

IMSA Media Conference

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Daytona, Florida, USA

Hunter McElrea

Mikkel Jensen

Steven Thomas

Press Conference



lineup is strong. We know our car is strong. So we just needed to execute the strategy today and have the weather on our side as well.

It was quite a crazy race for Steven starting on slicks, getting on the wets, then we had a long time under the safety car. And then Hunter did an amazing job bringing it up to first, and yeah, that made my life easier as well.

Just super happy to be back on the top step, back-to-back wins in Indianapolis. And as Hunter said, I think we should have won Sebring. We were the fastest in Watkins Glen as well, but we crashed.

So, yeah, luck has not been on our side, but we just take one race at a time. Now we won this one, and one more to go to win.

THE MODERATOR: Steven, you got to feel what it was like to kiss the bricks here last year, and now you get to do it again. What are the emotions like with that?

STEVE THOMAS: Well, I think this is a very satisfying race. I think whenever a Bronze is driving around in the rain, everyone is pretty nervous.

It was a lot of fun for me. I love the rain. So it was a great experience today for me, and you know, now we're tied for the Endurance, first place in the Endurance Cup, so we really have something to shoot for Petit Le Mans, one of my favorite tracks.

But the emotions of coming back here and being able to kiss the bricks again, one of the highlights of my racing career, and to be able to do it with Mikkel Jensen, who I think is the best P2 driver in the world, maybe best wet driver in the world, too; and Hunter, who has proven to be the fastest Silver, it's really been a pleasure to drive with them.

Q. Not who was in the car at the time, but there was a penalty --

HUNTER MCELREA: That was me.

Q. Did you think your race could have been over?

HUNTER MCELREA: Well, my engineer is French, and

THE MODERATOR: Okay. We are joined now by our winners in the LMP2 class, from left-to-right: Hunter McElrea, Mikkel Jensen and Steven Thomas. This is the team's first win of the season.

THE MODERATOR: Hunter, why don't you start us off, your first win comes here at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. What does it mean to you?

HUNTER MCELREA: I love this place. I it's kind of like my home track in America. I live in Carmel (ph) during the year, so I have a lot of experience in the Road to Indy stuff, and it took me so long. I got second eight times and it was really annoying, and I won last year Indy Lights and I was joking it would be cool to go back-to-back because obviously they won it last year as well.

It's cool. I was hopeful. I felt like we would be quick here. But, honestly, without sounding cocky, we've been literally fast everywhere. And we kind of felt robbed at Sebring, like we did -- everybody did an amazing job, and it was a bit of a lottery with how the yellow fell.

We knew we had the speed. We just needed things to click, and yeah, I'm happy. It's really nice to win an IMSA and to do it with these two guys that have done a lot for me, it's super cool.

THE MODERATOR: We'll slide over to Mikkel. As Hunter mentioned, you were quick on Friday and led the practice session. Was it just kind of a weekend where everything clicked for you guys all together?

MIKKEL JENSEN: The TDS car is very good here. That's why we won last year. We went out in FP1, we were straightaway quick again. I didn't participate in the test, but these guys were also fast at the test. At least what I got reported and saw from all the data and lap time.

So we had big trust in the team for this race. We know our



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he's really hard to understand on a good day. I can't tell what he's saying on a good day.

So what happened was, some weird stuff sometimes happens on like the long yellows, full course yellows, and the pass around was not happening. And I was getting passed by cars, and I was super confused.

So I was kind of whining about that, like what's going on. And then I got the drive through and then spun by a GT, like the same time, and I'm like, Oh, I'm probably a lap down last. And then next thing you know, at the end of the stint I'm leading by ten seconds.

So it sums IMSA up. It's crazy. You're never out of the fight. I think Ara (ph) is the legend of being two laps down and somehow being in the fight every time, I don't know how.

But yeah, it's just IMSA, really. I have no idea and I still don't have any idea. I just do what I'm told. But yeah, it was super confusing, and then I was very pleasantly surprised when we were P5 in the lead lap and I knew, I felt like we had -- I knew I could at least get to the front. Yeah, it was nice to get to the lead and check out.

Q. For Steven, there's a lot of good Bronze in a deep field in LMP2 this year. What does it say when a Bronze is able to make such a difference at the start when it is such treacherous conditions?

STEVE THOMAS: Yeah, I hear the Bronze field, when I first started a couple of years ago, it was me and Ben Keating trading back and forth. And now it looks like every Bronze out there looks like my child, you know (Laughter).

You know, we're in our 50s. I think -- there's all these 30-year-olds now, and they really drive. They are in single-seaters, and I started driving when I was 51. You go out and look at the field and, you think, wow, we really have to work hard and bring our game. And it's just made me work harder and harder and harder in the sim and harder with Mikkel and Hunter because the Bronze field now, I mean, it's got to be the best Bronze field ever in IMSA and the prototype. It's got to be. I mean, these guys are good.

MIKKEL JENSEN: I hope for the future that the Bronzes are German drivers and not drivers that have been driving since they were young kids.

Q. Out of respect for our German friend, two questions for Hunter. You touched on your Road to Indy experience earlier. How much did that help you have a head start going into this weekend?

HUNTER MCELREA: It was nice. Steven has given me an opportunity to where I've had a lot of testing, so I don't necessarily feel like I'm unprepared when I come to the race. But I've never driven any track on a schedule apart from here until now, obviously, right.

Like before the year, I had only driven here on the whole schedule. So it's been a lot of learning. Road Atlanta, I've never driven, so it's going to be another learning for a little bit.

Honestly, I really like this track. I don't know, you just never know -- like Indy Lights car is a little different, and obviously the single-seater stuff to the P2 in a way, but similar, but also different in its own way. I didn't want to assume we were going to be fast.

But I kind of knew, probably, halfway through the first day of testing we were doing, I was like, okay, we need to get our basics right and we'll probably win, hopefully.

It's never easy, but the pace will be there. It helped me a lot, truthfully. Even in the wet, knowing where the grip was, I had a really fun stint in the wet, and it was all stuff I already knew, which was nice because usually I'm just trying stuff all the time and learning on the go.

Q. You've come up through the open-wheel ladder in America. I know it's probably been your main focus and trying to make that No. 1, but how do drives like this and performances like this secure a sports car future in America to keep doing this more and more and more if IndyCar just fizzles out for you?

HUNTER MCELREA: Yeah, I don't know. I had no idea I was going to be racing sports cars, really, last year at this time. But I literally had nothing. Like I had no drive at all.

And he sent me an Instagram DM and said, "Do you want to drive for us?"

I had never met this guy. I was like, Is this guy pranking me?

MIKKEL JENSEN: He was the best-looking guy.

Hunter McElrea: Steven funds it and makes it possible, Steven and his wife, Emily. He kind of runs the program. I kind of have two bosses in a way.

But no, it's been so cool to join them, and it's funny because it's true. It's been so cool to join them. And I don't know what happens next year with ratings and stuff like that. If I stay Silver, then I think I'd love to be back with

these guys. But depending on a lot of things maybe out of my control, I don't really know what next year looks like. I feel like I did a good job today, we all did, but hopefully it's enough to get me something, especially if I'm upgraded.

Q. If you could talk about the last move, I think you had to get by the 22 at the end for the lead, you sort of bumped him out of the way in turn one. Did you know you were that much stronger? Talk about the move and how you pulled it off.

MIKKEL JENSEN: It was a crazy stint at the end because some guys, depending how long their fuel stop would be, some would not take tires and some took two tires like we did, only two new on the left. Some took a full set because a longer fuel stop, and I was obviously informed that Paul di Resta would be on older rubber than I was.

And yeah, I went for the gap. We are good friends off the track. So I hope he wouldn't do anything stupid to me, and he didn't. So it turned out well, everything.

Q. Then you just drove away at that point.

MIKKEL JENSEN: I think we had better tires at that point, and then we drove away but still surprised about the pace. I mean, we were faster than Dillmann having four tires, we only had two tires.

So I really had to manage towards the end, I mean, the right front, the right side of the tires. Did a double stint; was harder to make it last. But a TDS car is strong, and it's all about trying to be smart and not using too much tires in traffic when you get the dirty air, and just make it last over the stint.

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