

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Saturday, September 9, 2023

**Hunter McElrea**

**Christian Rasmussen**

**Danial Frost**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up today's INDY NXT race number one. Hunter McElrea, who led all 35 laps. Hunter's second win of the season, first since the IMS road course Brickyard weekend. Fourth career win.

Hunter, congratulations. You checked out early, then the restarts. How nerve-wracking was that?

HUNTER McELREA: It's like they didn't want me to win the race or something (laughter). I was getting told the gap every lap. It's kind of unknown with the new tires we're on this year and also new track surface. The tires can feel great, and you just never know if they're going to drop off or something like that.

I felt like I was driving pretty within my limits. My team told me I had a big gap. I told them to tell me the gap every lap and I'd just adjust to that. Really under control.

The first restart, I know he knows what it feels like because I've been on the other end this year, three restarts, you're running out of ideas what to do (smiling). We both know each other's tricks, been racing each other for how many years. It's frustrating at times when you're trying to think of new things to do in the restart.

At the end, it wasn't the easiest, there was lap traffic and all this stuff going on. But at the end of the day we got it done. Yeah, I can't thank the team enough. Can't thank my sponsors enough for making this happen.

These are results I need to be getting to show INDYCAR teams what I can do.

THE MODERATOR: Christian Rasmussen coming home second. Career high seventh podium of his season, 12th career podium. Now has a 51-point lead in the championship.

Pretty much, Christian, what happens tomorrow, make sure you wake up.

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Make sure I wake up, set the alarm.

HUNTER McELREA: Drop some eyedrops in his dinner tonight (laughter).

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Just have to take the green and then we're champions.

It was kind of trying to do a low-risk day today. Starting on the front row, I wasn't going to challenge Hunter too much into turn one. If you get the opportunity obviously you take it, but I didn't.

Just kind of rolled around. It was a very lonely race for me. Hunter was super quick at the start, couldn't keep up. On the other side, I also kept P3 pretty good. I was just by myself rolling around, trying to take care of my tires, hoping for a restart, maybe something would happen.

Like Hunter says, you run out of ideas. On the very last one, I got away pretty good. I think I had maybe something for him at the end. Again, it's super hard to pass around here, so who knows.

I'm very satisfied with P2. Tomorrow's going to be a good day.

THE MODERATOR: And Danial Frost coming home third. Third podium of the season. Back-to-back podiums going back to Portland a week ago. Eighth career podium.

Danial, your thoughts on your day.

DANIAL FROST: Yeah, I don't mind being up here on the podium once in a while.

Yeah, the race was good. We started third, finished third. We ended up where we started. Not a terrible day, I would say (smiling).

Yeah, I'm quite happy. The car was very good. HMD gave us a really good car. We've been pretty quick all weekend.



So, yeah, I mean, it was just making sure that we got off the restarts pretty well. We seemed like we did that. We protected ourselves from P4.

Yeah, try to give Rasmussen a little bit of a run, but he's got that little 10th on me, so it's kind of hard to keep up. Yeah, look forward for tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take a few questions.

**Q. Hunter, what I noticed during the first six laps of the race, you were starting to pull away. Through the turn three-four combination, you eased off slightly. Was that about long-term tire conservation?**

HUNTER McELREA: Yeah, my engineer was yelling at me to slow down because we had quite a big gap. I told him, I am.

Again, like I touched on, I really just wanted not to burn my tires off. You can look like a hero, pull away with a big gap. If you burn your tires off, that's why I didn't use any push to pass. I knew he wouldn't either. Under pressure I thought you would use it. I didn't want to use any push to pass. You want the tires under you.

I was kind of just cruise control, if you will. Our races are long enough where tire degradation is a factor. Yeah, I will say the old Laguna surface, this is way funner. The old Laguna surface is the longest race of your life. I don't know if you remember last year. Good job to the track for that.

**Q. The car looked comfortable through those corners compared to other cars. Does that come down to the heritage that Andretti Autosport has at this place, and you rolled out of the truck with a good setup?**

HUNTER McELREA: Yeah, I think we definitely hit the nail on the head this weekend for sure. Practice, I did not get a lap in. Obviously pole race one. Qualifying for race two didn't get a lap in really at all, which is unfortunate.

The car, like, just feels on rails this weekend. It wasn't a given either because we're on different tires. This track for HMD was strong. We've been able to be strong, like Indy GP as an example. The other times, like here, you don't know for sure if you're going to still be strong.

It wasn't like I was expecting just to be able to have the speed, but I'm glad we do.

**Q. You said your dad has always been very hard on you. Here he is today one of your biggest supporters. Could you sum up that feeling in terms of knowing**

**your mum and dad and girlfriend are here with you this weekend.**

HUNTER McELREA: Yeah, it's awesome. You need family, right? They're there for the good and the bad. To have those guys through thick and thin, it's good.

**Q. Hunter, your car seemed to be very dominant. Nevertheless, for tomorrow's second race, are there any areas where the car can be made better, improved? And Christian, you said earlier that overtaking is not very easy. For tomorrow, is this already in your opinion a 50% guarantee for a win?**

HUNTER McELREA: What's the exact number, tell me right now?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: I don't know the exact number (smiling).

But it is super hard to pass around here. As long as you get out on the straights all right, more or less you're pretty good. We'll see tomorrow.

Today was a very much of a risk-versus-reward day, so we didn't really fully push. But tomorrow, gloves are off and we can go race. It will be interesting tomorrow, see what happens.

Yeah, hopefully some good racing.

HUNTER McELREA: Am I locked into second, as well?

THE MODERATOR: Sounds right.

HUNTER McELREA: I guess it's just a bit of an exhibition between me and this bloke tomorrow. Should be fun.

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: It will be fun.

HUNTER McELREA: To answer your question, I think in terms of lap speed we obviously were pretty good. Again, passing is at a premium around here. But I think for sure we can tune-up a little bit.

Yeah, I guess we're both going to have a crack and it should be fun to watch.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on the podium. Christian, get a good night's sleep. Thank you.

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