

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Rinus VeeKay

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Rinus VeeKay, good afternoon.

RINUS VEEKAY: Good afternoon.

THE MODERATOR: Quite disappointed you moved out of Speedway, Indiana, where we are receiving the slightest bit of snow.

RINUS VEEKAY: I'm sorry. I'm not good with the cold. I enjoy sunshine a lot more.

THE MODERATOR: Second season with Ed Carpenter Racing is about to begin. Your thoughts? Optimism, I assume?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I'm very optimistic. I think this off-season we have not just waited around for the season to come around, but we have definitely taken all of our time to improve compared to last season.

We definitely knew what we had to improve, so we spent a lot of time going over it, tried some different stuff. I'm curious to see how much we will improve this next season.

THE MODERATOR: Your boss was asked earlier about the second half of your season after the collarbone injury. Was that a factor in the second half of the season or did you think it was going to some new tracks?

RINUS VEEKAY: There was one race -- actually two races. I missed Road America. Mid-Ohio, I wasn't 100%. I was happy to be back in the car, but I wasn't 100% yet. The rest of the races I had no problems with the collarbone.

I think the biggest problem was, yeah, I think as a team we were just struggling a little bit getting up to pace, showing up fast. Instead of tweaking the car a little to get the last few 10ths out, we were just trying to determine the whole setup.

I think we just struggled a little bit, which can happen. It only showed the whole team what we had to improve for

the coming season.

THE MODERATOR: What is new on your car this year?

RINUS VEEKAY: A lot. I think the thought about the whole car setup is different. I have spent a lot of time with my engineer, even staying at his house on weekends, doing fun stuff, but still making sure my feedback will be translated in a different way so he can take everything, like every little thing I say, translated into the setup.

Right now he has a better view of what I need in the car than before this off-season. So I think we definitely improved. I think everyone's really at the same level of we know what everyone needs on the car.

THE MODERATOR: Was that Woody?

RINUS VEEKAY: Brent is the strategist. Matt Barnes. Actually right now while I'm in Indy I'm staying at his apartment. I've been here already for five days. I've been at the team, yeah, tried to show my face as much as possible, even when it's off-season, be part of the team.

THE MODERATOR: Are you going to give out the address, a pizza party tonight?

RINUS VEEKAY: No pizza for me. I've been eating out too much this week.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You obviously came through the Road to Indy. New crop coming in this year. What advice do you have for them?

RINUS VEEKAY: First of all, very proud of the Road to Indy of producing such talents, making sure they get to INDYCAR. That's also quite something. Getting the talent to win in your series is one thing, but really making them have a career in INDYCAR is special.

I hope they will do very well. I think for them it's hard to see. In the Road to Indy, you're winning a lot if you do well. David Malukas. You're racing for wins every weekend. In INDYCAR, they will probably not come close to a win in like the first 10 races because they're learning,

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everything is new. It's a lot different than you're used to. It's a lot more stuff.

If you think you got everything, there's so much more you can learn. I think just being patient, focused on your weekend's execution. Whenever you do well enough to win a race, it will come your way.

Q. How beneficial is it to you this season going into the year with not having the consistency of having Conor with you but also having him as a full-time teammate this year?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I'm very happy for Conor that he's back again. It's always been a lot of fun. I think it will definitely help Conor, too, to have a full season with one team, one team only. It will not only help Conor but also his crew, if they're just working with one guy.

I'm very happy with it. I think it was definitely very good. I'm looking forward. He was on an upward curve throughout the last part of the season last season. If he can pull that through, I can get back to what I was like the beginning of last season, we can both go for many top 10s and good results.

Q. I wanted to ask if one of the targets for you guys is specifically consistency? Obviously we saw you driving like a bat out of hell in GP of Indy. We come back to the Indy road course, you're kind of relatively nowhere. We're seeing Penske, like Will Power did the opposite of that. Is that something that you feel you have a handle on as a team?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, we definitely have put a lot of focus on it because it's not something -- yeah, it's not something that you forget so quickly. If you look at Romain Grosjean, he had two consistent Indy GPs, which is very good for him.

I think what was basically the big factor between those two weekends was NASCAR running in the second one. The more they started running, the worse my car started to feel. I think we were not proactive enough on making setup changes towards, yeah, like fighting that NASCAR rubber.

Q. Obviously you led quite a few laps at Indy, as did Conor. Do you feel you are ready to fight? Say you got involved with the same kind of fight with a veteran as Helio like Palou did last year, do you feel like you'll be ready to take that fight to any veteran INDYCAR driver?

RINUS VEEKAY: I definitely think so, yeah. I have a lot of experience now in Indy actually, running in the front,

passing cars and everything. I know with Ed Carpenter Racing I have a great car.

Yeah, I just cannot wait for the Indy 500 this year. I think really I feel like a veteran now going to my third Indy 500. Just, yeah, I might have an advantage being a little younger and not knowing the dangers compared to Helio.

Q. Ed was in before talking about you. You're young, but it's your third year, you came through the Road to Indy. You're growing up. He talked about your finding some independence. What do you think he meant by that?

RINUS VEEKAY: Can you repeat the question? Sorry.

Q. Ed was saying that you're growing up, becoming more independent. What does that entail?

RINUS VEEKAY: Well, I was always having a lot of fun. I still have a lot of fun, as long as when that goes away there's a serious problem.

At the beginning of last season, like everything was fine. I was joking a lot. Sometimes a little too joke-y. We got some hard weekends in a row. It really made me think. I think it really opened my eyes to always keep looking for that little bit of extra speed that's hidden for the weekend.

Now I know that I've won my first INDYCAR race, I want to win more. Yeah, in the future I want to win an Indy 500 and also become an INDYCAR champion. To be able to do that, yeah, I need to get every -- find every little speed I can from wherever I can.

I think last half of the season really opened my eyes in a good way. I think it really matured me, too.

Q. When you were talking about the car setup for this year, you said there's some different thinking behind it. What have you been trying to do there, what the new thinking of the setup of the car is?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, so what I said, I have spent a lot of time with my engineer. We're always in a very serious setting where we're always talking about racing, thinking very deeply.

But now because I was staying at my engineer's house for so much time, actually we're just laid back talking, very chill. If you don't dig so deep, you say very normal things that actually you never think about saying.

We talked about some stuff about setups. He really knows what I need from a car right now. I said a few things in the

off-season which kind of opened his eyes, gave him a direction of thinking which way we have to go on which tracks.

I think that definitely helped. I think team atmosphere has never been better than it is at the moment.

Q. You've been connected to someone who is going to be sought after in the driver market if you have a good season. Is that something you've taken with you on your journey in 2022? Is it something you think about that essentially there's going to be some big teams looking at you in the future?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I know that's the case at this moment. I'm not really thinking about it. For now I'm just focusing on every weekend producing the best possible result what we can do. Yeah, actually for me actually I want to show myself and show the team that we can actually stay competitive throughout the whole season. I will see whatever happens after that. I think as long as you show the best driver you are, the best part of yourself, you will always have a future in INDYCAR.

Q. Ed mentioned with growth and maturing, he said you either changed up your workout routine or switched trainers altogether. Can you talk about how as a driver you go about deciding to switch things up from a physical standpoint.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, so this off season I've been focused on being physically fit a lot, especially after what happened to my collarbone. I didn't really have any complications, but I just wanted to be stronger. I felt like the stronger I am, the more work I put in, you will definitely feel the difference on track.

I actually did a lot of strength training. Then I got into the simulator. I was complaining to the guys, There's no force in the steering wheel. It's so light.

They're like, No, Rinus, it's about the same strength as it was before.

I'm like, Okay, that was a good sign.

That was funny. But actually, yeah, I was always (indiscernible) around with my personal trainer. We actually stopped working together after four years. Yeah, it was time for me for some change, trying something else.

I think for me not being 24/7 with a personal trainer also makes me just go head first in some other things that normally I would let him do. If there were, like, things with the team, if I'm in Indianapolis, right now I'm staying at my

engineer's place, trying to be doing a lot of stuff with the team, where with him I would always take off, go work out. I still do that but then on my own or with a trainer in Indianapolis.

Q. I wanted to get your thoughts on your countryman Max Verstappen had an exciting finale. Your thoughts on how that went down?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, it was a crazy season finale. Probably the craziest in history with Hamilton leading the championship every lap until the last one almost.

Yeah, it was a lot of controversy about FIA, how they handled stuff. Well, Max definitely got -- definitely was the better one. How do you say that?

THE MODERATOR: It worked out better for him.

RINUS VEEKAY: It worked out better for him this time. But Hamilton had a lot of luck. It worked out for Hamilton several times earlier in the season.

If you look at the stats, Max was the better driver last season. Definitely a deserved championship for him.

Q. When you think about the upcoming wins for yourself, would you rather they be that exciting or a straightforward victory?

RINUS VEEKAY: Really depends. Really depends, yeah. I like a good straightforward victory where you're just faster than everyone else, you sweep the floor with them. I think that's pretty cool.

But any kind of win, a win is a win. I would take any kind of win as long as it's fair.

THE MODERATOR: Apologize for saying this is your second year. 2020 kind of got away from me.

RINUS VEEKAY: It did to everyone, right?

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for being here. Enjoy your day.

RINUS VEEKAY: Thank you very much.

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