

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Wednesday, September 9, 2020
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA



Oliver Askew

Arrow McLaren SP

Rinus VeeKay

Ed Carpenter Racing

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, to the first of a series of video news conferences we're going to have in the next few days previewing the Honda Indy 200 at Mid-Ohio. My name is Arni Sribhen from INDYCAR. We'll welcome in the drivers who will be here to talk to you. The driver of the No. 21 SONAX Chevrolet for Ed Carpenter Racing, Rinus VeeKay, and the driver of the No. 7 Arrow McLaren SP Chevrolet for Arrow McLaren SP, Oliver Askew. Thanks for taking the time to join us today.

Oliver, we'll start with you. Heading to a road course; we really haven't done many in the last few months. Heading back to your first road course since Road America, how much are you looking forward to getting back to turning left and right?

OLIVER ASKEW: Yeah, very much looking forward to it, like you said. It's kind of weird to think that the season is heading into the final quarter and we've only done two road course events this year. Yeah, more time for me to get used to running on ovals and to get better on ovals, as well.

Yeah, Mid-Ohio is a special track for me. I've always loved going there. We've had a lot of success there in the Road to Indy and Indy Lights last year, as well. It's a very technical track, and I think it suits me and I think it suits the team Arrow McLaren SP and Chevrolet, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Rinus, Mid-Ohio is a special place for you and Oliver; you guys both have wins in the Road to Indy; you won in Indy Pro 2000, Oliver won last year in Indy Lights. It's also where you did your first test with Ed Carpenter Racing, so how much are you looking forward to getting to Mid-Ohio?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I'm really looking forward to Mid-Ohio. Of course it's a track where I've never finished

off the podium in my whole Road to Indy. It's quite a track. I love it there, and yeah, finally after a long time of ovals, we go to a road course again. Really enjoy the ovals, but yeah, I'm looking forward to turning right this weekend.

Yeah, I've had a very important test with Ed Carpenter Racing at Mid-Ohio, so yeah, good memories.

Q. Question for both of you guys. Just wondered with the sort of not knowing when or if Mid-Ohio was going to take place, obviously that affects your training regimen with it being sort of popped back into the calendar and just wondered how much of a challenge you're expecting it to be this weekend because it's already one of the hardest tracks for you guys physically. What are you expecting from this weekend?

OLIVER ASKEW: I think it's going to be really tough, although for me last year in Indy Lights, I felt pretty good. Both Rinus and I are kind of used to doing double-headers coming from the Road to Indy and Indy Lights, but the races aren't nearly as long. They're about maybe half as long or a quarter as long. So it's going to be a big challenge. I'm sure Rinus has been training very hard and just trying to get -- we don't really have any rest days. We're just trying to get the most out of our bodies and to prepare on the nutrition side, as well.

It's going to be a hot one. I think every race this year, that's just how it's been with the aeroscreen, it's going to be very hot, and just with the double-headers, it's important to recover as quick as possible Saturday night to feel as fresh as possible Sunday morning heading into qualifying, too.

It'll definitely be a big challenge for all of us and maybe especially for the rookies.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I feel good going to Mid-Ohio. I know it's a hard track, but with the aeroscreen it will be warm, but I've been training very hard, and I'm fitter than I've been in previous road courses. I'm not really worried.

Of course it's two days back-to-back, so you've got to be fit on both days, and I think all the rest you can get is going to be important for Sunday. But yeah, I feel good.

I think, yeah, for now, the last few races it all felt really

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good. I'm looking forward to going out there and putting some rubber down.

Q. I just want to ask you how confident are you going into this weekend? Obviously, Oliver, from your point of view with McLaren doing so well and racing races, but also Rinus, from your point of view coming off a really strong performance in race 2 a couple of weeks ago, how excited and confident are you guys going into the weekend?

OLIVER ASKEW: I feel fairly confident going into every race weekend, really, because we know that our engineering group at Arrow McLaren SP and on the McLaren side, as well, they have a lot of software and technology that we're putting into it so try and make sure we roll off the trailer in the best possible way with the best possible setup. There hasn't really been a race weekend this year where we show up and we just kind of feel lost, especially with having Pato. He's been really strong the past couple races and we can compare. It seems very hard for us to get lost at the moment and not understand where we can gain and where we can improve.

I think that in itself is very confidence boosting, and I feel like I can show up and drive as hard as I can and everything is going to be all right. So that's the plan.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I feel very confident. I know the team has had a great car at Mid-Ohio in the last years. I think Mid-Ohio is going to be one of their strongest road courses, and I know everyone works extremely hard and is very motivated.

I had the test there last October with Ed Carpenter Racing, and the car felt really amazing. I'm not worried at all, and I'm just very excited.

Q. What is it about Mid-Ohio that has been such a great show case for the Road to Indy? Both of you have done very well there. Oliver, you had back-to-back victories last year. Rinus, you've never finished off the podium. Guys like Felix Rosenqvist had their first INDYCAR test there, turned into full-time INDYCAR Series rides. What is it about Mid-Ohio that serves as such a great show case for the Road to Indy?

OLIVER ASKEW: I'm not sure. I think it's just a common racetrack, common racetrack to test at. It's always one of our most attended races of the year, and it is in close partnership with Cooper tires, as well. So they're obviously a huge partner and sponsor of the Road to Indy, and we've put a huge emphasis on that track and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway road course through our Road to Indy

careers. I think that has a lot to do with it. We both have quite a bit of time on that circuit.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, yeah, we always got a lot of practice there. It's just a great old-school track. Coming from Europe or seeing guys coming from Europe going into Mid-Ohio, it's quite a step from having run-offs, having grass. Yeah, crazy track, but it's a lot of fun, very technical, and I think if you can be fast at Mid-Ohio, you can be fast everywhere.

Q. There's a big rookie award out there for the Rookie of the Year, and right now, Rinus, you have a 21-point lead over Alex Palou and five points behind him is Oliver. How do you look at that with five races to go, that if you finish this thing off well, you could be Rookie of the Year, and Oliver, what does it take to catch him?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, it's of course nice to be leading the rookie championship, but there's way more than that. I'm just trying to make sure I do the best job I can do. And then yeah, it's quite crazy, I've had quite a weird season, I think, and then having one good weekend and you're leading the rookie championship.

You never know what's going to happen, but I'm going to give it my all.

OLIVER ASKEW: Yeah, like Rinus said, if you have -- everything is so close right now, even between all the veterans, you have one good weekend and you jump so many places in the championship, so honestly I had no idea what the points deficit was between the rookies. I just need to make sure that we do our homework and show up and be fast right away because on these condensed weekends if you're not on it in practice one, it just kind of snowballs into the rest of the sessions. That's what I'm focused on right now, and I'm sure the other guys are thinking the same.

Q. If you had to grade your season so far since we're getting close to the end, what kind of grade would you give yourself?

RINUS VEEKAY: Well, I'm not familiar with American grades, so --

Q. Out of 100 percent what would you give yourself?

RINUS VEEKAY: One out of ten, so let's say I think a seven. It's been a hard year. I've made quite a few mistakes, but after all, I'm learning a lot.

OLIVER ASKEW: What's that, C-?



RINUS VEEKAY: I think seven. I think it's a good number. It's not perfect at all, but I think I'm doing a good job so far.

OLIVER ASKEW: Yeah, I'd say -- I think I'm pretty hard on myself, so I'd give myself a six, 60 percent -- well, 67 percent.

Q. Any reason why?

OLIVER ASKEW: Nothing in particular. I just think I've lacked a little consistency. I mean, I know the speed is there. We were in the Fast Six right away in Indy GP qualifying and we had a really good weekend in Iowa, we just need to make sure we put it -- like Rinus says, it's such a weird season and you just need to kind of capitalize and make sure you're on it all the time because it's such a close series, so if you feel a little bit off one day, it looks like you're having a really bad weekend because everyone is so close together.

So I think, yeah, I just need to be a little bit more consistent and the results will be there.

Q. A question for both of you: Last year you guys were like racing each other for the top of the heap. I think if one misstepped and the other one didn't, it could have been either one of you being the champion. Certainly looked that way. But now you're in this INDYCAR season, and you're used to racing against each other, but now you're racing against the rest of the field. I'd like to get your feeling or reaction to now joining a field with the rest of the drivers when you're so used to racing against each other.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, of course. I've always driven against Oliver. He's always been a benchmark. But now there is, well, 24 more Olivers, so you're not just looking to Oliver. There's so many fast guys.

You're eventually just making sure you do the best you can because there's always going to be fast guys around you. You know you're not going to be a few tenths ahead of anyone else. It's super tough, but yeah, it's nice to see that in those years battling with Oliver. It really helped me preparing towards INDYCAR.

OLIVER ASKEW: Yeah, I think I can agree with what Rinus said. I honestly, unbiased opinion, my unbiased opinion is that this series is the most competitive in the world at the moment. You know, to come in as a rookie, there's a lot to learn, and if you don't take a stand against the veterans, they're going to understand that and use you up as much as they can.

It's super tough, and probably more tough than many people realize.

Q. Oliver, you mentioned that teammate Pato O'Ward's success the past few weekends helped you guys in some ways, I'd imagine from an engineering perspective. I know you guys have gone back and forth at times with your own successes. He's had maybe a little bit more consistency, as you mentioned, but we've still seen a lot from you in your first full time INDYCAR season. What have you been able to take and maybe how has Pato's successes particularly at Gateway this last race weekend, how has that driven you or motivated you as his teammate?

OLIVER ASKEW: Yeah, definitely. It definitely motivates me, and I think it can go both ways, as well. I feel that where Pato is really good at the moment is in practice 1 and qualifying, and like I said before, that's the whole weekend, really, especially at a place like Texas Motor Speedway or like we saw at Gateway. It's so hard to pass, and I kind of expect it to be the same at Mid-Ohio. It's going to be very difficult.

When you don't qualify well and you don't have a good first practice, it kind of sets you on the back foot. I think that's a really strong area of Pato's at the moment, and you can see it in the results. I'll try to pick up on that a little bit and take advantage of having such a strong teammate at the moment.

Q. How would you describe you guys' relationship as teammates kind of from a collaborative standpoint? I know this is both your first full-time seasons in INDYCAR. How do you guys use that teammate relationship? I know you're obviously competitors in a lot of ways once you get on the track, but off the track how do you guys try to utilize that relationship?

OLIVER ASKEW: Well, we have a job, and we race for the team. We're not very selfish people, I don't think. Pato seems to be the kind of driver who just shows up and drives the wheel off the thing, and I think I'm a little bit more -- I have to be a little bit more in depth with what's going on to become successful. But I think there's just two different approaches, and we can feed off each other in that way, as well.

It's been a pleasure for sure. We're continuing to get along well and continuing to build our relationship. It's been great.

Q. Rinus, you've got a sixth, a fifth and a fourth now. I think, what do you say, is it time for a podium this weekend?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, it's coming close. Of course race 2 in Gateway I was on podium course, so really sucked that it just grabbed next to the podium. But yeah, fourth was already amazing, but the podium is really a place I want to go to now. Of course there's only one rookie season, and I want to get a podium in my rookie season, so that's a big goal for me.

THE MODERATOR: That's all the time we have with the drivers today, so we appreciate everyone for joining us.

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