



2019 Open-Wheels.com 500 Mile Race

Press Conference

Sunday, November 17, 2019

Michele Costantini

Driver, No. 66 Apex Racing Team with Indy 500 Group Dallara IR-18 Honda

MODERATOR: Now joining us in the Media Center, the driver of the No. 66 Apex Racing Team/SDK Gaming/VRS Dallara IR-18 for Apex Racing Team with Indy 500 Group, today's winner of the 2019 Open-Wheels.com 500 Mile Race presented by Mitchell Transmissions, Michele Costantini. Michele, congratulations on your accomplishment today and welcome to the winner's press conference.

MICHELE COSTANTINI: Thank you so much, Tanner.

MODERATOR: Michele, yesterday we talked about how you came up just short of winning yesterday's Pit Stop Competition after running short on fuel. Today, you timed it just right – can you talk about your day and racing to victory?

COSTANTINI: More than the final caution, the assistance (more so) came from my teammates. I was either sometimes lucky that when they pitted out, they came out in front of me so I could save fuel behind them, and in some cases, it was well-timed with the fact that I could stay behind them saving fuel.

It is quite funny, actually, that what I didn't manage to accomplish (on Saturday) happened today. (Racing in the Pit Stop Competition) definitely helped, but a huge thanks to all (of) my teammates for helping me win this race.

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MODERATOR: You certainly saved the best for last – how was your car for this race? You were in

contention for much of the day despite the changing track conditions.

COSTANTINI: The car – for the first 100 laps until the first caution – was amazing. I had just enough downforce to be competitive in traffic, but it was also quick enough in clean air that the cars behind me would struggle to follow me close, so that was perfect.

The first caution kind of messed up my race a little bit. I pitted because I thought the tires would be important to have, which they were, but as soon as the green came out, the track temperature started going up quite quickly. I managed to pass five cars, but I kind of stalled there because of the track temperature.

From there, I started fuel saving for the rest of the race. So that was basically 100 laps of fuel saving. The fact that I got stuck in traffic, is probably the reason I won the race, because that helped me saving fuel from there until the end.

I had to add a little bit of downforce because I was not able to follow closely with the track temperature and the (wing angle) I started the race with. I knew it was going to hurt the fuel saving a little bit, but at the end of the day, I was able to stick with people with the added downforce for the last few stints, which helped me save more than what I would have saved with lower (downforce) by myself.

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MODERATOR: On that final fuel stint, you went 33 laps. Were you confident and comfortable that



you would have enough fuel to the end had it stayed green?

COSTANTINI: Yeah, I was telling my fuel numbers to Christopher (Demeritt), AJ (Burton) and everyone else in the team. They were helping me with calculations because we had no spotter for this race, which was a bit of a problem in some stages, but we managed to calculate the numbers on the fly between all of us even though we were all driving. That was an incredible effort from everyone in I5G. I was good to go, even without that last caution.

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MODERATOR: Talk about that Indy 500 Group unit that helped you – how did they help you get to where you are today after a month's worth of work.

COSTANTINI: We had a very solid base from May, but still, we worked a fair amount this last month – and a little bit prior to that. Having a solid base from May was definitely a good thing, but that was about it. We just worked out our race setup a little bit better. We worked on our qualifying setup a bit, because the qualifying format (in the Open-Wheels 500) is a bit different compared to the "official" 500, so we worked out that a little bit. But other than that, (the teammates) have been amazing – every single one of them (have) helped me be so successful in these events and I can't thank them enough for this.

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MODERATOR: What does it mean for you to be the inaugural winner of the Open-Wheels.com 500 Mile Race?

COSTANTINI: It really means the world to me because of how well-organized this event has been... It has just been the best-organized event I have ever run in anything sim racing-related, so I cannot thank Tanner and Open-Wheels.com enough for this event. It is amazing to be the first winner of this event, and hopefully if this happens again next year, I'll try to defend the title.