

IMSA Media Conference

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Daytona, Florida, USA

Jack Hawksworth

Dudu Barrichello

Misha Goikhberg

Jack Aitken

Press Conference



have the smoothest of weekends. The team did a lot of work overnight. Yeah, it's a great, great place to start the race.

I think we know where we need to adjust to have an even better race car for tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go to questions.

Q. Have you ever been in a situation where another car went quicker than you in qualifying but you still got a pole?

MISHA GOIKHBERG: No. He did throw it off in T17, so he was trying (smiling).

Q. Jack, when we talked on the teleconference the other day, we talked about the hundred races for Lexus. You said what matters are the poles and the wins. Do track records matter?

JACK HAWKSWORTH: Yeah, they're always nice (smiling).

Obviously it's my hundredth race. It's super cool to be kind of starting on pole, get the track record. That's really nice. I find that cool.

Although I'd still put race wins above poles. See how we do tomorrow.

Q. That Lexus logo is right behind you on the wall. Is there more pressure of that here?

JACK HAWKSWORTH: I think it's pressure coming into the weekend. Honestly, from the minute we rolled out in FP1, I think we were surprised at how competitive we've been. We came off the back of really being uncompetitive at Daytona. We knew we were going to be better at this race. But we're more in the mix than we thought we were.

Like I say, there's some fast cars. Having the support of Lexus here, the signage on the straight, the big Lexus logo over the top of the bridge, certainly adds a little bit of pressure. We feel support from the manufacturer. Excited to hopefully have a good race tomorrow.

Q. Misha, this is your first time in Prototypes in a long

THE MODERATOR: We're pleased to be joined by our pole award winners. Jack Hawksworth, Jack, could you talk about obviously a strong lap here to get the pole. You've done this before. Led to a win last time.

JACK HAWKSWORTH: Yeah, no, was super happy with it. Obviously still always one of the races you got circled. After a tough Daytona to kind of bounce back, the team has done a really, really good job. Phenomenal car in qualifying.

Get to start from the best place on the grid tomorrow. Last time I had a pole was at this race and we went on to win. Hopefully we can try to do the same tomorrow.

It's going to be super tough, a super competitive class, a lot of good cars. Excited to go racing.

THE MODERATOR: We're also joined by Dudu Barrichello. Dudu, congratulations. First pole. What does it mean to you? How excited are you for tomorrow's race?

DUDU BARRICHELLO: Yeah, it was a great session for us. My first-ever qualifying here in IMSA. A bit nervous before that. New team, new championship. It was a lot of firsts.

Yeah, it was good fun. I think the car was good. We had a good balance. We really hit the ground running from FP1. So yeah, I think I did a decent job. We'll be starting from a good place tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: We also are joined by Misha Goikhberg. Misha, first pole. You've been doing this a while. How exciting is it for you to get the pole here?

MISHA GOIKHBERG: No, it's very exciting. It's my first qualifying attempt in a Prototype for this team. We didn't



while. We know what you used to be able to do. When you assess yourself against the quality of the other cars, where do you think you measure up, especially after getting this pole position?

MISHA GOIKHBERG: Well, it's no secret I got downgraded last year, so I'm enjoying the newly minted status of a bronze. Hopefully it will result in lots of wins and a championship.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, congratulations. Best of luck tomorrow. Thank you.

Now we're joined by our overall pole winner, Jack Aitken. Jack, congratulations. Obviously you look at the times there, there's not quite 3/10ths first to fourth. Top nine within a second. What did you have to do to get the pole here today? How competitive do you expect this field to be?

JACK AITKEN: Very. From what we saw in practice, it was some really quick cars out there. We were up there. I think we were trying to find a little bit of something, especially as the conditions were cooling off. It's one of the coolest Sebrings that we've had for a few years.

Just getting the tire to work with you is a bit of a job. We know that we're relatively strong in qualifying. Again, I have a fantastic car. The Whelen Cadillac was giving me a lot of confidence. It's a really tough lap around here, so I don't think anybody gets a perfect lap, but we were closest.

It's a lot of fun. I enjoyed it a lot. We're going to keep doing our homework tonight and expect we're going to have some stiff competition tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. A lot of GTP teams have been not concerned but cautious about the tires usage this weekend because there's 11 sets. Same number as last year. With the new tire and everything, does that cross your mind?

JACK AITKEN: Yeah, it's always a concern. The way the race runs, it kind of pushes you to a double stint early in the race when it's hot, which is pretty unpleasant. We've had to do it in previous years, and it's not been a major issue. It's been unpleasant for everybody, but you're all in the same boat.

This year we are going into a bit of the unknown because nobody has pushed that much mileage on the tire in practice this weekend. We'll see. I'm sure it will be fine. The new Michelin has been a pretty nice little upgrade from the previous tire, fixed a few issues that we had. I wouldn't

expect the degradation is going to be especially worse. Like I said, it's been one of the coolest Sebrings, so that's going to help us as well just to control the tire temps.

Q. Have you guys or JOTA done any long runs on the (indiscernible) in testing before?

JACK AITKEN: We have. But not at Sebring. And Sebring is a pretty brittle track for that. Personally I'm expecting it to go in a similar vein to previous years, but we'll be prepared if it looks like it's going to go sideways late in the double stint.

Q. How much more do you think you had in that?

JACK AITKEN: In a perfect world where I get tons of laps with the tire at its peak, there's probably another half second in there, realistically. Like I said, it's a really tough lap because of the bumps. The way you have to set the car up around here is going to be a bit on a knife-edge. Going through turn one, sunset, even today we got a big tailwind going through 15 and 16, it's really tough to keep the car on the track and four wheels going in the right direction. I think we saw a few spins from previous sessions.

It's going to be the same up and down the grid. Everybody will have a similar story, I'm sure.

Q. Daytona, a lot of y'all talk about qualifying doesn't seem to matter as much. Is it a different story here? Does qualifying matter more here?

JACK AITKEN: Maybe matters twice as much. 24 hours to a 12 hour (smiling). But still not a lot.

No, I think it's going to be fairly inconsequential. It's lovely to be on pole. It's nice to show how the team is working, putting out a good car, to get the bragging rights on some points.

At the end of the day, we started last in '25 because of an issue, and we were into the lead in less than two hours with the help of yellows and stuff. It's kind of neither here nor there. We saw a lot of cars further down the grid were very quick in night practice and over longer runs yesterday. Fully expect they're going to make their way through, as well.

Q. At the end of Daytona, you were incredibly upset with how close you were. How do you put that behind you, turn the page?

JACK AITKEN: Luckily I was over it a week or two after (smiling). It always hurts immediately after 'cause you just

get out the car, there's lots of ifs, woulds, maybes.

I think realistically, looking back at the race with the benefit of hindsight, the winners did a fantastic job over the whole race and were fairly dominant. We did well to run them as close as we did.

This a whole new weekend. I'm not really carrying any of that baggage or anything like that.

Q. How confident are you in the pace when the Porsches were kind of showing their hand, being quickest in the practices leading up until today?

JACK AITKEN: I think, like I said earlier, we know that we're relatively strong in qualifying. It's been the trend over previous years. Even with the Evo upgrades and stuff we have working on the car now, I think it seems to be similar. One and a half pole positions this year. I'll say two (smiling). I've still got the trophy.

Definitely we're aware of how strong some of the other cars are, like the ones you mentioned. They don't show any signs of dropping out of the fight. If anything, they tend to somehow get quicker as the weekend goes on. I'm not taking much stock from what we've just seen in qualifying. I believe they'll be right there from quite early in the race.

We've got some homework to do still I think to find what we need to win this thing. That's all we can do, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Jack, congratulations. Thanks for coming in. Best of luck tomorrow.

JACK AITKEN: Thank you.

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