

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Ed Carpenter

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Ed Carpenter. Welcome back. Another year. You got a busy plate of drivers, races, goals are probably still the same. Rinus VeeKay. You signed Conor Daly. You're in a driver suit still yourself.

ED CARPENTER: Still got it on somehow (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: What are your thoughts coming into this one?

ED CARPENTER: I'm excited. It's nice to have some continuity, expand the continuity a little bit. For me obviously still chasing Indianapolis and as many other races and wins as I can compete in.

With Rinus, looking forward to year three. He had a lot of success over his first two seasons, had a breakthrough win last year. Also had some inconsistency last year which you can see at times in year two.

I think he's entering the phase of his career where he's starting to mature as a driver and also a person, becoming more independent. At the end of the day he's still a kid, he's so young. So I think you're just going to see him come into his own skin and talent even more so this year.

I know Conor, having worked with him, I think he'll benefit from being able to focus a little better on one team, one home, not bouncing around, looking for his next opportunity. Looking forward to that continuity.

The two of them did work well together over the past two years. Having a good understanding of each other to be able to carry that forward I think will be a good thing for the team.

THE MODERATOR: You'll run two cars at all the races except Indianapolis?

ED CARPENTER: That's what we're confirmed for today. That could change.

THE MODERATOR: Is it difficult to say or you're really pursuing yourself in some oval races?

ED CARPENTER: No, we're definitely working towards me doing some more, but just not to a point we're going to lock it in yet. I have a desire to race more. This opportunity came about that kind of steered us that direction as a team and business. When you get those, to me it was very similar to the process of me not running full-time in 2014.

This is a great opportunity for our business with a new partner coming in to transition the 20 car to one full-time driver. I know I'll be at Indy. Maybe you'll see me at some or all of the other ovals.

THE MODERATOR: That means a different car number for you?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, I think so.

THE MODERATOR: Do we know?

ED CARPENTER: There's a couple candidates. We haven't fully come to agreement yet, but...

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Was the decision to make the 20 car full-time based purely on financials or were there other reasons behind it?

ED CARPENTER: The 20's been full-time. Moving it to one driver versus a split role I think is what you're alluding to.

Yeah, I mean, everything we do at some level is partnership related. We had the fortune to bring on BitNile as a partner. They were looking for one driver to go behind for the season. I'm definitely not going to go back to running road courses outside of an emergency sub situation if required.

Definitely sponsor, business driven for sure.

Q. Obviously Rinus has already been discussed as a future champion, multiple race wins across a season. How do you feel about keeping hold of him in the

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long-term? If he has a good season, it's great for the team, but means he's more talked about as well.

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, that's natural. I think some years there's more movement than others. Every team's after talent, whether it's behind the wheel or on the car, the engineering office. I don't remember an off-season that's gone by where I haven't had to defend myself from within from someone wanting to get a driver, engineer, mechanic.

It's the nature of the beast, what we do. You can't prevent it. You just have to try to provide an environment and opportunity from within that makes them want to stay with Ed Carpenter Racing.

I know Rinus enjoys his environment right now. It's our job to make sure we're providing him with opportunity to meet his goals that he has personally and professionally, give him a place where he can accomplish those.

We both want the same thing. If we have a successful year, I think we'll be positioned well to carry on. If he feels like he needs something else, he'll be able to pursue that when he can.

The goal is for him to be with Ed Carpenter Racing for a long time.

Q. You mentioned a couple minutes ago putting Conor in a car with one team. He tweeted this was a multi-year deal. You said maybe the comfort that might bring him. What do you hope to see more of from Conor this year knowing he's going to have a full season in the car, planning and scheming for what his future in 2023 is going to look like?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, I think we have a good feel for each other. Conor knows where we've struggled and what our emphasis has been as a team to improve. We've been working with him long enough that we know what his strengths are and areas for improvement on his end as well.

For sure Conor, he's fast, he's been able to produce good qualifying results and have some good runs. I think the goal for him this season is to maintain that pace that he's shown throughout the rest of a weekend. That's not pointing the finger at him and saying he needs to do that, it's a group effort. That will be the collective focus, to finish off weekends a little better than we were able to last year.

Q. You've seen INDYCAR on this upward swing, growth arc. We have 14 races on network TV, some added momentum in some other areas. What would you like to see the series do to continue on this

upward swing and take advantage of some of these opportunities you have this year?

ED CARPENTER: I think we need to do everything in our power, which I believe that everyone is, to make sure the product we're putting out there with this opportunity that we have, with the growing number of network races, to be putting the right product out to market to continue the growth, not only cater to the great fans that we have but to draw in more fans and grow the base.

At the end of the day that's going to be the thing that continues to drive us forward. We have a great product, but it can always be better. That needs to be the goal.

Q. With regards to the upcoming year, you came close to getting a podium at Indianapolis. What would it mean to get back to the podium this season?

ED CARPENTER: That's the plan. Indy was a tough one last year. We had a great car. We were right where we wanted to be the first stint, had a pit lane stall for some reason. I thought I made a mistake, but there was a bit of an anomaly that caused that. Spent the rest of the 450 miles catching up just to get to the lead pack for the race to end.

I still feel really good about the cars that we have for there. Just need to be able to get through with a clean execution the whole way, be in position for it.

We just got back to the front too late last year.

Q. What impressed you about Rinus as a driver?

ED CARPENTER: I mean, he's just one of those rare guys that comes along that is an exceptionally talented, naturally gifted driving a car, maximizing the car. He never gives up. He's pretty strong at all types of circuits that we go to, whether it's short oval, speedway, road course, street course, he's pretty versatile.

He definitely has all the tools to develop into a champion. That's the goal with him, is to get a championship.

THE MODERATOR: Rinus VeeKay had an injury last year mid-season after Indianapolis. Never really found his stride afterwards. Do you have some commonalities that help explain that?

ED CARPENTER: That's been a big topic of conversation internally and a lot of other people have asked that, as well.

Certainly I think it was a setback in preparation training, et



cetera. The other thing that I think factored in a little bit late in the year, he went to a couple venues that he hadn't been to or raced at in the past with the way the previous season was. I think there's a combination of factors that took place. In some instances we just didn't do a good enough job executing through an event.

At the end of the day it's not something that's making me lose sleep at night. I'm pretty confident that as a group we'll get back on track.

THE MODERATOR: You talked about your problems early in the Indy 500 last year. The second half of the race was one of your best segments. Is that as good as it's been except for the year maybe you finished second?

ED CARPENTER: In its entirety, yeah. I think we had a really good car, we were fast, not quite good enough in traffic. Had we not had that issue, could have just been in the top five all day, I think it would have given us an opportunity to finish higher than what we did.

Yeah, I think the team collectively, we had really good cars. Conor led the most laps, Rinus was up there leading as well. We had what we needed. We just didn't put together a complete race with any of the three cars.

THE MODERATOR: Back to the Zoom for more questions.

Q. For 2023 there's quite a radical difference coming both with the power unit, other parts of the car. How much time can you focus on the 2022 car when you're also having to have people off to the side investigating all your possibilities for the '23 machine?

ED CARPENTER: I would say for the most part right now with the information that we currently have access to, we're really focused on the now and this coming season. There's going to be a point in time probably after we get through the month of May where we'll start getting more information and getting more involved directly with the next season's changes.

But as we sit here today, the ball's not really in our court, so to speak, on that side of things, on the preparation. It's going to come before the season's over. I feel like we're prepared as a group to manage that. But right now everyone's focus is on 2022.

Q. As a part-time driver, you're eligible to be Chevrolet's test driver for the 2023 spec engines.

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, I don't know how all that's going to shake out yet. I'll definitely do whatever I'm asked to do.

Q. Conor had a really good run at the 500 last year. Obviously you want to win it as a driver. What would it mean to you to win it as a team owner? Was there a point when you looked up and said, Oh, crap, I have a good chance to win this with one of my other cars?

ED CARPENTER: First off, I'll be happy, for sure be happy, if any of our team cars can win. Everything we do is as a group and a unit. That doesn't mean that I would not want to win it myself if I got to pick.

We definitely go there with the same intention on every one of our cars and every one of our drivers. It's hard to say what my emotions would be like as far as happy meter personally and professionally. Either way it's an accomplishment.

I know from seeing how Bryan Herta, for example, reacted with winning it as an owner, it's equally as impactful for what we're doing, which is on a different level.

As far as it goes in the race, I don't really pay attention to that so much or think about that. Obviously I'll see and know when they're up there, but really just focus on my own race and cockpit at that point, not thinking about scenarios like that, just staying focused on my job at that moment.

Q. There's a lot of popular drivers that have been in this race, but you'll always go down as the hometown boy, hometown hero. You get great cheers from the fans in qualifying and in the race. How important is that to you?

ED CARPENTER: I mean, it makes it fun. At the end of the day what we're doing is fun. We're all extremely lucky to be able to drive race cars for a living, to be able to drive INDYCARs for a living, compete in the Indy 500, the greatest race in the world. It definitely makes it more fun.

The year there was no one there, it was awful. It wasn't the same. I think it was an eye opener for everybody. Once we got going, you move past it. The energy level and the excitement just wasn't the same with no one there.

Yeah, it's gratifying. When you're around a long time, people eventually like you, so... Thankful for that (smiling).

Q. What is your approach to training during that time and staying in shape? What kind of guidance do you give to the other guys to be able to put up with the season?

ED CARPENTER: I've worked with the same trainer for

quite a while. We have our routine kind of that's evolved over the years as my schedule has changed and I have to balance my driver schedule and owner schedule. Conor and I actually work with the same trainer so we train together I would say 75% of the time, schedule permitting.

Rinus himself, he's had someone that he's worked with in the past. He just made a change in working with the same trainer as me somewhat now as well.

I don't question any of our guys' preparation.

THE MODERATOR: Thought your training was chasing children.

ED CARPENTER: That's what I do from 4:30 to whenever I go to sleep.

THE MODERATOR: Asher, you're on, brother.

Q. Is there still any contact with Ryan Hunter-Reay on getting in?

ED CARPENTER: I talk to Ryan still because we're friends. We have been for a long time. I'm not sure that there's really an opportunity at the here and now, which Ryan and I have talked about. But I will always continue to talk to Ryan because he's a good guy. I'm sure he'll end up being around at some point, whether it's with us or someone else because he definitely still has a desire to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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