

# NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Thursday, March 4, 2021  
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA



## Conor Daly

Ed Carpenter Racing  
Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good morning, Conor Daly, driver of the No. 20 U.S. Air Force Ed Carpenter Chevrolet. Thank you for joining us.

Give us a little overview of how you see things shaking out this season. How are things looking for you heading into the 2021 season?

CONOR DALY: Honestly, I think everything's looking great. We knew where we had to improve I think from last year with our group. So far, after our first two test days, we have been quite a lot more competitive, which has been nice. The car has definitely felt better for me. The operating window where my driving style works I think is smaller, but I'm broadening that out a little bit. It definitely feels better.

I'm proud of the team for the work we've done over the off-season; put a lot of effort in. It's going to be nice to get out on the racetrack when everyone is finally together. It's weird not having an open test like at COTA we did last year because that's kind of like the first taste of where everyone is at.

Yeah, I mean, Barber is going to be a lot of fun. It's going to be a tough place physically to start, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: How far are we going with this?

CONOR DALY: I feel pretty good about it honestly. After seeing it come out of the fryer this morning, whatever they do to hair, it was pretty cool. I don't know. We're just going to let it live a little bit. I'm not sure when, what the timeline looks like. I feel pretty strong about it now. Josef Newgarden even said to me this morning, he said, wow, you look good. As a man who had to grow up going up against Josef Newgarden, not only in the driving category but also the looks category, because that guy is just a finely tuned specimen, he just looks like a Greek God, it's impressive to hear that from him, so I feel pretty good about it.

THE MODERATOR: Any helmet adjustments due to that?

CONOR DALY: No, still same sized helmet. Someone actually got mad at me on the internet, What happens if your hair catches on fire because it comes out the back of your helmet?

If you think the hairs come out the back of the helmet, you have a serious problem. I'm tucking that stuff all the way in; we're maximum speed.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions now.

**Q. The truck race you're running tomorrow, you ran the trucks last year, what do you think about your chances this week as you head over to run a truck?**

CONOR DALY: I'm excited. I mean, just another chance to kind of capitalize on what I learned last time. I mean, did 138 laps, then you sleep on it, you can improve quite a lot afterwards. I've just been waiting four or five months to do that.

It's something that I already know where I kind of want to start, what I want to do, and what I want to improve on. It's going to be fun. We have Fatheads and Elliott's Custom Trailers & Carts helping us out there which is really, really cool, and the team is awesome. Cody Efav and everyone over there, Al Neese, great environment. I have some great teammates, too. It's going to be fun.

**Q. Do you have any other planned races for the trucks? They'll be on road courses with COTA. Maybe the fall Vegas race or something?**

CONOR DALY: I want to race everything, everywhere, anytime. I have a focused schedule on INDYCAR, so that's going to take up every bit of my time. The only reason I actually got to run Vegas is because our schedule got pushed back a little bit. I got to keep myself busy. I got to get the body rolling into race mode. It's going to help come I think Barber because I'm going to have a full distance race with some heat and sweat going. Nice preparation for the INDYCAR season.

**Q. How do you get the top of your hair like that?**

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CONOR DALY: Well, there's a lot of electricity, passion and staring at the American flag for a certain amount of time (smiling).

**Q. And it works?**

CONOR DALY: So far.

**Q. Is it the staring that puts it over the top?**

CONOR DALY: I think it's realistically enough hairspray to set a house on fire, but I'm excited about it either way.

It's not always going to look like this. For today, we're just going to let it eat and have a great time.

**Q. You have one truck race at this time on your schedule, but if opportunities came open, would you add more?**

CONOR DALY: Oh, yeah, absolutely. I mean, I want to do everything that I can do. I'm ready to go whenever. But INDYCAR for sure is the focus. We got a lot of races in a row coming up in May, April and May, then basically all throughout the season. That will be taking up every bit of time.

**Q. Can you remind me what your program is this year in INDYCAR?**

CONOR DALY: Currently it's 14 races with Ed Carpenter Racing, the Indy 500 and all the road and street courses. That's officially all that I've got.

**Q. You think you might fill the rest?**

CONOR DALY: I mean, if I was a betting man, yes, I would enjoy doing the whole season. I think it's possible. But it's not up to me.

**Q. Roger has had a full year to own the series. What is the most significant thing you've seen happen under his leadership?**

CONOR DALY: Honestly, Roger's leadership is something that I think we're all lucky to be a part of. There's some incredible things happening with the series. I think there's a lot of energy. I know the improvements at the actual Indianapolis Motor Speedway are fantastic.

I think it's just the amount of positivity that everyone has, like, under his leadership is pretty cool. I mean, I'm excited to see when we get back to a fully, fully normal season, I think then Roger's kind of outlook on everything and his

team obviously, his group of people that he's put together, that's when I think it will really start taking off into the sky, which I think is really cool. I'm excited for the future. The future is bright, for sure.

**Q. The value of being able to have your deal locked in during the off-season, you haven't had that opportunity very often in your career. How valuable is that just to keep your mindset positive?**

CONOR DALY: It was great. I mean, honestly, I hadn't really ever gone into like a renewal type of situation of a contract before. To have that with Ed and the Air Force, basically where we were just like, All right, we all like each other, we all know what we need to improve, let's just keep this going. That was really cool.

Ed was always really honest with me as well. Ed is a straight-shooter. Really appreciate that guy. Happy late 40th birthday to Ed. He still looks like a young, athletic man, you know what I mean? That's very exciting for him.

Yeah, I'm pumped to be with the same group. Continuity, it's nice. We saw how that paid off last year with Carlin. I think it was super important to have that first year together, come back and take advantage of it. Want to do the same thing this year with ECR, first year, now we know what to do, take advantage of it in year two.

**Q. In some ways you and Ed are like part of the family, the extended family. How important is that? How much do you kind of wish maybe this opportunity had happened much earlier in your career?**

CONOR DALY: Well, I've been asking him much earlier in my career to be a part of the team, but it just didn't work (smiling).

I mean, I love the group that he's got assembled. A lot of the guys there I've known actually since I was a lot younger. It would have been cool to be here for a long time. But as I told Ed, I'd love to be there for 10 years. You know what I mean? You could be at that team, settle in in a competitive environment. They've got the resources there. They're working hard. It would be great to be with those guys for a while, start winning races with them, really compete for the top spot more often.

**Q. Make sure you get your Carson Wentz jersey early.**

CONOR DALY: We'll see (laughter). Actually, he's a ginger, so love that. We're going. I think he's my guy now.

**Q. How did it feel to have a really good test at Barber, with Rinus VeeKay? How is your relationship with him**

## coming along? How is that working in the pits?

CONOR DALY: Rinus is obviously very talented. We all know that. He's super fast. He's a good kid, too. He's someone that is just constantly happy, constantly has a smile on his face, which is great, and he's quick.

For me, it helps. When you have someone that has raw talent like that as your teammate, it's great data to look at, great information to have. I'm very much I think more focused on the technical side, trying to develop with the experience I've got. He doesn't have that experience yet, only because last year, the rookie season, he didn't get to go to all the tracks yet. He's still got to experience some of these tracks in an INDYCAR. That was tough on the rookies last year, for sure. It's been great to work with him. Ed has put a great group around us.

He's going to be quick again this year for sure. The goal is to have us both on the podium as much as we can get there.

**Q. You did well in the test. I guess you're looking forward to the first race. It's got to feel great to have a shortened oval season this year. Just gives you more races there at ECR. When do you think you might be able to talk him into having the full ride on every race?**

CONOR DALY: Well, I mean, that's always the goal. We were trying to make that happen, but it's a financial game. Obviously we need to have certain things to make certain things happen.

Right now it's the best situation possible for me and the U.S. Air Force. At some point maybe that could happen. For right now, I mean, we've got this opportunity in front of us, which is 14 races.

To be honest, I would actually like more ovals on the schedule. I like the oval racing. But, yeah, for right now it works out perfectly. If I can organize another program to end up doing the full season, it all fits really well.

**Q. If the planets align, you still have enough races to get the championship. Go for it. Good luck.**

CONOR DALY: If that managed to happen, that would be hilarious. We'll give it a shot (laughter).

**Q. We have Jimmie Johnson joining the series this year. He's such an incredible driver, résumé. A lot of folks imagine it would likely be tough for him adapting to a new series and a new car. Do you have any idea what it would feel like finishing that first race in Barber and seeing yourself ahead of Jimmie Johnson, having**

## grown up and watched him as a kid?

CONOR DALY: I mean, Jimmie is a brave man. Also I respect the heck out of what he's doing. Doing the sports car stuff, coming over here to the INDYCAR world...

I think this season without a doubt has so much excitement. You have some real heavy hitters coming here, Scott McLaughlins of the world, Jimmie Johnson, Romain Grosjean, Pietro Fittipaldi now, two current F1 guys, V8 Supercar legend, man the world, incredible talent, then you've got Jimmie Johnson who has more trophies than all of us combined. I think we have to take advantage of that as a series and say, Look, we have the best in the world coming here to race. It's no joke. We're going to have a great time this year.

I would love to beat Jimmie. That sounds like a great plan. I'd like to beat everyone. I just think he's taken on this opportunity so perfectly. He respects the heck out of what we're doing. He's getting out there, testing as much as he can. He's doing everything he can. That's super cool. To have him part of the series, awesome.

I mean, this whole championship is just stacked. It's pretty cool to be a part of, for sure.

**Q. We haven't gotten on the track for races yet. You mentioned all of the new talent and the exciting drivers. The series potentially is looking to undergo some changes or potentially renew with NBC. You have the potential of a third engine manufacturer trying to come into the series. When you are preparing for the season, you're involved with things on track, but do you have a sense of everything that's going on around you off the track and what the season can potentially mean for INDYCAR's future?**

CONOR DALY: I mean, as drivers, it's our job to just try to help as much as we can make all those things happen, you know what I mean? We got to go out there, and we got to produce a great racing event. We got to be smart, but we got to be electric. We got to get our personalities out there. There's people with great personalities in this series. We got to be able to have -- just got to put the best show on that we can. We have to make sure we do our work on social media, whenever we can.

It's going to take us, like all of us, to do this. It's a team sport, but it's also like a team effort in general just to get this thing to go. I mean, we all know, everyone in the Zoom here knows the excitement of this championship, how much cool stuff is going on around us with the drivers and the teams. I think there's so many full-time cars, it's awesome, it's great. Then we have an incredible Indy 500

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as well that's going to be happening. We have to hammer it home to everyone that doesn't know about INDYCAR, hammer it home to everyone that might like F1. Maybe there's some F1 guys in there now, we'll check it out. I don't know.

We got to do our jobs to help make sure this series takes off as we know it deserves to do.

**Q. People have asked about your truck potential for the rest of this year. We have an Xfinity race on the road course at IMS the same weekend at INDYCAR is racing there. Any chance you would potentially end up or pursue an opportunity to run both races that day?**

CONOR DALY: I think I'm too poor for that series. We'll see. I'd love to be a part of it. I don't think anyone is just going to take a chance, Hey, we like your hair, jump in this Xfinity car. We'll see.

I have to focus on the INDYCAR races. Physically it's going to be hard to do both of those races in the same weekend, that's tough. But I'm a yes man. I learned that from saying yes to Travis Pastrana; anytime he asks you to do something you always say yes. I'm not a no man. I'm ready to go.

THE MODERATOR: We'll let you go now and thanks a lot for your time. Best of luck to you.

CONOR DALY: Sweet. Thank you.

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