

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Rinus VeeKay

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Rinus VeeKay, the driver of the No. 21 for Ed Carpenter Racing, after a pole last year, a podium, three top 5s, six top 10s, and looking for many more of all that.

All begins tomorrow at Thermal. Looking forward to getting back in the car?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yes, definitely. It's going to be exciting. New track for everyone. We'll see how that goes.

THE MODERATOR: Tell me about the preparation for the season, how it's gone so far.

RINUS VEEKAY: It's going very well. Spent a lot of time with the team. There's quite a few new people at the team. The biggest change-up I've had so far in the three seasons of INDYCAR.

Q. You're all wearing the BitNile colors?

RINUS VEEKAY: We also look like each other now (smiling). We look like a team.

Q. How far you've come in such a short period of time. When you look back at how INDYCAR started for you, where you're at now, one of the up-and-coming drivers that can win races and challenge for the championship, has it happened according to your schedule or faster than you thought it would?

RINUS VEEKAY: It's going according to my schedule like it hoped it to be. Yeah, it's gone fast. The whole Road to Indy, I'm in INDYCAR now longer than I've been in the Road to Indy. Pretty crazy.

No, I'm very happy with how it goes. Yeah, good. No complaints.

Q. We're going to see you in any orange this year or has that gone away?

RINUS VEEKAY: My helmet is more orange than ever

(smiling).

No, I think the car will primarily be the car that was announced this morning, yeah.

Q. Last year was an up-and-down year. Not the consistency you wanted. What have you dug into or found this off-season or focused energy on to try to make this year across 17 races more of what you want from a performance standpoint?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, that's definitely something we focused on. We've had great pace at races, but we've been too up and down, exactly.

With the engineers, we kind of took apart every full race weekend with practice one, practice two, like everything with the feedback, what I gave. Lap for lap, we looked everything back. We tried to find stuff that should have gone right but didn't go right. Kind of kept going the whole weekend.

Sometimes in practice one something happens, that kind of carries over throughout the whole weekend. Sometimes something goes very well in practice one, and it carries out throughout the whole weekend.

Yeah, we found a lot of stuff that I could prepare better in some ways. I feel like I can prepare a bit better in some ways. I found ways, different ways, to prepare, so...

Yeah, I'm focusing on that now. Also within the team, they also found a few things they can improve so we can start off better.

Q. You mentioned you have some new people at the team. Can you elaborate on that? How many people did they bring in, what departments, and did you have any influence on that?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yes, I did not really have an influence on that. Of course, I encouraged the team to get new people, extra people, new minds, new brains in the team.

Yeah, we have a new fueler. We have a new performance engineer. For me, the main people are still the same. I think there's definitely people around that are going to pick



up a little bit.

Q. Where did you feel like you needed extra people? Engineering?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I think just a few different minds just to switch up the way of thinking, coming to a few tracks where we struggle.

There's tracks where, like Road America, we struggled, and we kind of always struggle, so it's kind of a trend. Some new suggestions from new people, new ways of thinking.

Hopefully, yeah, end that.

Q. When you look back at last season, do you feel you drove to pretty much what the maximum of the car gave you? Do you feel you didn't leave anything on the table? Did you feel like there was more you could have done?

RINUS VEEKAY: You know, I always try to give it all. There's been weekends where I've left some on the table. Yeah, like Portland, I definitely made a mistake, while that was an easy top 10 when we were at that race.

There's been a few mistakes that were unnecessary that needed to be filtered out, so yeah. But, no, for me, yeah, I think there was a top eight in the championship that was possible with the car we had last year. I think now it was 12.

I think if stuff would have gone my way a little, if I didn't leave some stuff on the table, a top eight would have been possible.

Q. Are you looking forward to having one season where things go smoothly? 2021 you win, then you have the injury, things kind of changed after that.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I'm kind of toning down the cycling. No more breaking of clavicles or bones (smiling).

For me, I'm definitely planning on having a very steady line, hopefully a steady upward line, throughout the season. No, I'm excited to get going. For me, the off-season has been too long.

Q. The interaction between you and Conor, do you see it as a benefit that you're teammates again, or do you wish that Ed was able to expand to a three-car team? Do you think like an Arrow McLaren SP, haven't got the SP anymore, but they're going to be another stage moving forward because they have a third driver? Do

you think that needs to be Ed Carpenter Racing's next step?

RINUS VEEKAY: In some ways, yes. I think a third car, full-time car, will give us a lot more data. It just goes a lot better.

But it also happens quite often that a third car kind of shakes up the dynamic of the team and things don't move that smoothly anymore. You don't know until it happens.

I know the team still performs really well with a third car at the ovals. For me, why not? But it's not my call to make.

I think having Conor as a teammate is great. For a fourth season in a row, we know what we can extract from each other. We don't have to find anything out.

Q. Where do you think you need to make the most progress as a team rather than yourself? We all know you can do the job. Where do you think the team needs to move forward?

RINUS VEEKAY: I think just consistency. We just got to have our bad weekends be a top 11, 12 instead of being all the way down. I think if we can really do that, just rank up the points, that will definitely give us momentum and we'll put ourselves in a position more often where we can win the race or get on the podium.

Q. Regarding your performance at Barber last year, if someone asked you did you give everything you possibly could, what would you say was missing that day in terms of car performance? Was it using up its tires too much?

RINUS VEEKAY: In Barber?

Q. Yes.

RINUS VEEKAY: That was just me (smiling). That was just I didn't use push-to-pass. I fumbled, yeah. That's something I still have nightmares about. But I'll improve that. That's one of those mistakes you make one and you'll never make it again. Planning a redemption.

Q. You've got an Amazon or Netflix show coming out in The Netherlands. When is that?

RINUS VEEKAY: Coming out on February 10th. It's going to be in The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, just to start out. Hopefully it's enough of a success that it expands. It'll be February 10th on Amazon Prime Video.

I've seen it already. It's really cool. It's three episodes, 45



minutes per episode. So, yeah, it's turned out really well. They were filming Indy 500, which did not end very well, but still, it's a really good story. Yeah, really, really -- I think they did a really good job of getting that Indy 500 atmosphere into the show.

Q. You may have an opportunity at Detroit where I think you've done well, changing from Belle Isle to the new course. What can you say about the new course and how you perceive it?

RINUS VEEKAY: I think it's going to be interesting for everyone to come to a new track. Yeah, definitely downtown is going to be I think a bit more alive. I think the fans, there's going to be a bit more attendance from the fans.

I'm curious to see how it's going to go. Of course, I've seen the track from the aerial view. It looks very square. I've been on the track before with a road car. It actually looks very cool. If they change up some patches on the track, I think it's going to be a very cool race.

THE MODERATOR: We'll wrap things up with Asher.

RINUS VEEKAY: Awesome. How are you, Asher?

Q. Good. How about you?

RINUS VEEKAY: Doing well. Thank you.

Q. What are your goals going into the 2023 season?

RINUS VEEKAY: My goals for the 2023 season is getting back to the top step of the podium, winning a race again, hopefully more than one. But, yeah, ideally just be more consistent and be closer to top 5s and top 10s all the time so we can be high up in the championship standings at the end of the season.

Q. Except for the Indy 500, what race are you looking forward to this year?

RINUS VEEKAY: St. Petersburg. First race of the season. I'm excited for that.

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