

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

Wednesday, January 15, 2025

Ed Carpenter

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by Ed Carpenter, who is obviously back driving the No. 33 Ed Carpenter Racing Chevrolet, beginning his 23rd year in the series, looking ahead to qualify for what I believe is his 22nd Indianapolis 500 this coming May.

Obviously the team has got some changes, as well. A lot to talk about this morning. Good morning to you. Just your thoughts on kind of a new look team for Ed Carpenter Racing.

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, it's been a busy off-season welcoming in a new ownership partner and a new driver to the team, a returning driver to the team. We've talked about it at the shop, in a lot of ways it feels like 2012 just because there's so much new, and some changes but also a lot of the same.

Anytime you bring a new group of people in -- we haven't had this much newness since we started the team back in 2012. It's been an active off-season.

Q. How would you describe all of this? Is it kind of revitalizing it?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, to me it's exciting. It's gone really well up to this point. A lot of enthusiasm, I think especially within the team. Hopefully that will carry over to external and results and everything else. Yeah, just really looking forward to 2025.

Q. Any good Rossi stories yet?

ED CARPENTER: We'll save them.

Q. It used to be a struggle business-wise to get a sponsor. Now you're getting ownership partners wanting to get involved in INDYCAR teams. That's got to be a great sign from a business standpoint. How do you see the growth of that being so positive?

ED CARPENTER: I think there's a lot of factors. I think all of us in this room and that have been in this sport have

been feeling the momentum in the paddock build over the past couple of years.

I think the charter system plays a role in that. I think the FOX announcement plays a role in that. It just feels like the whole thing is picking up steam.

It's a really fun and exciting time to be a part of this sport.

Q. I asked Alex this question yesterday. With Ted coming in, sponsorship that he's brought along with his ownership role, can you go into as much as you can just some of the things that that coming in allows you to do that you just weren't able to do or couldn't do or chose not to do to make the most financial sense for the team the last couple years?

ED CARPENTER: You know, I think Ted, he's a very smart and successful guy. He's built a business from nothing to what it is today, which is very impressive.

He and his entire organization, they're an asset to us, especially on the business side of things, that's expanded our operation and creating new opportunities and resources that we haven't had.

Then as we shift that towards the on-track product, I think it's just allowing us to maybe move a little quicker, make decisions a little earlier, and be slightly more aggressive in what we're trying to do to accomplish our goals of winning races, winning the 500, and being a contender in the championship.

Q. From a staffing perspective, you mentioned doing a bunch of hiring at the level you haven't done in quite some time, if ever. Do you know off the top of your head how many new people you've brought in this off-season or how much bigger this team is than it was six, seven, eight months ago?

ED CARPENTER: I mean, it's not really that much -- it's not as much change as you would think. We've added a couple people in engineering, and we've added one up front, which there will be another hopefully soon.

But then there's the addition of just some of the shared

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resources and capabilities that they have within his business.

When you roll into the shop, it has a very similar look to last year. I would just say it's more just adding layers to capabilities.

Q. The rebrand that you guys announced this week, I know you explained a little bit of it in the release, but why did you guys feel like that was something you wanted to do to kind of change the image and the story?

ED CARPENTER: It's something I had thought about even before we went through a bit of an ownership addition. But it just seemed like a good time to do it, to reinvent ourselves isn't the right word, but just to take the next step as an organization.

I think we want to send the message that we want to be better and stronger, and obviously changing the logo doesn't do that, but it is part of the process, and sending the message internally and externally that we're doing things a little different than how we have in the past.

So just one piece of the puzzle that hopefully will go successful over the course of the year.

Q. You said in the past that the addition of Ted and the new partnership sort of came about through the charter system. Are there other benefits to the charter system that we're going to see down the road or is it just giving someone value that wants to come in and partner with the team?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, I think there's things that we already feel like that. It's making people want to be involved because there are -- it's limited now, where it wasn't before. So I think that creates value and demand.

I think as the series continues to grow and becomes more valuable as a whole, it's just going to expand on how charters are viewed. But it's hard to say where it'll go, but I haven't seen any negatives from my perspective thus far. I think the process, it was long, but in the end it was done right and went well. I think it's been a positive.

Q. You've got a couple consumer-facing sponsors now. I know you've had both the B-to-B stuff and the consumer facing. How important to the series is it to have a little bit more on the consumer-facing sponsorship side?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, I think that's really exciting. It's something that we haven't seen at a high level in our sport

in a long time, so to be able to have some of the brands that we're representing, especially around the Splenda brand, it's something that pretty much everyone knows. Everyone knows what the yellow packet is and means.

From there, I think some of the opportunities that we'll be able to see and develop, just the amount of shelves that they're on and how we eventually are able to use that not only for our team but for the series, there's some really exciting opportunities there that are -- yeah, they're going to be good for ECR, but as it develops and matures, it's good for everybody, and even seeing the Andretti announcement yesterday, the more, the better.

We obviously want to be successful on the business side of things and on track, but the more success our rivals and peers have, it's good for everybody. It's great to see announcements coming out like that.

Q. Alex mentioned yesterday about this really being kind of a long-term project in his eyes, and in light of some of the changes you've had as a team, what is your vision maybe not only this year but further down the road, and do you feel this maybe alters the potential that you have as a team?

ED CARPENTER: What projects were you talking about?

Q. Alex just said yesterday that he views this as a long-term project at Ed Carpenter Racing. Do you think the changes you've had this off-season alter the potential you have?

ED CARPENTER: I hope so. Anytime you're out signing drivers or re-signing drivers, we have to sell ourselves and what our vision is for the future. Alex and I have had a relationship for a while now. We were pilots together. But this is now a different relationship. But I think he bought into what we're doing. I think he's felt pretty comfortable within our organization from the first time he visited the building.

I think so far we're off to a really good start, and hopefully it'll be the start of us getting back to kind of the success that we had in the earlier days of our team. There's a lot of effort going into it. We haven't been happy with the ultimate results that we've gotten over the past couple of years, so we couldn't just keep doing the same thing.

Q. There's kind of been a lot of talk about a possible new car for 2027. I'd just like to get your take both as kind of a veteran driver and now a team owner, what do you think INDYCAR needs to do and needs to have from a new car, if that is to come in 2027?

ED CARPENTER: You know, I think that's a hard question to fully answer. First off, we've had this car a long time. I've been around long enough that we thought we had the previous generation car a long time, and this one has gone on further. It's definitely time for something new.

The other part of that is our racing over the past handful of years, especially at Indianapolis, is really strong. I think it's critical that we don't make any mistakes in the new car process that get us away from the style of racing we have right now because I think it's the best product in the world.

But it does need a bit of a refresh and a reset to make sure we're staying in front of technology and everything else. It's something that needs to happen. But we're all still learning a lot about it. We've seen some of the preliminary stuff, but even what we've seen, I think, is still not near a finished product.

We're all excited to see how this project develops, as well, which I'm sure we'll see more and more as we get into this year.

Q. Obviously you are stepping back to only running the Indy 500 this year. What do you feel made this the right time to step down your commitments a little bit on the driving side?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, I think as I get older and the team matures and has challenges and opportunities, it was getting harder and harder for me to keep my focus and time everywhere it needed to be all the time.

Much like when I made the decision to not run the full season and step away from road courses, I think Christian, when he got in the car to finish the year on the ovals, he did a good job and did what I thought he was going to do and ultimately did a better job than I did.

I've always said I'll put the team first. I think I bring the most value to Indianapolis at this point, so that's where I'm going to focus my energies as a driver.

Q. Apologies for going slightly back in time, but I want to ask you about your thought process that led to your decision to part ways with Rinus at the end of last season after five years together, strong second half. What is it that you expect Alex to bring to the team that you haven't been able to get from Rinus, and did Ted Gelov have any influence over this decision?

ED CARPENTER: I mean, everything we do is a team decision and there's a lot of conversations and a lot of thought, debate process that goes into it. Ted was a part of the team at that point, so he was for sure a part of the

conversation. But it wasn't solely one person's call.

To go back to the beginning of the question, I have nothing but respect and appreciation for the years we had with Rinus. I still consider him a really good friend and a really talented driver that I hope will find a spot in the sport. He deserves to be here.

But for us, like you said, he had been with us five years, our longest tenured driver ever at ECR, and it's never easy to make those decisions, but we just felt like it was time to move in a different direction.

It could have easily been Rinus and Alex instead of Christian, but we made the decision that we thought was best for our team. I'm not going to go into all the details of why and how we got to that exact decision, but I think the important thing is, in my eyes, we had five really good years together, and I have nothing but appreciation and respect for Rinus, and hopefully we'll be competing against him.

Q. As for Christian, first full-time season in the series coming up. What do you expect from him after a fairly promising rookie year?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, I think we see a lot of upside with Christian. It's really hard to be a rookie in this sport. We weren't as good as we needed to be last year. I don't think our problem was with our driver lineup necessarily. We weren't good enough as a whole. But Christian continued to develop.

Then for me, I think I learned a lot about what he's made of when we put him in a really tough position when I got out of the car at the end of last year and where we were in points with that, and how he dealt with the pressure of closing out and keeping us in the leader's circle.

I'm expecting a big year from him. I think he has a ton of talent and potential, and I think we'll see that this year.

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