

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

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## Rinus VeeKay

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: What's the outlook for 2026? New team, new year.

RINUS VEEKAY: Very exciting outlook. I feel like it's going to be a really good season.

Definitely more than two weeks of preparation for St. Pete will be nice this year. Just going to be nice to really have almost a full off-season to work with the team and get to know everybody and get to work with the engineers before we actually turn a lap.

I can take on that leadership role within the team.

**Q. I'd just like you to go into the decision making to move from Dale Coyne Racing to Juncos. I know you mentioned the amount of preparation you've had this year, obviously a lot more than last year. Talk about your entire thought process and why you signed with this team.**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, to start with, we've had success together in the Road to Indy, which is a different ballgame. It wasn't a super easy decision to make. I really weighed both being with Coyne and now JHR.

I think talking to the team, I got to see and hear what their off-season plans were, what their development was going to be like. That to me was just the better decision of the two.

**Q. Do you look at this as a long-term home for you?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, it could be. I've signed for one year now, but for me, I want to win. We all share that feeling within the team, within JHR. If we can make that happen there, that's all we want. They want their car to win. I want my car to win. The goal is to make it all happen together.

**Q. Racing against these cars over the last couple of years, what have you noticed? What have you observed about them? What are some of the things**

**you think you can bring to this team to improve the chances of it?**

RINUS VEEKAY: So the thing I want to bring to JHR is consistency. I've seen they show -- with Grosjean they have shown patience on road and street courses. With Conor they have shown patience on ovals last season. I think I can kind of tie those together and we can create a frontrunning package for the entirety of 2026.

That way -- I want to be in the top 10 in the championship for sure by the end of 2026. I think we actually have a shot at winning races and being on the podium, not once, not twice, but more often.

**Q. You're back with a Chevy power unit. How good does it feel to return back to normalcy after that one year of Honda with Dale Coyne?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, it still felt like an INDYCAR. It wasn't completely different. It is nice to be back, though. I've spent so much time with Chevy power in the past that it's just nice to be back, nice to use all the namings for all the tools that are in my head instead of just getting confused every time. That's very nice.

Of course I'll find the biggest change of going back to Chevy when we go out on track.

**Q. What are some places you need to improve? Obviously last year Toronto was big but that's off the schedule. You go to Markham. You had some great runs throughout the summer months last year. Do you change how you attack a race weekend knowing that for a second straight year you're in a contract year? You may not know where you're going to be in the next year, may stay with this team, may not. But do you change your approach on a weekly basis when you get to the summer months and people start talking about where drivers are going to end up?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Honestly, it doesn't affect me too much. It doesn't matter if I have like a 10-year contract. I think it's really healthy for a driver to approach a weekend like it's their only shot, to really make everything -- to maximize everything they have and don't get comfortable because I



felt like at DCR at one point I was there for so long I was so comfortable.

I kind of loosened up a little bit too much, where what really shook things up last year is that I really had this one shot that I had to take with both hands, and I want to keep that mindset throughout.

One contract year or ten, it doesn't matter. I feel like that's how you're going to be successful every single weekend.

**Q. In your six seasons in the series, you can be remarkably consistent with championship finishes. It's always been between 12th and 14th. How do you unlock that potential to become top 10? I know it can be team dependent, but is there anything you feel like you need to do to elevate yourself to that position which you set out to achieve?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I think one really big thing for championship points is top 5s. Just barely getting top 10s, it's good for points, but where you really start to see a difference is top 5s.

For me, getting consistently in the top 5 is a priority. I feel like at least five, six top 5s are going to be necessary to comfortably be in that top 10 in the championship. Probably when I'm top 10 in the championship, I want to be top 5. I'm always striving for more as a team.

The top 10 in the championship is just the goal. Every single race, that can change according to what we do. We're going to have to maximize everything we have. One weekend we might win, the other weekend it might be 12th is the best we can do.

Yeah, I'll have a really short-term mindset every race, just focus on the day ahead this season.

**Q. Obviously you speak about trying to combine the ^ roval form and the oval form the team has showed the last few season, obviously a big part of that with the Indy 500. We saw Conor have a good run there last year and you've tended to qualify nearer the front, but last year was a big difficult for you. When you think about going back to Bump Day, how do you reflect on the difficulty and the mental side to push your way through it, and is it almost in some ways good to have that experience of having to fight your way into the field as opposed to going straight into the Fast Six?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I think every hard moment and challenge in your career makes you stronger. For sure, I feel like I've again grown as a driver in 2025 at the 500. Yeah, I feel like especially again, with Chevy power, now

with JHR, Conor told me at the autograph session last year this is the best car he's driven around the speedway, including DCR cars.

That made me very excited, as well. I cannot wait just to be on track in general. Sebring is my first big day I'm looking forward to.

No, it's going to be awesome, and I think I can help this team build a very strong race car, as well, at the speedway.

**Q. After your one season at DCR, what's the learning curve for you? As you said, drivers get very comfortable. What did you take away from that one season at DCR that you think will help you as you start your new season with Juncos?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I think really getting into a team that nobody within the engineering room, no mechanics really know how I work. In whatever way I show up to my first day at the track is how they're going to know me, and I set that standard pretty high, and I want to be as professional as possible, as much help as possible and as much of a team player as possible to the team.

At Ed Carpenter Racing I came in as a rookie. Now especially at DCR last year but now also at JHR I was hired as a veteran to really help the team forward. That's exactly the mindset and the role I took when I got into the team.

**Q. 2026 has obviously a lot of changes, a lot of drivers are looking forward to newer tracks, older tracks. Are there any tracks that you have specifically in mind that you aspire to really leave a mark on?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yes, I mean, I'm excited for all of them, really. I would say with Phoenix being in the double-header weekend with NASCAR, also being an oval, which has proven to be a strong track for JHR and their cars, I'm really excited for that, just to start the season out strong.

Of course we've got St. Pete before, but really a good car is really the most important on the short oval.

**Q. You're coming into this season with your seventh year in INDYCAR. How much have you grown both as a person and a driver since your debut?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yeah, I've grown a lot. Really it's funny to see 19 year old Rinus just dive into INDYCAR with such easy expectations. It's a lot harder than people would think, especially coming from the Road to Indy. You would



think it's not that much different from INDY NXT, but it is. It's totally different.

Yeah, I've grown a lot throughout the years. I feel like strategy-wise, I've really gotten a lot smarter in the car while driving. I'm really proud of myself how I've created this mindset that extracts everything out of myself and the team at all times.

Everybody always tries to win, but it could also be a distraction. Yeah, really being in that right mindset makes a really big difference, and I think I've found that one pretty flawlessly pretty quickly.

**Q. You're coming into JHR kind of having worked with the team before in the Road to Indy. Does that sense of familiar faces and the team and the name you know before give you a really good launching pad coming into 2026?**

RINUS VEEKAY: Yes, there's definitely a few faces that I recognize from that time. Not too many, though. There's been a lot of changes.

But no, it's been really good within the team so far. I've been in the shop a few times a week doing pit stops with the guys and just talking about life, which is a great way to get to know everybody.

Yeah, I feel like I've got a good connection with my crew already, and within the engineering office, as well. I feel like we are ready for our first days on track. I already feel like I've been at this team for a while.

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