

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Saturday, September 10, 2022

Sting Ray Robb

Christian Rasmussen

Hunter McElrea

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up race No. 1 this weekend, congratulations to Sting Ray Robb, driving the No. 2 Sekady Machine for Andretti Autosport, picking up career win No. 1. Also joining us today, the second-place finisher, Christian Rasmussen, in the No. 28 Road to Indy Machine for Andretti Autosport, as well as Hunter McElrea in the 27 Andretti Autosport Machine, coming home third with another podium.

We'll start with Sting Ray. Seventh podium of the season, but that's low on the totem pole. You got your first career win in the Indy Lights series. How does this feel?

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, it's awesome. I think it's about time. We've got quite a few seconds and thirds, as you said, seventh podium, so we've knocked on the door a few times. I'm just super grateful at the moment. All the glory goes to God on that one.

I think the team has done a good job all year. Obviously 1 through 3 is not too shabby.

I'm pretty happy with the day, qualifying on pole and then the race, but we've still got one more, so I'm going to be fighting hard for that one, give this guy a good go, and we'll see tomorrow.

Q. You didn't let up at all. You were turning qualifying laps there at the end almost.

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, they were telling me to save the tires, and I didn't tell them, but I was saving tires. It was just the car was hooked up. We were good. I don't think I burned them off at all at the beginning of the race, and I had plenty of Push-to-Pass left.

It's reminiscent of 2019. That was the year when I gave the win to Kirkwood on the last two laps there in INDYCAR 2000, but back in fashion and learned from our mistakes

and pretty dominant.

Q. Obviously the most nerve-racking moment for you was probably at the start trying to keep everybody behind you. They were at one point three wide going through Turn 1 trying to catch up with you. Just your thoughts on the start and staying up front.

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, I was deep, and then Christian went deeper. He was on the outside line there, which I think was a little bit more rubbered in, and I just understeered into him a little bit, and it gave me the corner on the exit there. After that, I was able to just pull away a little bit, and that was it.

THE MODERATOR: Christian, your thoughts; second-place finish today, fourth podium of the season for you. You were doing everything you could to get around Sting Ray there at the beginning.

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, I knew that was going to happen at the start or at the very end, so I did what I could. We did a lot of calculations on how late we could break, and I think I hit that pretty well. Got around the outside and was pretty close to overtaking, but yeah, unfortunately got hit there.

But even though I think Sting Ray would have gotten me anyways. He was super, super quick.

We'll do some changes for tomorrow, see what we can do, and hopefully we can pull off the win tomorrow.

Q. What did you learn today that you can apply for race 2 tomorrow?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Well, I mean, lesson learned about tire deg, right. We knew it was going to be big. I don't think we knew that it was going to be that big. It was pretty big on my car, at least, and we'll see. We'll see how we can manage that tomorrow, and yeah, see what we can do.

THE MODERATOR: Hunter McElrea, coming home third, seventh podium of the season. What you need to do tomorrow is start race 2 and you will clinch the Rookie of the Year award in the Indy Lights presented by Cooper



Tires. News to you?

HUNTER McELREA: Yeah, that's cool.

THE MODERATOR: Another podium, though. Tell us about your day.

HUNTER McELREA: Yeah, it was an interesting day for me. Qualifying was a disaster, so that was unfortunate. Obviously we're in a bit of a three-way battle for P2 in the points, me Sting Ray and Matt. So that definitely didn't help me.

But yeah, we had a decent race today. I knew I had to make something up on the start, so I was a little mad after qualifying. That's why I really just didn't -- I didn't really mind; I was just going to throw it in there and see what happened, and popped out third. Yeah, stayed there the rest of the race.

The deg was huge, and yeah, probably the most challenging driving-wise race I've had.

I don't know, probably not Sting Ray, seeing as thought he was hooked up, but I don't know about everyone else, but I was hanging on for dear life there.

Yeah, we'll see what we can do tomorrow starting ninth, but anything can happen. So we'll see.

Q. You have to learn to deal with the tire deg and overcome that; what do you learn from today that you can apply tomorrow?

HUNTER McELREA: Yeah, I learned a lot. I think we're definitely going to go a different direction tomorrow with setup to help at the end there because I was, like I said, pretty wounded.

But no, learnt a lot. At the end of the day, I think being uncomfortable is a part of it. I've been very comfortable a lot of the time this year driving for Andretti, so they give you a very good car all the time, so it makes my job easy. Had to work for that one, but that's what we're here for, right?

Yeah, see what we can do tomorrow, and again, lots of learning.

Q. For all three of you, obviously it's Andretti, Andretti, Andretti, and usually Andrettis have pretty good cars here, the big cars, as well. Just your thoughts on the team and the job you guys did as a team here.

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, I think after practice yesterday,

I was a little bit worried. We were a bit off the pace, and then we had the gearbox problem, as well.

But the track was just way different than it was today. We actually didn't change a lot. We just relied on the setup from past seasons. Kirkwood had a really good run here last year, so we pretty much copied his setup, put it on the car and it worked.

Qualifying it was really good, and Christian and I both put it on pole, and I think that we don't have much to build off of that. The car is pretty perfect, at least for me. I don't know about you guys yet.

We made a change call right there before the race, my engineer and I did, just for tire deg, and it worked out pretty well.

I think tomorrow will be maybe more of the same, but you never know. This track is kind of crazy when it comes to heat variance as well as new rubber laid down by the INDYCARs. We'll see what it's like for them.

We can learn a lot from the big cars on the Andretti side. Ron does a good job of balancing what they're having and what I need from the car.

Q. Hunter, first thing, how good is it to know that you're going to be back in this car again next year and you're signed up with Andretti already?

HUNTER McELREA: It's really good. I feel like it kind of takes a little bit of your mental space, or I guess at this point in a lot of years of my career I've been in the back of my mind wondering what am I doing next year, so this is probably the first time in my career I've had that safety net of knowing where I'm going to be, and that's really nice. That feels great.

Yeah, I think obviously we've got one more day at school tomorrow for the 2022 season, but I think 2023 is shaping up to be really strong. Like I said, I've been trying in some ways not to think too much about it because, like I said, obviously Linus has won it, but we're fighting all for P2 in the points. I'll be trying to focus on that for now, but yeah, it's nice for sure.

Q. Obviously we talked a lot when I was up and saw you earlier in the year, but you've done a bit of a Dixon-like season here. You've been so strong in the second part of the season with race wins and everything. Not taking anything away from the two guys sitting next to you, but it's been a really strong second half. That's the mental mindset going because I know we've talked about it, but you've learnt a lot out

of that first part of the season that you've converted in the second part, haven't you.

HUNTER McELREA: Yeah, I think it's just like a bad day at the start of the year was crashing from an easy win or DNFBing and getting no points, whereas a bad day in the second half of the year has been fifth.

I think that's a good lesson to learn, which I've learned, just to be a bit more -- even today it was quite a bad day, to be honest, with just some stuff that went wrong, but we're still on the podium. That's probably been the biggest thing is just the days where you're maybe not quite where you want to be, still being able to get a decent result out of it has been the biggest thing.

Q. Sting Ray, your thoughts; family, this is a very huge day for you guys, right?

STING RAY ROBB: Yeah, we've got a big group here. I think it's like 65 or 70 people that came down to watch, family, friends, all of the above. We have the big Idaho Potato truck here, which is always pretty cool. People always recognize that. So it's good to have some local support. I say local, but West Coast support. Yeah, and we got the win.

So I think they're all good luck or something. I don't know, but I enjoy having all those people at the track. It brings back a lot of memories, and I just love having them here.

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