

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Rinus VeeKay

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone. Glad you're with us today. The spring swing of the 2023 season continues this Sunday with the first road course race of the season at Barber Motorsports Park.

Count Rinus VeeKay among those going back. Pole position a year ago, finished on the podium. If you believe in nice round numbers that maybe mean something going into a race weekend, Sunday's race will be Rinus' 50th start in his young NTT INDYCAR SERIES career.

Rinus, 50, where has the time gone?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I don't know either. It's actually crazy. Beginning of this year I was looking, and I'm longer in INDYCAR now than I've spent to get to INDYCAR. I still feel like a rookie actually.

THE MODERATOR: That's a good sign. Got to get that number to grow. You're going to be around for a long time.

A little bit of success last year at Barber. Tell us about that, how much you're looking forward to going back this year.

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, Barber last year was my highlight of the season. Pole position by quite a bit. That was really good, really fun.

Then, yeah, unfortunately only a third place in the race. I knew I had the possibility to win the race, but made some mistakes that hopefully I can go for redemption this year and really go for that win.

THE MODERATOR: Do you believe in the idea that at some tracks you just have a good feel for the layout, the track, the rhythm of it? If so, is Barber Motorsports Park that track for you?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, Barber is a great track. I like turning left and right. That's what I've done since I'm in go-karts really. Yeah, the feeling is very important. But I know since last year we just found something on the setup

in Barber, on the grippy road courses, IMS road course, Barber, that just really works for us. Hopefully we can pull that good result through.

THE MODERATOR: After Barber you have the road course at Indianapolis, so a couple good tracks on the schedule coming up for you.

We'll open it up for questions.

Q. How do you feel about the first few races of the season, what your level of concern is going from those? Inside the team, do you have any level of concern in the pace on those races or are you happy with how things are going?

RINUS VEEKAY: Well, we're definitely not happy. It's been so far disastrous in results. Definitely not where we want to be.

We know we have pace. Long Beach wasn't where we wanted to be. Texas, there's still room to improve. I think we really had the pace to race there in Texas.

In St. Petersburg, we were third, sixth in practice, something goes wrong in qualifying. At the end of the race we were fighting for sixth place again.

I think we have all the cards on the table to do better, to get back to last year's results. We just have been a bit unlucky. I think Barber, Indy road course, Indy 500 are those places where I can climb back up and get back to where we belong.

Q. Like you said, you had the podium in Barber last year. What do you put that down to in terms of the track layout or just the performance of the car there that suits you?

RINUS VEEKAY: Well, I like the track layout. I like fast, flowy corners. But you need to have a car that does well. You can drive 100% and nail every corner and be 10th with the car. That's not good.

As a team, we have to nail the driving because the talent in the INDYCAR SERIES is so high. Also compared to all



these other teams, everyone is working day and night to be the fastest. You've got to make the good decisions and get it right.

Q. How do you expect this weekend to go? Do you think you're going to be quick this weekend?

RINUS VEEKAY: I think we're going to be really quick this weekend. I've liked Barber since the beginning. We've been fast there with our car all the time. I expect we're going to have a good race. Hopefully, again, make it through to the Fast Six, hopefully pole, pick up where we left last year in Barber.

Q. You mentioned last year. How much do you still think about how that last sequence went? Is that something that still haunts you to this day?

RINUS VEEKAY: Well, it's fuel for nightmares, definitely. I've not been as close to winning all last year and since that moment.

We had all the ingredients to win, and I didn't make it happen when it mattered most. Really sucked. Also it's a mistake I'm never going to make in the rest of my career.

Mistakes happen for a reason. They're good mistakes if you learn from them. I'm really, really sure I'm going to really not make the mistake any time any more.

Q. You're a superstitious guy. You're in a little bit of a rut right now as far as finishes. Do you change your approach coming into this weekend?

RINUS VEEKAY: Not really, no. I take a lot of time to prepare to (indiscernible) stuff. Of course, I rewatched everything from last year. I'm not really changing my approach.

I have higher expectations because last year was good. I think we can rely on all the good info we had there last year, hopefully do the same thing as we did last year.

No more lucky underwear on this race.

Q. Road courses for the next five races, does Barber kind of start a fresh set of the season for you? Do you look at this weekend as that?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, no, definitely. The sequence of races is where we have always been competitive and where we basically have an opportunity to win. That's really good.

I knew past races, especially Long Beach, was going to be

a hard one for us. But it's nice to get into some races and have a lot of confidence that we can do well.

Q. Your race pace has been pretty good. Is the fair to say the one-lap pace has been one issue and do you have an idea of how to solve that?

RINUS VEEKAY: I think our one-lap pace is pretty good. It's more we don't put ourselves in a position where we can show that. In St. Petersburg, we of course got traffic in the qualifying lap, so I got screwed there. We had great race pace. We had to get back from the back to the front.

Then in Texas, we just went the wrong way in qualifying. We qualified in the back. Well, Long Beach was just a tough weekend. Our one-lap pace is pretty good. We have been making it up all the time in the race.

Definitely one-lap pace could be better.

Q. We have Barber, IMS road course, big one at the end of May. Would you say these three races coming up are make or break for the rest of your season?

RINUS VEEKAY: I think so. Also the morale of the team. I think it's important we get good results. If we get there, fight for the win, we make it happen, at least we got to be at the front of the field now.

Yeah, it's going to be tough. Everyone is very fast. I think there's more fast cars than last year at the track in the INDYCAR SERIES. You give it all, I think we can really change our season with these few weekends.

Q. Last year youth wasn't only served, it was showcased. The podium was Pato O'Ward, Alex Palou and yourself. We've had maybe younger podiums than that, but the young guys really took over that race. What is the reason why last year's race seemed to favor the younger drivers?

RINUS VEEKAY: I'm not really sure, actually. I think we just qualified well. It's the race where you cannot pass a lot. It's hard to pass. I think I qualified on pole, Pato second, and was it Alex Palou third?

Q. Yes.

RINUS VEEKAY: It was the same top three. I think it really carries over from qualifying. That's almost the same result for the race.

Q. Is it a track that rewards aggression or do you have to play it cool?



RINUS VEEKAY: It rewards aggression. You got to still be smooth. It's long, flowy corners. You cannot throw the car around like a street course. Still you have to make the car work.

Q. Big night coming up Thursday when 100 Days to Indy will be on the CW for everybody to see. You were at the private screening. You can't really divulge what's in the first show, but what did you think of it, and what do you think it will do for the INDYCAR SERIES?

RINUS VEEKAY: I think it's a really good show. It's what INDYCAR needs. We need more fans for my age really, guys and girls that are, yeah, just not familiar with INDYCAR, they don't watch it.

Everyone I've spoken to that goes to an INDYCAR race that watches INDYCAR cannot stop. They keep coming back. You just need to have people get to the races then they will keep coming back.

I think new fans - I'm not sure how to say it, I have it in Dutch - new fans will be introduced to INDYCAR and will come to the races. I think that's just very important.

We got Formula 1 that has really good marketing, but we really have to keep up with that at INDYCAR.

Q. Going to Alabama, INDYCAR has found a home at Barber Motorsports Park, one of their more successful races. A week ago NASCAR was at Talladega. It's almost like fans can see two diametrically different forms of races in a seven-day period. You get more of a Mercedes Benz, Audi, BMW type crowd than Talladega. What do you think of the fact that INDYCAR found a great home at Barber Motorsports Park in Alabama?

RINUS VEEKAY: I think it's really good. We need homes like that, places we know will be on the schedule next year. Continuity is good. That's what we need in INDYCAR.

It's good for the series. It's a fun race, good racing. Also, again, this weekend maybe there's going to be rain, maybe not. It's always a spectacle.

Q. You drive for one of the biggest names in INDYCAR, Ed Carpenter. Driver to driver, what kind of advice does he give you from peer to peer?

RINUS VEEKAY: He doesn't give me that much advice, I got to say. But I can ask him a lot of questions.

In Texas there was one thing with a pit sequence, pit stops.

When everyone pits, there was one thing I wanted to know. I can knock on Ed's door and get an answer. He has so much experience, especially on ovals.

I always prefer to have him go out. He has a good feel of the car. I can push afterwards. I know that the real veteran has a good feel in the car.

Q. As an owner to driver, what kind of advice does he give you from the owner perspective?

RINUS VEEKAY: He gives me some advice to talk good about the media, on how to get a better, yeah, media talk going, thank the sponsors, thank Chevy of course.

Mostly he just tells me to get results. We got to finish, get good results, show good things whenever we need it.

Q. Has there been any discussion by Chevy to its drivers, especially you, on how well you might be able to bring things back at Barber?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yes, I think more of the high-speed tracks where we really pull the engines hard Chevy will do good. It's kind of on and off between Chevy and Honda.

I think it's very important to get a good result so it will always help Chevy. Yeah, it's going to be an important weekend for Chevy but also for us as a team to get results that are really deserved.

Q. In terms of racing dynamics, do you see anything different having to do with the green alternative tires compared to what you previously used in Alabama?

RINUS VEEKAY: I think we are using the reds like we have previously done in Barber. I think it's only the green tires that we use in the street course races.

Q. What do you to make certain if you get a P1 that you end up ending up P1 after qualifications?

RINUS VEEKAY: In Barber it's important to keep the tires lasting, make sure you don't drop off a cliff. Be consistent, not make any mistakes. If you're consistent, hitting your marks every lap, it's hard for the guy behind you to pass you. That's important. Whenever he gets close, make sure to use the push to pass to defend and brake as late as possible to keep him behind.

Q. Last week you missed a test day. Are you confident going into the Indy 500 and the preparations in the coming month?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I'm very confident. Indy has



always been a very good track for us. We've always been very fast. Yeah, one day of testing was very important. There was a very big wind, too windy to turn into turn two, headwind out of turn four. It's still very good to get some running in, marks, get the race running going.

Q. Something that everybody praises about INDYCAR is most drivers actually have a chance on winning. Since the end of the last season, beginning of this season, we've seen more monopolized by the big four teams. Do you think the gap is growing between the teams or it's something because of the circumstances?

RINUS VEEKAY: One thing, they are very consistent, that's one thing for them. They're consistently up there. I think as a smaller team we have not had a chance yet to show some real danger. That is the goal for the next races. We can really attack and give those guys a run for their money.

Hopefully it can pull through throughout the whole season, but it's important to go weekend by weekend, and we can do that.

THE MODERATOR: I wanted to follow up on 50th NTT INDYCAR SERIES start. When you started out as a young man, does 50 sound like a lot? Obviously you're proud of the fact you're still part of the series. Where do you think you are right now in your development?

RINUS VEEKAY: I'm pretty high in development now. I've learned a lot. If I compare myself to a few years ago, my first few races where I was a young guy. In the team we call it the wild boar where it was so, so (indiscernible) it all the time, you have to finish, too.

I think I'm more responsible now, a more responsible driver. Also I have so much more experience by making those mistakes as a wild boar.

THE MODERATOR: Who came up with wild boar?

RINUS VEEKAY: Lee Bentham, my driver coach. He comes up with the funny names. He's a great driver coach.

Q. The last few days there's been some rumors that Liberty Media can buy INDYCAR. It's true there have been some approaches between Formula 1 and INDYCAR in the past months. How would you see this approach? What is your point of view of some future alliance between INDYCAR and Formula 1?

RINUS VEEKAY: Well, I hope that's not going to happen ever. I like the competition between INDYCAR and

Formula 1. They're both the leading series in the world. Formula 1 is now kind of taking over the U.S., but I think INDYCAR is still the series here.

I think it's always nice, keeps everyone sharp if we keep battling. I don't want INDYCAR to become a step-up in the ladder towards Formula 1.

THE MODERATOR: Rinus, 'not for sale' is the best way to wrap that up.

Q. I want to ask you the next race, the month of April, then Indianapolis. For you guys on the team, what is the importance of finishing this month strong? What's the importance of this race?

RINUS VEEKAY: It's going to be very important. We come off a few very bad results. We need also for the team, for all the crew that is working hard, to get a result back, get some euphoric stuff going on, some happiness on the team.

We can really do it. Barber has been a really good track for us. Indy road course, Indy 500, we've always been up there. It's going to be looking very good.

Barber definitely brings momentum to the next coming races.

Q. It's been three years since your rookie season. How do you think your career has developed? How do you get the momentum?

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I think my career so far has been pretty good. Of course, I would love a bit more progression in my standings at the end of the seasons.

It's been good. I've been learning hard. Making some mistakes, learning hard from those again. If you never make a mistake, you'll never learn.

I really feel like I progressed a lot, became a lot more mature. Hopefully I can make another step to be one of the guys to beat in the future.

Q. Testing at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway during the week, then going to Barber, do you lose concentration in that regard, or going into the test are you able to compartmentalize the test and the race?

RINUS VEEKAY: Well, it's always great to get two days of testing there. We get so much testing in Indy, at one point you almost get a bit anxious because you get too much time in the car. At one point the car is good, you want everything to stop, qualify and race with that.



We get enough. Even if there is no test, I would be fine with the time we have coming to Indy. It's definitely nice to get into the oval mode a little bit and study before we get back to the track.

Q. I talked to Conor. He says he struggles at Barber. He said you're really good so he's looking forward to getting some tips for you. If you were his driver coach, not really, but what kind of tips would you give Conor to help him succeed there?

RINUS VEEKAY: I would give Conor a few tips. There's few things in Barber, it's getting to power. One thing that is very important, to make sure you can really get a compact rotation in the corner and get power as soon as possible to get all the momentum throughout the straightaways.

That is something I am constantly working on and it's never perfect. If I have to tell anyone where you can improve in Barber, it's getting to power as soon as possible every corner.

Q. You mentioned it's hard to pass at Barber. What turn would be the hardest one to pass at Barber?

RINUS VEEKAY: I think the hardest turn to pass is going to be turn eight, the chicane downhill where we grab the curb right at the museum. It's a turn, if people pass there, stuff can go wrong because there's no space for two cars.

THE MODERATOR: Is there a cake this weekend for you, a celebration, a special hat? Do we know yet?

RINUS VEEKAY: I think we got to ask that to Brie, who is the PR lady in the team. She is the ones that gets the golden balloons, the big celebrations going.

THE MODERATOR: Happy 50th coming up this weekend. Bring some rain tires. Looks like it might have a chance of raining. We'll see what happens.

RINUS VEEKAY: We will see. I like some shake-ups.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks again, Rinus.

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