

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Linus Lundqvist

Hunter McElrea

Sting Ray Robb

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Let's go ahead and begin. We're joined by Hunter McElrea from Andretti Autosport, second podium of the year. Big bounceback from yesterday. Sting Ray Robb bouncing back as well. His fourth podium of the season, driving for Andretti Autosport.

Hunter, tell us about the start a little bit and the restarts obviously were crucial, maybe making a move on Linus but didn't happen here today.

HUNTER McELREA: Yeah, Linus is very strong. The whole time he was very good on cold tires. I was good on cold tires, too, because I dropped the pack. I pull away on the restart, kind of manage the gap to behind.

I kind of had a few moments. I wasn't really prepared too much to push any harder to catch Linus. I was trying to be a bit smart.

But, no, happy to bring home second. Another podium. It's been a very frustrating season for me, just a lot of errors, man. Sixth in the championship, but we shouldn't be there. I think I've qualified on the front row almost every race. Had a great pace. I just made a lot of silly errors this year.

Today is good for the confidence momentum again. It's tough. Tracks like this, it's very, very easy to get caught out. Unfortunately I hate to see Christian in the fence again today. It just shows I would say everyone in the top eight, I'm sure you agree, are all championship-worthy drivers. It can catch you out really quick.

I'm happy. The restarts are pretty crazy. I don't know what it was. I found today that 12 and 13, the last two corners, which was the restart zone, there was a little bit of oil dry down. That made it pretty tricky. There was a lot of, on my side anyway, moments where I was, like, oops, that was a bit close.

Anyway, I'll take second. Overall a good day.

THE MODERATOR: Sting Ray, fourth podium of the season for you.

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, I think we're the King of Third. Could have had another one yesterday. I really wanted that win. At least get something other than third, which I kind of got my wish, but the wrong direction. Good to rebound from that.

Yeah, it was a good race. Towards the end of that I felt it was a quallie session. Everyone was pushing hard. The new 'push to pass' was interesting to use, trying to manage it, see what's other guys were doing. It's a tough track, like Hunter said. The new 'push to pass' around here makes it that much more fun.

I'm sad to see Belle Isle go. Going in the fountain was a bit of a treat there at the end. I got to do that.

THE MODERATOR: Linus Lundqvist joins us as well, HMD Motorsports with Dale Coyne Racing. Fourth win of the season, clean sweep at Belle Isle. Seventh win of his career which places him seventh on the all-time Indy Lights list. 84 points up over your teammate Benjamin Pedersen. Not much more you can ask for coming out of a weekend like this. Your thoughts on win number two at Belle Isle.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, thank you. Like you said, way couldn't have asked for much more than this. Obviously it was maximum points for us. It was. Straightaway from the box, even in practice one, we felt good. I felt pretty comfortable. Didn't feel 100% happy with my driving. I knew I could fix that up for quallie, which we did.

It's tricky around this place because you never know. Even if you build a bit of a gap, it's not like you're cruising out there. You're still pushing. The bumps can catch you out. You know one small mistake is going to end up in the wall.

Yeah, super happy. Massive shout-out to my team, HMD Motorsport with Dale Coyne Racing. My sponsor this weekend, Jula. Great to have them onboard. To get two wins out of two possible was not bad.

THE MODERATOR: Linus, about a win here, obviously maximum points, we all have Road America next week, is there momentum on your side? Can you feel something building with your team and your driving right now?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I would like to think so. Obviously Road America is a very different place to Belle Isle. We'll see what happens.

I think it's still very close between both us HMD and Andretti. I think it's whoever has the 10th, 2/10ths on their side on that way that's going to get pole or race win. We have to keep working hard.

Right now we're in a good place, good momentum. We're trying to build on that and the confidence we have going this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Very tight street course. Usually everything is based on starts and restarts. How difficult was it to hold off these guys behind you today?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I hate seeing these guys in the mirrors. Yeah, no, it was actually trickier today than yesterday. For some reason, at least for me, turn 12 was a lot trickier. Obviously that was kind of my place to go.

I tried it both of the times, but both of them I ended up with way too much understeer. Had to focus on turn 13 instead, which worked well.

I think we were strong in turn one, two. With a bit of the aero wash, we were safe into turn three. After that it was just settling a rhythm after that. 'Push to pass', when to use it, where to use it.

But, yeah, it was trickier today than it was yesterday.

THE MODERATOR: Sting Ray alluded to this, but talk about the 'push to pass'. First time with the NTT INDYCAR SERIES style of that program. How does it change the strategy? Did you forget sometimes you did have it or didn't?

STING RAY ROBB: I want to know how much you had at the end.

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I had like 30 seconds.

HUNTER McELREA: I had a lot left. I forgot to use it in the middle half. I don't know about you guys, but I've only done not many races in Indy Lights so far, being a rookie. The 'push to pass' thing is new to me.

It's kind of like I think this is a lot better system because

before there were instances at tracks like Indy GP and Road America. Not that I don't like good racing, but there's times where you pull away, you get on a long straight and you're a stranded duck.

The tow is quite big, but for instance at Indy GP, I was just sitting duck and was passed. I like this more, this system. I don't know about you guys, I don't want to speak on your behalf, I think this encourages a bit more strategy.

Even so, you'd hit it before, get 15 seconds, right? Sometimes you hit the button, you'd be in the brake zone, then seven seconds of the 15. You almost get a lot more value in this system, too. I think this is a lot better system than what it was before.

THE MODERATOR: Linus, your thoughts?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: Yeah, I think I agree a little bit. Half at least with what he said.

I think it was kind of cool to see the system with the one and a half seconds because I think it made overtaking easier. I think that's what they wanted.

Obviously they want to do it more like INDYCAR, which prepares us better. Like you said, you get more value for your pushes, where to use it, how to use it.

Maybe not as much here because the lap time difference was not that much, not many straights. At a place like Road America, Indy GP, the time difference is going to be huge. How much do you use or do you save till the last five laps? I think that strategy game is going to be super fun when you go into next week to see what everybody does.

I think when we had a test here, some of the guys tested it, it was one and a half seconds a lap, it wasn't like a few 10ths here or there. We'll see how it plays out next week, but it will be fun.

THE MODERATOR: Going from a street course like this to a much different road course at Road America, over four miles long, big runoff areas, what do you expect going into Road America next week?

STING RAY ROBB: Hopefully more than a third (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: You're the King of the Third.

HUNTER McELREA: I think it's going to be very close racing for sure. I like what Linus touched on. The 'push to pass' is going to be mega.

That being said, it's not like you're going to be in a position, say the leader before has to sit there and pray he's not going to be driven around the outside on the 'push to pass'. It's basically two guys on the button now with the draft. It kind of cancels each other out.

I'm looking forward to it. I love Road America. I think it's one of the best tracks we go to. A lot of racetracks, a long lap, quallie laps around there are really fun. I really like quallie. I think the racing is going to be really close, at least a three-car battle for the lead if not more.

The only way you're going to get away is if the guys behind are battling pretty hard, you can almost get a gap. But long straights there usually means a lot of drafting and overtaking.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Linus, you are 84 ahead now in the championship. Are you starting to think championship yet or are you still very much keeping it race for race?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I mean, you're always thinking a little bit about the championship. I think everybody does. But we still haven't reached halfway. We know it's one race with a DNF, somebody else wins, sort of gets cut in half. It can change quickly around here.

Obviously the doubleheader weekends are important for us. We realize if we had a bad race, it's a doubleheader, we lose double the points. We focus on having a good car at the doubleheaders, then take it one race at a time.

If we have a bad race, we try to have a top five or top three, see what we can get away with.

Obviously still a little early to think about the championship. We're here to win. That's what we enjoy doing. That's also the best way to try to win, so yeah.

Q. Looking at next year, any people starting to sniff around you yet for INDYCAR?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I wish I could tell you. I was bombarded by the team with emails. But obviously the good thing is that we race one or two hours before the INDYCAR race. Even if they don't want to, they're bound to know who wins the Indy Lights race. Otherwise I'll make sure that they know.

But we're trying to make things happen. Obviously the target is to be in INDYCAR next year. We do what we can, but nothing has been confirmed, or there's no tests aligned as of yet.

Q. Hunter, you had a pretty rough one yesterday of course. Today must feel very good then.

HUNTER McELREA: Yeah, I kind of said it before. It's been such an annoying year for me just personally. Lots of pace, but not many results yet.

I've kind of found every way possible to throw away a good result this year. It feels good to obviously have a better day today.

I mean, it's learning, right? As much as it sucks to have to say that, I'm learning a lot. Yeah, it sucks to be sixth in the championship, it's obviously not where I expect to be, but I'm learning a lot. I think the pace is obviously there.

This weekend, honestly, it was tough to catch him, but I think a lot of other places the pace is always there. All I can do is just focus on learning and having fun. I get to drive an Indy Lights car. I honestly didn't think I would get this opportunity, driving for Andretti Autosport. Somehow I'm here. I'm going to have fun. I think when you're having fun and learning, it means good results.

Yeah, as much as it sucks, I don't want to have those results, especially when you're in a podium position. I think it's the third time this year I've been winning or in a podium position and something has gone bad.

It's good to end on a positive note. Looking forward to Road America.

Q. You talked about 12 turn was trickier. Why is it? What was different?

LINUS LUNDQVIST: I honestly don't know. I expected the track to be generally faster today because obviously the more road running, the better it should be, which it was in some places.

But you come to turn 12, all of a sudden the balance changed. But that's how it goes sometimes around these street tracks. Changes so much from day to day, session to session. Even throughout our race I think it changed a little bit even. Just have to adapt to it.

I don't know the reason. Maybe the wind changed. They told me there weren't any wind. I'm not entirely sure.

STING RAY ROBB: I felt like when I was following Hunter, I was on a bit of a different line than he was. I wasn't having as many issues as he was on the way into 12. It looked like he was getting loose on the way into the corner. That's not normally something that happens there.

Usually it's on the exit, the wall comes up too quickly.

I thought maybe the rubber line changed with the IMSA race yesterday, or maybe any other series that are running here just lays the rubber down in different parts of the racetrack. That's where the grip was.

HUNTER McELREA: For me, there was oil dry. It was really offline, off exit. It kind of for me progressively got better and better. But the only thing that I could really think, I don't know if there was a Masters race before us or something, maybe some old car broke down and dropped some oil. There was oil dry there.

Pretty simple dude. Whenever you see oil dry, it usually means less grip. But these street tracks are very different. Usually there's always track progression. I think this track in particular, we're doing a lot quicker than qualifying in the race. Usually these weekends, unless there's rain or something, the track gets better and better and better and better and better.

Yeah, turn 12, it was never for me super comfortable. I mean, if I'm interested, maybe Sting Ray thinks it's line dependent, which maybe it is. I'm glad he was having trouble, too, because I was riding that horsey.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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