

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Christian Rasmussen

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Continuing on, Christian Rasmussen joins us, driving the No. 20 Ed Carpenter Chevrolet, of course the 2023 Indy NXT by Firestone champion, with five wins, eight podiums, and three pole positions last year. Moving up in size, team, whatnot. Happy New Year. Are you looking forward to a big 2024 for you?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, I'm looking forward. NTT INDYCAR is something that we have been working towards for a long time now, and something that I feel ready for.

Getting the opportunity with Ed Carpenter Racing is huge for me. I'm just looking forward to a season where there's going to be a steep learning curve, a lot of new stuff for me, pit stops, different cars, different people to drive against. There's a lot of new stuff coming my way, but I'm going to the task very humble and just going to try and do the best that I can.

Q. You've won a lot of scholarships on the way up to INDYCAR. Would you be here without those scholarships?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: No, not at all. I am out of a very regular family, and obviously I've had great support from investors and sponsors during the way. But most of the budgets for each year has come from the scholarships.

That was why like last year was very hard for us because that was the first time in a while where we didn't have a scholarship, or I didn't have a scholarship.

We had to find a full budget. That proved to be very hard. We pushed through, but not without issues. Like three times during the year we were less than 24 hours from losing my ride, which was hard. But we pushed through, made it happen, and still won the championship, which got me into INDYCAR.

Q. Do you think racing with that pressure every year will help you as you continue your career?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: It's definitely a weight lifted off

my shoulders. Obviously there's still always pressure in racing. There's always pressure to perform. You have to perform to stay in the game, especially in a competitive series like INDYCAR.

But having that financial burden off my shoulders is very, very great. And, yeah, I just look forward to start racing and focusing on my craft and getting better.

Q. Winning in all the Road to Indy levels -- or USF Pro, whatever they call it now -- now you're coming up to INDYCAR, what does a successful 2024 look like from your perspective as a rookie?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: It's very hard to say. I haven't really set any overall, like, position goal in mind. I go to the season, I want to learn as much as possible. I want to improve over the season and see where we end up.

It's hard to say where we're going to end up, but yeah, I hope for some good results, see if I can be close to Rinus and give him a run for his money. He's obviously the first guy to beat. But we'll see. See where we end up.

Q. What do you think you can learn from Rinus VeeKay this season?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: I mean, obviously there's a lot -- is this his fourth or fifth season in INDYCAR? So obviously a lot of experience there.

But there's going to be a lot. Learning the car is one thing, all the stuff that's around INDYCAR with pit stops and a lot of new stuff that's got to be learned. So I'll be leaning on him. Hopefully he'll help me out.

But just looking forward to the task.

Q. Do you plan on -- obviously you're running the 500. Do you plan to travel to the other ovals, learning from Ed and the feedback that he's going to give back? Are you going to travel with the team? Is that part of the learning process, as well?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: For sure. I go into INDYCAR my first year, I want to learn as much as possible and be

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as well set up for 2025 as possible. So that means also going to all of the ovals and everything else to see how all that works.

Obviously I get the 500, which is going to be super special, but it's going to be the first time on a superspeedway for me and the first time on an oval in an INDYCAR.

I'll go to all the events, try and learn as much as possible. Obviously Ed has a lot of experience on the ovals and in INDYCAR.

Yeah, I'll be like, what's called --

Q. Sponge?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: A sponge, try and soak up as much as possible.

Q. Some questions about you and Rinus. Of course you're the rookie on the team, but in age you're actually older than him. How is he falling into this role as team leader, and how has he helped you get up to speed the last few weeks and months?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, I think the work really starts now. Obviously we've been in the sim a lot where he's been helpful, but it's really when we get into the car, which we haven't had a lot of time yet. So, yeah, I'm looking forward to working with him more.

Up until now, it's just been kind of getting to know each other, and we seem to get along very well. I'm sure it'll be a fun season. I'm excited to learn what I can from him and see where that takes us.

Q. Personality-wise, do you guys have a little bit of fun outside of work, as well?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, obviously he lives in Florida, I live in Indy, so we're kind of far apart. But once we're in each other's town, we tend to do something.

Q. Not running the ovals this year, do you feel like that could actually help your development because then you are able to just focus on the road and street courses, and then in the future you could then develop on ovals? Or do you feel like you would rather have run an entire season this year?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, obviously the goal is always to run an entire season, but I'm very thankful for the opportunity to run the road and street circuits.

We'll see. I think there is a lot to learn when you step up

into INDYCAR, so having to only focus on road and street circuits might be a good thing.

I feel pretty strong on the ovals, so I think I could do some good stuff. But that's also the plan, to continue through a full season in 2025.

For now, I'll focus on the cards that I have been dealt and see where that takes me.

Q. You kind of alluded to this, but you talked about how you almost lost your Indy NXT ride three times within 24 hours. You were able to save that. At what points of the season was that happening?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Well, the first one came very early before St. Pete. There was that. We managed to avoid that bullet. Then again like midway through the season, and then I think again before St. Louis, I believe.

But it happened a few times, but thanks to the network that I have built up in racing over the years, I was able to save it and get some good help from a lot of different people, which was awesome, which helped me get through also.

My team was very good working with me, partly also because I was -- at the end I was leading the championship. Obviously they wanted to win a championship as well as I did. I think that helped.

I think if I weren't leading the championship, I don't think I would have been able to finish the year because I wouldn't have that same wiggle room.

But I worked, which was obviously partly thanks to myself putting in that situation, which I think was crucial for my continuance in Indy NXT.

Q. If I remember correctly, and I might be wrong, but if I remember right, some of your sponsorship or some of your backing through your Indy NXT career, obviously through the whole Road to Indy, came from Europe. What's the challenge for someone who comes from Europe with your backing trying to sell the idea of racing in a junior category in America and making that a payoff investment for them?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, it's very hard, especially in the lower categories. You don't really have that media attention, and it's hard to convince a company that there's going to be a huge return of investment in those series.

We've had to go an investment route and do it that way, which is great. That's what has gotten me there, what's



gotten me here, and it seems to be working now.

Yeah, it's hard, but that's what we've been dealing with.

I've also started to focus more on the American market in terms of getting sponsorship and investments from over here, which has also been a huge part of my success last year.

Q. You're getting ready to be a rookie in INDYCAR. We know the journey. But what's the best piece of advice you've received about stepping up to INDYCAR, and who gave you that advice?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Not sure. But obviously I've been told a lot of times to just do the best I can, which is I think the way that I'm going to go to the task. Don't overthink it and just do the best I can. I think that'll be the main thing.

Q. What do you think about the fact that we are seeing more and more European competitors in the series? Why is that?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: I think it's great. I think a lot of Europeans are starting to realize how cool of a series INDYCAR is. I took that leap a long time ago. I was one of the few that went to the U.S. early and went through the ladder series.

But I think it's great. We have a lot of Scandinavians, obviously two Danes now, a lot of Swedish, and in general a lot of Europeans, which is cool.

I think the depth of the field is super great, and there's a lot of very, very talented drivers out there. And I think it makes for some of the best racing in the world right now.

Q. What's a track you haven't done? Since you were in Indy Lights last year you've done a lot of road course stuff. So what's a track you haven't done in Indy Lights that you're most looking forward to this year?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: I look forward to Long Beach. I love the street circuits in general, and Long Beach is such a cool event. I got to experience it as a spectator in 2022, so getting the opportunity to run the race is going to be super cool.

I look forward to going back to Toronto. I was there in 2019 last. That was my first win in the Road to Indy. So going back there is going to be super cool to run. It's a cool city, enjoyed being there, and loved the circuit, as well.

Q. I've learned watching races that you have to keep a lot of reaction time. How do you train to keep that reaction time up?

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: I work out with PitFit Training where it's kind of a whole circle deal. We get strength, we get cardio, and the reaction training is part of it, as well.

We do a lot of training on these big screens where we do hand-eye coordination and reaction stuff. A lot of different stuff that we do.

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