside of the last turn, so they were kind of on the inside struggling. I looped around the outside.

Then following Pato, I couldn't see anything. I could see the red flash, the rain light, but that was it. I kind of knew when to pull out from that.



Yeah, the heavens opened as soon as I pulled out of the tow. It's great because every time I look back at a restart or a start or something, it was just torrential downpour.

Maybe I shouldn't tell you guys this, but I saw Simon poking out on one of the restarts on the TVs. I was watching the TVs because I couldn't see anything out of the mirrors. Every time he would poke out, I would go down a little bit more so he couldn't see anything going into one, but yeah.

Q. That was pretty smart.

COLTON HERTA: I was giggling a little bit in my helmet looking. Every other TV he would poke out a little bit more, so I would go a little bit more. Funny. What's that?

Q. (Off microphone).

COLTON HERTA: I can't see the ones on the outside, but the ones in the media center. I think there's, like, four or three of them.

Q. I wanted to ask did you at one point Pato spun. He went past Rosenqvist, his teammate, and then he looked like he was going to try to go down the inside of you. Did he touch you when he spun at all on your right rear?

COLTON HERTA: Who spun? Was it Felix?

Q. No, Pato.

COLTON HERTA: I think he did touch me. It didn't do anything to me, but I think he did get in a little deep, and I think his left front just got my right rear, but I saw him coming in, so I left some space just in case. I think he maybe overcooked it a little bit and needed more.

Q. That was going to be my other question. There's been a lot of talk about the visibility through the Aeroscreen. How much can you see through the mirrors through the Aeroscreen?

COLTON HERTA: The mirrors are fine. Yeah, I think we would have been in the same situation without the Aeroscreen there at the end, though, because it was really, really wet.

The only down side I think there was was not having a tear-off when it dried up because you get all the mud and dried, I don't know, raindrops on there, but once I had a tear-off, it was fine. I think a lot of people were worried about the fogging because it can still be quite muggy when it's raining here, but it wasn't a problem for me. I was happy

with it.

Q. Colton, I was going to ask you something else, but I'll ask one thing first. Playing off what you just talked about the TV screens. Football players do that a lot in stadiums. They look up and see who is chasing them.

COLTON HERTA: That's where I got the idea from.

Q. Seriously, is this the first time you've done that or have you been doing it?

COLTON HERTA: I do it all the time. I think everybody does. If there's a screen on the back straight or the front straight that you can see. Obviously, I'm not looking in the middle of the corners or anywhere that it could catch me out, but yeah, there's a long straight. You don't have anything to do on it but look around.

Q. Look around, defend, right?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah.

Q. Can you put people in the cockpit for me? How grueling was this from a nerve standpoint to drive a car like that today and at the front obviously helps, but just how frayed do you feel right now after that?

COLTON HERTA: I'm okay. You are kind of on edge, but you can't drive like that, you know, be afraid or anything because you don't get the most out of the car.

I was never nervous about going off or hitting anything. I was focused completely in this race, and maybe the most I've ever been because it's so difficult in those changing conditions to not only feel everything, but you have to see everything before you go over it, which is what I think almost caught me out with that big slide at the beginning of the race.

So, yeah, there's no lapse of focus, which for, I don't know, how long was our race -- it was a timed race. Two hours?

THE MODERATOR: Two hours.

COLTON HERTA: For two hours it can be quite physical, but on the opposite end of what we're used to.

Q. The first stop of the race, I think it was lap nine, ten, around that area, what was the process in deciding now is the perfect time to stop for the red tires there?

COLTON HERTA: I had an under-steer that was building. I knew from hearing from previous drivers at how much the reds will run in the wet. I didn't really get to -- I didn't run

here in the wet when they were in 2019. I was already out of the race. I ran in 2019 at Detroit in that wet race, but it was dry by lap two.

I felt that feeling of kind of what they were describing when the fronts go off and you get more under-steer and what kind of decides what happens with the dig level. Once I felt that, I thought it was maybe a bit early, but I thought it was the right decision to say, hey, I think we should come in.

Thankfully it ended up being that way, and yeah, great stop to get me back out there and then try to stay on the track and reap the benefits.

Q. How beneficial is this result for you going into practice week and then for qualifying?

COLTON HERTA: It's nice for momentum-wise. Obviously, mechanically it has nothing to do with what we're going to be doing, but for the team and for me to be in a high note going into truly the month of May it feels great. So, yeah, hopefully we can kind of reap some of the benefits of that, turn that into some speed and everyone is going to be working that much harder to be back where we were today in two week's time.

Q. After a rough start to the season, does this win give you a sense of relief, or was it just rewarding to win under such tricky conditions?

COLTON HERTA: No, I knew we could do it. Did I think we were going to win today in a straight-up normal dry race? Probably not. I don't think that we quite had the speed to win.

The car was really good in morning warm-ups, so it gave me confidence going into the race. Then, obviously, all hell broke loose, and everything started happening. Yeah, we kind of adapted really well.

Nathan put some things on the car that maybe would have worked in the dry. Nathan is my engineer, by the way. Put some things on the car that would have been fine in the dry, but also would have helped us in the wet, so we kind of had maybe a little bit of a hybrid setup, but not with the intention of being fast in the wet, and it ended up being super fast in the wet so it was a lot of fun.

Q. One of your first races in the Road to Indy was actually at this track in 2014 in USF2000. It was raining. It was wet at the start of the race but then dried up. Any flashbacks of that in the car?

COLTON HERTA: I didn't even remember that until you just brought it up. No.

Q. You finished fifth, by the way.

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, I remember the qualifying was also in the wet, which I think we qualified on pole, but then I was too late, so I got disqualified.

No, I did not think about that. I was watching video of the 2019 race to see what everyone was doing there line-wise and stuff to get some hints.