

# IMSA Media Conference

Saturday, March 16, 2024

Daytona, Florida, USA

**Ben Barnicoat**

**Jack Hawksworth**

**Kyle Kirkwood**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have the winners here at the Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring presented by Cadillac in the GTD PRO class. We have Ben Barnicoat, Jack Hawksworth and Kyle Kirkwood.

Ben, first win at Sebring, first win for Lexus at Sebring, how important is that?

BEN BARNICOAT: Yeah, it's huge. Obviously huge for the organization. All the Lexus racing guys have been grinding, working so hard, looking for perfection year in, year out. I've been lucky to step in the program satellite such a good time.

First year got Atlanta, Petit Le Mans win, which was incredibly huge. Last year we won Watkins Glen and the championship. Now we ticked off Sebring. Just got Daytona left to go.

We had a real rough start to this season, but that performance today showed why we were champions last year. That was definitely a champion's comeback and got our season well and truly back on track. We're looking forward to going from here.

THE MODERATOR: Jack, you converted the pole position yesterday into the victory today. It was quite a battle. Tell us about it.

JACK HAWKSWORTH: Yeah, it was. We knew it was going to be a battle. These long races, you have to do everything perfectly. Everyone has to do their job absolutely perfectly just to be there to even have a chance at the end. Then you just hope that the cards fall your way.

As Ben touched upon, we had a tough day. But the team, we made good steps over the off-season. We wanted to come and show what we could do, right? This has been a proper bounceback. Today everyone was perfect. We had the one obviously drive-through early in the race, a wobble

there. Other than that it was rock solid all day. The guys on pit lane were unbelievable all day. Ben and Kyle were absolutely monsters out there.

Yeah, we ended up in the fight there at the end. Come out on top. I couldn't be prouder of everybody. Yeah, the last four hours out there were absolutely nuts.

THE MODERATOR: Kyle, one of the crown jewels in at least sports car racing. Talk about how big it is for you to have that on your résumé.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: Yeah, I've never been so nervous in my life watching a race car that you're part of go around a racetrack other than today. It got to the point where Ben and I would literally have to walk off the stand and not watch because of how nerve-wracking it was, watching Jack absolutely send it on every single car that was out there.

To be honest, we didn't really have the pace, the raw pace, at the end of the race. Jack just knew at every moment that he had a chance to pass somebody, he'd just send it in there and keep them behind him.

It ended up paying off. It reminds me of our win at Petit. Similar situation to that. I couldn't ask for a better group of guys right here. Of course, the team as well. These two drivers right here, it's like you put them in the car, and they're automatic. They get in, they send it, do everything perfectly. I'm proud to be a part of this team.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Jack, the battle at the end, I heard some people were not particularly happy with the way it all went down, maybe a bit too physical. What was your take on that?**

JACK HAWKSWORTH: I mean, everything seemed all right after the race. It is what it is. It's hard racing at the end of the race. You're racing for the Twelve Hours of Sebring. At the end of the day we're racing to win. Nothing beyond the line, if that makes sense. It was rough, hard racing. I got roughed around a bit, lost positions. Other times I won positions.

Yeah, this is IMSA racing. It's hard-fought. There's a bit of



rubbish racing, right? This is what we do over here. We come out on top. If people want to cry, they can.

BEN BARNICOAT: Side of the car was still pretty clean.

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I think it was on the rear bumper that was damaged. I wonder why that is.

**Q. What does it mean to get this win in the context of missing out last year and what happened at Daytona?**

BEN BARNICOAT: Yeah, as we touched on, obviously last year was fantastic. We came second here. We were close. There was a point in the race last year where we thought we had it. That last yellow meant that the Porsche could make it. Then we suddenly didn't have it.

Last year was a bit more, at that point, still felt like we were building something special. Now it feels like we have all the cards we need to go out and deliver these performances week in and week out.

There's been a lot of talk over the winter of Ford coming in. We've delivered today and shown why we are one of the big leaders and champions and we plan on trying to go back to back.

**Q. Jack, you talked about rubbish racing, all that. How fun is that?**

JACK HAWKSWORTH: I love it.

BEN BARNICOAT: It's not fun to watch (laughter).

JACK HAWKSWORTH: These races are crazy, right? These long races, IMSA races, the way the rule set is, the way that it comes down to the last two hours, the last hour, 20 minutes. You have to make hay in the last four hours of that race, right? It was restart, restart, restart.

There's a lot of cars out there. Everybody wants to win. Yeah, you go out there and I feel like the way IMSA run the race, it's fair, hard racing. Look, nobody ran into the back of anybody. No one dumping anyone out there. Just hard race, side to side. Who is good? This is what racing is. I like it. Worked out well today.

**Q. At what point do you turn to the TRD guys and say we don't need a new car?**

BEN BARNICOAT: We definitely do.

**Q. Doesn't look like it from here.**

BEN BARNICOAT: We're doing well with what we have.

One of the beauties of having an old car, we know it inside-out, how to manage the race, when to go, when not to go. The beauty of being in it for so long, absolutely everyone knows their job and what they need to do to make this thing click.

But yeah, still doesn't mean it can't improve and look forward. It's been great to go through such a period with this car and become champions in it. We plan to be here for many years. Hopefully claim many more titles. That probably needs a little look further down the line.

**Q. Kyle and Ben, you said you had to walk off the stand at times. Were your eyes opening on the screen during the final restart? What was the reaction on the stand when Jack went from third to first?**

KYLE KIRKWOOD: I mean, it was insane. I've never screamed so much in my life over any instance in racing, other than probably today. Petit was another one, like I mentioned. It's a different feeling being a part of a car when you're not in it and you're relying on someone else to go do it.

For us, we're screaming like, C'mon, Jack. Yeah, that was a cool moment for the team, right? Of course, the win was great. Everyone was hooting and hollering then. During that last bit, we knew that he needed to get it done right there to hang on to the lead. That was probably the moment that would have won us or lost us the race. It ultimately won us the race.

Yeah, we were pretty stoked about it.

BEN BARNICOAT: Kyle hit the nail on the head. When you kind of go through that, if you had a clean race, you kind of bring the win home easily, it does feel a little different. Obviously the record books don't change no matter how the race goes. We're in there as the winners, extremely proud of that.

The moment and adrenaline of Jack doing those moves gives to the entire organization, then gives those guys fuel to work day in, day out, all the hours we need, to make sure we go and do this again. It's what we live off of. The little extra bits of adrenaline definitely help fuel you more to go get it done again in a few weeks' time at Long Beach or Laguna.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. Thanks for joining us.

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