

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, July 23, 2022

**Hunter McElrea**

**Christian Rasmussen**

**Matthew Brabham**

Indy Lights Series Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody, wrapping up the Indy Lights at Iowa Speedway event here this afternoon, and joined by the podium finishers today, and that includes Hunter McElrea with his back-to-back wins in the Indy Lights presented by Cooper Tires Series, Hunter from Los Angeles, California, driver of the No. 27 for Andretti Autosport. Finishing second, Christian Rasmussen, the rookie from Copenhagen, Denmark, the Road to Indy Machine for Andretti Autosport, third podium of the season for Christian; and Matthew Brabham, back on the podium for his fourth podium of the season, plus 5 today, from Boca Raton, Florida, driving the No. 83 for Andretti Autosport.

We'll start with the champ here. Just holding on to the lead was one thing, and then probably after you lost it, you're thinking maybe your day is over, but hang on, there's more, right?

HUNTER McELREA: Yeah, I mean, I think it was a perfect weekend until the restart really for me. I've got to look what I did. I think I might have just got a little bit high. Really frustrated with myself about that, to be honest. Obviously I went from hero to zero there, and then I was pretty much just sealed third.

Obviously I didn't see what happened with those two. At that point, as well, I was free. I think I had the one-lap speed on everyone this weekend, but we were maybe a little bit on the free side at the end there because I was having a few little "Tokyo drift" moments. But yeah, didn't really have much for Brabham or Lundqvist at the end.

I think Lundqvist didn't have anything for this guy, to be honest. His one lap speed wasn't good, but he made it work with the race pace.

I thought I was third, and I'll take it. Truthfully compared to the Mid-Ohio win, if I'm being honest, I don't feel as happy

because I don't think I necessarily deserved it as much as he did potentially, but overall I'm going to take it still. I'm still going to take the win and the points at the end of the day, and I've had a lot of things just constantly go against me at the start of the year, in my control and out, so finally some good luck; I'll take it with open arms.

### Q. Christian, your thoughts on second?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, very happy. We thought that from qualifying fifth that it was going to be a very, very long race, and getting passed at the start so I was down to sixth, yeah, I thought this was going to be a very, very long race.

I was stuck behind Frost for a little while, but as soon as I got by him, my race pace was really, really good, and I was catching I think it was Brabham and Sting Ray a lot. Then once I got up to them and then all that stuff happened which I didn't really see, then obviously I got a little bit gifted with what happened.

But yeah, very, very happy. I looked very racy out there, was able to pass cars, which we thought was going to be very, very hard.

### Q. Matthew, fourth podium of the season, circuitous route to get there for sure. Your thoughts on the contact there in the backstretch?

MATTHEW BRABHAM: Yeah, obviously in hindsight it's easy to be smart afterwards. I think I just had the best race car by far of everyone. I came from eighth and probably should have won the race pretty easily. I think it was just a matter of choosing when to pass him.

To me it just looked like he was really struggling in that corner, and he was always trying to go higher to block me, and then that one lap he went really low and then I got overlap on the outside. So I thought, well, obviously he knows I'm here, he's going to give me the lane high. Then we came off the corner, and to me it was like he knew I was there because he gave me the lane at first, and that's what gave us like quite a lot of overlap, and then we were already straight -- at least I was already straight, and I thought that he was straight, and then he just came over and squeezed me in the fence. So I don't know if -- he said



his spotter just cleared him, which obviously we weren't clear because he hit me.

I just said to him, I said to him, look, even though your spotter probably cleared you because he's trying to win you the race, you've still got mirrors. There's still overlap, and I still got put in the fence at the end of the day.

Obviously I probably could have been a bit more patient, but there was only two or three or four laps left, but who knows what happens with traffic. I just thought I got given the lane so I took it, but yeah, maybe I should have just in hindsight been a bit more patient because I was way faster than him, I think. I probably would have had the race pretty easily. But yeah, I saw the chance and I took it, and I just got squeezed in the fence.

**Q. Overall, plus 5 today, first oval of the season for the Indy Lights presented by Cooper Tires. Your thoughts on being on an oval, an exciting oval certainly like this at Iowa Speedway?**

HUNTER McELREA: I loved it, yeah. It was a big day for me. Oval racing is new to me the last few years, obviously, coming from a different side of the world, so to get the first pole - that was legit today at least - for the first pole today, I was really confident in my one-lap speed. Even the last test I think I knew I had the quickest quality car.

Yeah, obviously first oval win still, so really happy and big day for me. It feels good to be racing on a track that I haven't been on. I feel like we almost -- would be nice if we did a little more ovals still because if you look at INDYCAR, they probably still do a couple, two or three more. I think it's been good to get on a different oval this year. Like I've never been to Iowa before, but yeah, I'd like to do more still because there's a small race called the Indy 500 which I really want to win. I don't know if you've heard of it.

THE MODERATOR: Get in line on that one.

HUNTER McELREA: Yeah, so oval racing is new to me but I've really learned to love it and I'm constantly learning. The more the better for me I would say.

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, like Hunter said, it's a big learning curve for us rookies going up into a bigger car coming from the Indy Pro Cars. It's quite a bit different.

In the past the ovals have been pretty good to me. I've had wins and I've had podiums at Lucas Oil and Gateway, as well. So I feel confident on the ovals, and I was happy that I could show that here today again.

**Q. Matthew, your prior experience, did that play a factor do you think in the way you were able to move through the field a little bit today?**

MATTHEW BRABHAM: Yeah, I think so. I just had that experience to kind of know what would be good in the race, and that's why I was so bad in qualifying was everyone trimmed out and I'm like, hey, you guys, I don't feel good on a trimmed car in the race. I feel crap. I was terrible in qualifying, but as you saw in the race, I think that was kind of an experienced call because I don't think if I had that experience I'd be ballsy enough to make a call like that and be so bad in qualifying and end up being the guy that probably should have won the race.

HUNTER McELREA: You've got to give the old dog the credit, because I saw him in eighth, and I'm like, oh, he's screwed. Like you can't pass around here. Then I see this blue car in third at the restart. I'm like, how? How is he here? It shows how much experience is on the oval.

**Q. Talk about the points championship; you made up a little ground. You're still 77 behind, five races remaining.**

HUNTER McELREA: I mean, I needed to take 17 a race out of him my dad said, and I think -- how much did I take out of him there? Probably more than 17? It's tough. What is there, five races to go? He's in the box seat still, but I'm the next closest now, and we have two in a row. I think it's not over until it's over. Obviously you need a little bit of luck and things to pull your way, but it did today.

I think to be honest I'm not even thinking about it really. If it happens, it happens. I think it's pretty probably close behind me. I think me and him were like really a couple points apart, so we'll be super close. Sting Ray will be close. I think it's just going to take us doing our job to the best we can, and that'll handle it really. If it is, it is; and if it isn't, it's not.

**Q. We've got the Nashville Music City Grand Prix coming up for you guys here in a couple weeks. Christian, your thoughts about an Andretti sweep today and getting back on a street course in a couple weeks?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, excited to get back on a street course. I feel like I need a redemption run on the street circuits. We had a good run at St. Pete that kind of got taken away a little bit, my own fault in Detroit, putting it in the wall, so hopefully we can stay off the walls in Nashville and have a good run there. I feel like I've been good on the street courses in the past, so I don't see why Nashville shouldn't be good.

**Q. Matthew, just kind of bring us home; nice afternoon for Andretti all told to have all three on the podium?**

MATTHEW BRABHAM: Yeah, obviously I would have liked to have been on the top --

**Q. Is it bittersweet a little bit?**

MATTHEW BRABHAM: Yeah, obviously I just feel like that was my race to win, and obviously I'm just replaying the moment over and over in my head and what I could have done differently to be better.

No, I think Andretti had really good cars on the oval, and we showed that at the test day, and to be honest I think if we were allowed to trim out and they didn't change the rule, we'd probably have been one, two, three, four.

Because of the rule change and what different people were doing, and we weren't allowed -- we had to basically run whatever we raced with in qualify, so that mixed the grid more than probably what you should have. I think we had the fastest cars. I think consistency across the board at Andretti; we were guys to beat, and I think we deserved to be one, two, three, at least in terms of the team and all the hard work they've done, yeah.

HUNTER McELREA: I want to say also a shout-out to Andretti because it was their 250th win, so cool that I was able to do that. Happy for the team, and obviously 250 wins is a lot.

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