

Indy Lights News Conference

Sunday, February 27, 2022

Matthew Brabham
Benjamin Pedersen
Linus Lundqvist
Indy Lights Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Congratulations and welcome to the podium finishers for today's Indy Lights presented by Cooper Tires event here on the Streets of St. Petersburg, Florida. Matthew Brabham, second career win, driver of the No. 83 Andretti Autosport Honda who, by the way, just turned 28 on Friday. It's his birthday, so it's a weekend-long celebration, obviously.

Benjamin Pedersen, driver of the No. 24 Global Racing Group with HMD Machine finishing second, his third runner-up finish of his career.

Finishing third today, wrapping up the podium, Linus Lundqvist, driver of the No. 26 HMD with Dale Coyne Racing Machine, and you go back the last seven races this is the sixth time in the last seven races he has finished on the podium. Congratulations to all three.

Matty Brabs, we'll start with you. Welcome back to Victory Lane and a press conference involving that, back in the Indy Lights series presented by Cooper Tires.

MATTHEW BRABHAM: Yeah, thank you so much. It's nice to be welcomed into a press conference other than ignored with deaf ears in the Super Trucks. So yeah, it's so good to be back. Really appreciate it. It's so good to see all you guys' faces again. Looks like there's a lot of you in here today, so awesome.

THE MODERATOR: Tell us about the last few moments there.

MATTHEW BRABHAM: Yeah, it was pretty hairy. Obviously pretty heartbreaking for Christian. I was just lucky. Obviously very unlucky for him, and my sympathies and apologies for him because that just must be gut wrenching. You're going to win the race, and I'm not sure exactly what happened, but he just didn't finish. He just lost power.

I thought maybe, oh, he thinks the race is over or something because he started slowing down, but then he picked up speed again, and I'm like, oh, no, maybe he realizes the race is still on because I'm catching him, and then he just died coming out of Turn 9, and I nearly wrecked him. I nearly went right up the back end and hit him and actually did hit him and I clipped the front wing on his rear tire, and I think I broke my front wing, but it stayed on for the last lap.

On the last lap I was just trying to avoid all the curbs and be as smooth as possible so my front wing wouldn't break any further.

Yeah, just super lucky. Obviously got a really good start, and man, like I was lucky to win, but I'll take it where I can get it, and it's so refreshing and good to be back. Unbelievable. Couldn't have seen it happening like that from sixth place for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Benjamin Pedersen, finishing second today. Tell us about your afternoon. How did it go?

BENJAMIN PEDERSEN: I think it's the longest Lights race we've ever had around here, so it felt long and hot. Yeah, it started with a pretty -- it was a good start for us but it was a messy start from a field perspective, so just getting through that. And then I think on the first lap we were like third and then it was just trying to manage, and then like Matt said with Christian, whatever happened with him, we blew by, and then I realized I was second, and then at that point we still had a lot of laps to go still. Just managing the pace and Push-to-Pass and, yeah, I think it was a really good recovery today starting fourth.

THE MODERATOR: Linus, great day for the HMD boys, right, when it comes to getting two out of the top three.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, for sure. Like you said, good to be back here. Good to get the season going. It's a great place to do it. St. Pete is nice, and like you said, a good start for us with second and third. Obviously we always want a little bit more, but from my point of view and my race, it sort of just got a little bit dropped in Turn 1 where it got a little bit hectic and close and we dropped back to sixth, and then yeah, managed to get away with a

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

podium. On a bad day for us like this, we'll take a podium.

Q. Matt, it's been 2,851 days since your win at IMS. What is the story behind you coming back to do another season of Indy Lights after quite a few years of doing other racing?

MATTHEW BRABHAM: I mean, just not giving up. I think there's a lot of people at my age and in my situation that would just say flat-out no to doing Lights again purely because they're worried about what they're going to look like on track. What if they come in and they're the big dog and they've done it all before and they get beat.

I just have no notion of that whatsoever. I'm a racer at heart, and I'll race anything; I don't care. If I get beat by these guys, that's a credit to them. It boosts the level of the field.

Yeah, I mean, the whole opportunity came about last year, and I've always just said yes to everything that Andretti have said and my supporters have said, and yeah, obviously my goal is INDYCAR, and I see this as a great avenue, especially for me being out for so long. I need to get back racing full-time, and I've seen that in testing. You probably saw that in qualifying. I only qualified sixth. I need to get back into the swing of things. I need to get back to where I was before.

Being out for so long, it definitely takes a toll and definitely makes you rusty.

I think I could be thrown in an INDYCAR this weekend and do well, but if I had another year -- if I have this year of Lights and I get thrown in an INDYCAR, I'll be a lot better off.

Q. Benjamin, you finished off last season with a lot of podiums, start this one with another podium. When is that first win coming?

BENJAMIN PEDERSEN: Hopefully soon.

Q. What do you need to do to get over that little bit of a hump?

BENJAMIN PEDERSEN: Yeah, just believing in everyone around me. I have really good people around me, so a lot of positive energy. I think it will happen very soon. The whole preseason testing we've been really quick.

Just sticking to the gut, sticking with the program, believing, and even if we can't win right away, then be second, so collect the points. Yeah, I'm feeling very good about it.

Q. Matt, it's been eight years since your last win in the Road to Indy. Was it difficult getting used to, okay, I've got to do this after the race, do this after the race, or was it all second hand to you again?

MATTHEW BRABHAM: After rolling Robby for the years that I did, nothing is new to me and nothing surprised me, so this actually feels really normal.

Yeah, as you said, it's good to be back, and obviously being at the level like this and being around all the INDYCAR guys obviously with Roger taking over the series, yeah, it's great to be a part of it all.

Q. I believe they said Rasmussen might have run out fuel coming to the white flag there. Was fuel or tires a concern, or were you just managing it the whole way?

MATTHEW BRABHAM: I think all of us thought, especially looking at last year's race, they were running times just as fast at the end of the race to the start of the race. I think all of us didn't really think there was going to be much dropoff or issues with tires or fuel, and for me the tires were great. The Cooper Tires held on all race. I was running the same lap times at the end as I was at the start. In fact, I think I was probably getting faster just getting into a rhythm.

Yeah, that's just extremely unlucky. I don't know, I haven't talked to the guys, I haven't talked to my crew. I don't know what happened to Christian, but if he ran out of fuel, that really sucks for him. That's heartbreaking. I can't imagine how he feels right now. Sorry, Christian, but obviously I'll take it. I was happy to get second, too.

Coming from sixth place, finishing second, I was ready to take it. That was going to be an awesome result for me.

Q. Benjamin and Linus, is this a new rivalry with the Andretti Autosport guys? Is it going to be fun going against them this year like this?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, we would like to turn it around a little bit, obviously one of us being in the middle. But yeah, I think we saw that last year, as well. We have a good car, and so do they, and I think we're going to come to tracks and maybe we have an advantage, and I think this was one of the places that we knew that Andretti was going to be strong. There are a few of those places coming up, as well, but we're going to do some hard work and try to beat them. We got close but not close enough today, so yeah, we'll do our homework and come back a little bit stronger.

Q. Matty, usually in this series there's a lot of spraying

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

the fake champagne. Did you get the real stuff or did you get the fake stuff?

MATTHEW BRABHAM: Tasted real to me. I'm 28 so I sure deserve the real stuff.

Q. You're good, but do you know how old the rest of these guys are?

MATTHEW BRABHAM: I don't know. How old are you guys?

BENJAMIN PEDERSEN: 22.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: 22.

Q. We need to find out the last time an all-legal --

MATTHEW BRABHAM: At this age I deserve --

Q. -- podium happened in Lights.

BENJAMIN PEDERSEN: They did ask us on the podium. They checked.

MATTHEW BRABHAM: It was definitely real, yeah. It was nice. Tasted great. It always tastes better in Victory Lane for sure.

Q. Did they ask you how old you were?

MATTHEW BRABHAM: They didn't ask me how old I was.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: They asked us, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Matthew, it was your birthday on Friday, right?

MATTHEW BRABHAM: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: The birthday celebration continues, I guess, right.

MATTHEW BRABHAM: It does, but as you get older they get less and less exciting. Today was a lot more exciting than Friday, I can tell you that.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations to all three. We'll see you soon.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports