

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Wednesday, January 10, 2024

### Ed carpenter

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Wrapping up this morning's session here at the Content Day 2024 with Ed Carpenter, back in the No. 20 Ed Carpenter Racing Chevrolet, beginning his 22nd year in the NTT INDYCAR Series, another oval program as he splits time with the 2023 Indy NXT by Firestone champion and Christian Rasmussen. How is your Content Day going?

ED CARPENTER: It seems quiet this year. It seems very quiet today.

THE MODERATOR: Looking ahead to the year, how is the team right now?

ED CARPENTER: It's exciting, I think. Christian, it's fun bringing a rookie along. There's definitely challenges that come with it, but the excitement that you get out of a rookie driver getting his first opportunity is fun.

He and Rinus have really bonded pretty quickly, which is good to see, and Rinus has taken his more veteran leadership role pretty seriously.

But the two of them have really off the track bonded well. We haven't had them on the track together yet, so I'm excited for that.

But these off-seasons can be long, but as we get to this time of year everything can happen fast, but I think things are going very well.

**Q. Tell us about the new sponsorship. And I know obviously IMS is your favorite track, but if I'm not mistaken, Milwaukee is probably 2. Talk about going back to that track later in the fall for a double-header.**

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, I think Milwaukee has always been a great venue. Everyone was sad when it didn't work out the last time, so it's great to get another opportunity to make it a great event.

I think we've learned a lot of things as a series and as teams since we last raced there that will hopefully make it

a more successful event, so that's great that it's back.

Sad to see Texas go, but that's the way things go.

Obviously, yeah, we've got some new colors that we're showing here. There will be more announced later in detail, but GuyCare, just kind of a men-specific health clinic, they launched their flagship station in Utah this week. There will be a lot more happening around that and targeted around our schedule the rest of the year, so there will be more to come on that soon, but still within the RiskOn International, Todd Ault family of businesses that have supported us the past couple years, so thankful for that, and looking forward to more announcements with it.

**Q. This off-season, outside of bringing Christian into the fold, Rinus taking on more of a leadership role, can you tell us anything more about trying to build up that team around those guys that I know is going to be a big focus for you guys from engineering and other departments within --**

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, we haven't had a ton of change. It's hard right now to make drastic changes in our series. The personnel from mechanics to engineers, I'm proud of the fact that we're able to keep people. I think we do a really good job with that. It's hard to get people to move. Sometimes it's restrictive. So there hasn't been a ton of change.

But last year was a challenging year without a doubt. We had our struggles. I did feel like as the year went on and we got into the end of the year, our direction and focus was better.

We've been able to carry that on and kind of start over in a lot of the things where we felt like we were wrong. But again, you never know how good all those efforts are until we get on track.

The nature of the off-season, we've had one track day since the season ended, so there's been very little room for validation of the work other than that one day. So excited to be getting on track here later in the month.

**Q. That was the test with Christian shortly after**

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## Laguna?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, Christian and Oliver were both in the car.

**Q. Several of the drivers that have come in so far this morning, I think most of them were involved in some sort of a dinner last night with Penske Entertainment leadership talking about the future of the series. I don't know if you were present at that dinner, but from that or other talks that you've had with folks in the last couple weeks and months during the off-season that I know has been a little up and down for the series, there seems to be a lot of positivity from drivers that we've spoken to so far despite some of the things that have gone on. What is your perspective on where the series is and where it's headed over this next couple months.**

ED CARPENTER: It's definitely been a different off-season. The cadence has been different. Obviously with a big change coming and being delayed from what was anticipated, I think that's always a challenge, and it's easy to be frustrated.

But at the same time, you have to focus on where we're going and how we're going to get there.

It's definitely been a group effort from INDYCAR and Chevrolet and the manufacturers to the teams and a lot of the communication that's gone on.

I think within the challenges, I think it's been getting better and better, working collectively for what those solutions are to make sure we're putting on the best racing possible.

I think we're all excited to get to the hybrid era when that day comes, and coming up with the best way to get there so when it does come that it is what it's supposed to be and not sacrificing the show for the fans and the teams.

**Q. Do you have any plans still to run a third car at Indianapolis?**

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, it's announced we're running three at Indy. Myself, Rinus, and Christian will all be at the Indy 500.

**Q. You just indicated that understandably you're not satisfied with how last year turned out for ECR. Can you elaborate on what you guys have been working on over the winter to try and turn that situation around?**

ED CARPENTER: I mean, never going to get into total details of what we've been working on, but I think there's

always an evolution and progress with what you're developing as a team and around the engineering.

I would say some of the targets that we were aiming for last year weren't necessarily on point, so just refocusing -- I wouldn't say we've totally reinvented anything, just improving the process of our simulation and everything else that gets us to a better spot.

It's easy to try to start over when things don't go well, but my experience over my 22 years is, one, it's never one big thing, and, two, it's just getting all the details correct, and we didn't do a good enough job with that, especially early last year. I do feel like we were turning a corner at the end of last year.

Excited to carry that momentum and get started, and confident that we're going to be in a stronger spot.

**Q. I remember after Rinus's rookie race in Texas, you famously said he needed to work a little bit on his sponginess. Going back to Christian versus Rinus, can you compare them? How are they in the way they approach this? Are there any similarities?**

ED CARPENTER: I would say there's a lot of similarities. They're the same age now, so Christian's rookie year, he's older, so I would say -- this isn't a knock on Rinus whatsoever, but Christian is a little more mature than when we got Rinus just by nature of he's the same age that Rinus currently is.

But from what we've seen so far in the car and the simulator, their styles are very similar. I think they'll be the most complementary duo that we've had or as a pairing to Rinus in his time with the team, so that's exciting.

**Q. Just curious on a couple of things. You talked about Rinus's leadership. I'm just curious where that maturity has grown into the fact -- do you look at him taking that leadership role because of the way he maybe took a step forward with Ryan being his teammate the last half of the year? Is it a de facto? Is it experience?**

ED CARPENTER: I think it's all of the above. He gets more and more of his own experience. I'm sure there definitely was an effect from Ryan, just learning from a great teammate, a veteran teammate, a champion, an Indy 500 winner, being around that, seeing how he approaches it, and just getting older. His married now. Your life changes as you get older. Your perspective changes.

I think it's all of those things.



**Q. With Ryan coming in last year to kind of validate a few things, how significant was that for you guys to get pointed in the right direction for this off-season?**

ED CARPENTER: It was helpful. I think he did everything that we asked him to do. And I never viewed it as a silver bullet or a quick fix, but Ryan is definitely someone that I trust and our team holds in high regard, and he came in and did a good job and definitely brought his experience to give us his opinion on where things were and continue evaluating that and getting back to where we want to be.

**Q. The last one is with the hybrid but also with the fact that -- your team in particular, with your team trying to find itself to get back into a competitive nature at the front of the field again, also while trying to figure out ways to go through this hybrid development, what's the challenge there for you? How much percentage do you put towards focusing on the hybrid versus also trying to focus on some of those details, and how difficult is it to work on those details when a new power plant could also change the way the car feels, balance, et cetera?**

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, you have to do both. We don't have any first-hand experience yet with the hybrid system. We are able to test some of it in simulation, so we are getting some experience in being able to learn at least in the virtual world kind of what's changing, but until we can fully get that on track, you don't have anything to compare and validate your simulation to.

You're doing the best you can. Obviously we know the areas we need to focus from last year for things mostly being the same to start the year. Obviously there's still a lot of new components that are going to be on the car in preparation for the hybrid, but we won't fully know how that's all going to change until we do get the hybrid on track.

We get some information from Chevrolet and the series, from those that have been doing the testing, but that's all secondhand at this point.

Looking forward to getting firsthand knowledge to really dive into that and understand what the differences are and what we're going to need to be trying to achieve.

**Q. What's your take on the Million Dollar Challenge?**

ED CARPENTER: Are we talking Thermal?

**Q. The Thermal Club.**

ED CARPENTER: It's interesting. To start with, I think

everyone questioned what it was going to be like going there for the open test last year, and I think at the end of the day it exceeded our expectations.

This is going to be a new type of format for us to try, so I think it's important -- INDYCAR racing has always been an innovative sport going back to the very beginning, and you look around other sports and leagues, and everyone is doing something all the time to try to be innovative and create new excitement.

I think this is going to be a unique experiment, and it's hard to really say what I think or how it's going to go until we get into it, but I know it's going to be a good experience from having been there last year.

But it's definitely going to be a little odd going to a race event that doesn't have points, so I think it'll change the approach or what you're ultimately able to accomplish over that weekend. But I'm sure it's going to be fun.

**Q. Is it odd that you have a no-points race after the season starts as opposed to an exhibition in preseason?**

ED CARPENTER: I mean, I think if -- I don't know that it matters all that much, to be honest. At the end of the day, early in the season, you're less focused on points just naturally than you are as the season winds on, so I'm sure once we get there, it's going to feel more like a race than an exhibition just because we're all competitors, and at the end of the day there's a lot on the line with the challenge.

I do think it's going to be important to go there and be strong quickly by the way the format is laid out. I don't think it'll be the easiest place to overtake. So speed and qualifying is going to be vastly important to give yourself a chance to be a factor in the final of the event.

**Q. You've been around 22 years now; who do you think is the face of the future of the series?**

ED CARPENTER: I mean, I think it's hard to pick one. I think there's a ton of amazing young talent. I think you look across the majority of the teams, and there's a bright future. The competition in the series is so high across teams and drivers.

But obviously I think Pato and Alex Palou are probably highest on the list. The Josefs of the world are pretty established now, but he's going to be around for a long time to go, so I think the future is in great hands.

**Q. Maybe it's a good thing we don't just have one face?**

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ED CARPENTER: Yeah, I think that's always a great thing.

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