

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

## Christian Rasmussen

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Tell us about your ambitions for 2026.

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: More races like Milwaukee.

Yeah, no, very excited for the year ahead. We definitely saw an increase in performance from ECR last year, and I think just continuing that development, I think everyone within the team, myself included, is very excited about what we're bringing to 2026, and yeah, really see what performance gains that we can have.

A lot of talent has been brought into the team and a lot of work has obviously gone into the off-season. Seeing what that amounts to on track is I think very exciting for everyone.

**Q. Alex talked yesterday about the great momentum that this team has rolled in from the last third of the season in 2025 and building on that, that momentum. Just the vibe seems to still be there, doesn't it?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, no, for sure. I think everyone got a taste of it last year where the team is going, and I think there's more of that coming here in the near future.

**Q. If you could describe the role that Ted has played in helping elevate the team, it seems like it was a major boost, not only financially but also commercially for him to get involved and how much that's really helped you get your face out there, your name out there, and also we're going to be seeing probably a lot of you and Java House at the Grand Prix of Arlington.**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: And Splenda. No, it's been very exciting to get Ted and the whole Heartland Food Group with Splenda and Java House in front on board the team. It's definitely given ECR some opportunities to step up on multiple levels; like you say, not only on the sport side or the performance side, but also on the commercial side.

It's been super fun to be a part of, remembering back to our bit commercials that we were doing last year, and it's stuff that's all new for me.

Yeah, it's been cool to be a part of. I think most exciting is just the amount of opportunities that the team has gotten all of a sudden to do development that we haven't really been able to do in the past.

I think it's really now where ECR gets the opportunity to show their real abilities and real abilities and real -- what's it called?

#### **Q. Potential?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Potential, exactly. Yeah, excited to be a part of that change.

**Q. You're one of the guys that came up through INDY NXT that's been able to get into Victory Lane. Just how difficult is it for the young guys that come up because there's so few opportunities?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: It is difficult for sure, especially with how little testing you get in INDYCAR. Again, like you're coming in, you're used to racing INDY NXT where you're racing people that have been in that particular car for one, maybe two years. All of a sudden you step into an INDYCAR and you're racing -- I've said this sentence a lot, but you're racing Scott Dixon that's been driving these cars since I was born.

It's quite a different level of competition, so it's hard to just step in and be up there right away.

I think therefore I was very lucky in where I landed my first seat here in INDYCAR. You could look at my first year and it wasn't -- we showed potential, but it wasn't a great year.

Ed allowing me back into the program for 2025 and giving me the opportunity again to show what I really can do was very important, and not everyone gets that opportunity. Even though they maybe do show some promise and whatever.

Yeah, very fortunate to land where I did and excited for the

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future together with ECR.

**Q. When a driver doesn't make it, then what? Because you guys are young and you've devoted most of your life to making it to INDYCAR, and if that opportunity doesn't pan out, then what do they do?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, thankfully I haven't had to think about that. But yeah, I don't know. You've got to try and go find another job somewhere.

I think as long as you can stay in a race car racing, and anytime you can get paid for driving race cars, you're a pretty lucky guy or girl.

**Q. There was a press release last week about some organizational changes. Can you talk about how that affects you directly on the 21 car?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah. Like I said before, there's a lot of talent that has been brought on this winter. The goal of upping our performance on everything, not only just the commercial side but also on the performance side, we're looking at everyone, from engineers to crew guys to people's overall health within the team. We hired a new strength coach that's also our pit stop coach to get that more up to speed.

All the perimeters are cranked, and we're doing everything we can to catch up to all the other big players in INDYCAR.

**Q. If you had to pick one area that you think needs improving, what would it be?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: I think for us on the 21 car particularly, I think our qualifying pace wasn't what we -- our qualifying performance wasn't what we wanted it to be. Also a lot of effort has gone into that in the off-season to try and improve that. So also excited to see what that is going to amount to in 2026.

**Q. I know you did the majority of oval races in 2024, but last year was your first season where you raced all the ovals. What has clicked for you so quickly on that style of racing?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: I don't know. I think oval racing has always come quite natural to me, and obviously even though I'm from a European background, I came to the States quite early and did all of my junior categories in the States, so I've been on ovals since 2019 was the first year.

I've worked up some experience on the ovals and have had pretty good success on them in the past in the smaller

categories.

For whatever reason they just kind of click with me. I love racing on ovals. I think you don't obviously see it anywhere elsewhere. You're basically able to race side by side for many laps in a row, and the opportunity for overtaking is just higher than it is on a road course, which just opens up the game a little bit.

**Q. Obviously a lot is made of your style of oval racing being a bit more on the edge than others, for example, especially by the broadcast. When you're sitting in the car, do you feel you're more on edge than others, and how do you know where the line is where you don't go too far over that limit?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, it's definitely something that you develop all the time and try to get better at judging and whatever.

When looking at it, I think we did a pretty good job of it, not a perfect job of it. Obviously Nashville we didn't really get to see much other than the first corner. But also overall I was the third highest scoring points on the ovals combined out of all the drivers in INDYCAR last year, so we must have done something right.

We're honing, getting better all the time, but I think we're on the right path at least.

**Q. You've been at the team before and after the investment came in last year. What sort of developments have you seen within the team in the last couple of years which have helped you make that step forward?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, like I've said before, just the investment in new talent from all parameters of the team, from the commercial side to our new pit stop coach, physical training for all of the guys, new engineering crew.

I think just in terms of added manpower to the team, I think we've gone from -- I don't know the exact numbers, but we've grown quite a bit as a team and just have more people involved.

Each person can have a more specialized job and hopefully do -- if they have less stuff on their plate, hopefully they can do an even better job at that particular thing than they have in the past.

**Q. How will you bring your first win into the new season?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: How I will bring my first win

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into the new season, I'm going to --

**Q. Do you have some momentum do you think?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, it was definitely a box that we checked last year, which was great. But also, I think we're just going to continue down that same path. We're getting better and better as a team. We're trying to compete for wins at more -- compete for wins more often than we have been in the past. We're just looking to hopefully do it more than once a year.

I think Milwaukee was the start of that, and we'll just continue down that same road.

**Q. With that win, will you use the same race strategy that you used for the oval races or will you slightly change it for the street and road races to help you get that second win?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, that's hard to say. It's such a specific thing down to the particular weekend in terms of what tire is being brought, what's the weather conditions like, how is your car that particular weekend. It's a hard thing to just say, okay, that worked on that day, and we're just going to copy/paste that into next year and we'll go win again. It doesn't really work like that.

I think it's more down to a method of approaching the weekends and going through the weekends that we can kind of bring. But no, it's not really quite copy/paste. I wish it was. That would be nice.

**Q. You had a great race at Daytona; what can you learn from that experience to maybe help you in INDYCAR this season?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, always good to do Daytona. Always enjoy doing Daytona start of the year, especially just from the standpoint of driving a car. We don't really get much testing opportunities during the winter in INDYCAR.

Even though there's not an INDYCAR that you do drive, at least it's something and you can kind of knock some of that rust off that builds up over the winter. Weren't our year this year, unfortunately, at Daytona, finishing fifth in class with AO Racing in the 99 Spike Dragon car.

But yeah, it's always a fun experience.

**Q. What would you consider coming back to INDYCAR a success this year and what can you physically do to achieve that?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: I think just competing for race wins more often, and I think making our bad days less bad, being more consistent up front, being more consistently in the top 5, top 10, and yeah, definitely limiting the bad days to something other than last place for sure.

**Q. You spoke about what you could do to improve in the season, but heading into 2026, what do you think or where do you feel you've matured most as a driver over the past season?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: I don't know. I think you develop from each race that you do. I think we're trying to -- at least I'm trying to learn from each time I hit the track and try to get better and better.

I think for us, I'm just kind of honing in on racing in INDYCAR, what you can get away with, what you can't get away with, and I guess testing out some limits.

I think, again, just closer to where I want to be as a race car driver in INDYCAR and in the future, and again, just keep developing my skill, get better in the situations that I haven't handled the best, try to up our qualifying performances from last year, which was definitely our achilles heel, if you will, and yeah, just again, overall try and improve our performance, my performance.

**Q. We have a new influx of drivers in INDYCAR this season, a bunch of fresh faces. What would you tell a young Christian now?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: What would I tell a young Christian now?

**Q. It would have to be a really young Christian.**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Yeah, young Christian, I don't know. Not much. I don't really have many regrets from my career so far from the very beginning. I think everything you do leads you to a certain place, and I really like the place that I'm in right now. I just let it ride.

**Q. We talked about a little bit how you adapted to oval racing with five of your six top 10s last year being on ovals, but we also talked during this press conference kind of the struggles that other younger drivers have had. Do you see a difference in how the developmental ladder is going to need to change to put a higher emphasis on ovals, or what advice would you give to upcoming drivers trying to make their way into INDYCAR?**

CHRISTIAN RASMUSSEN: Well, I feel like I'm a perfect example that the U.S. ladder system that we have in place



right now works pretty well for preparing you for ovals on INDYCAR. Again, like I said earlier in the press conference, even though I come from Europe, I've done all of my junior categories here in the States.

I've had the experience of driving on ovals in both a USF 2000 car, Indy Pro 2000 car, INDY NXT car for two years, and then eventually in INDYCAR.

Again, I had pretty good success in the small cars, had good success in the INDY NXT cars on the ovals, and have had good success in the INDYCAR on the ovals. So there's definitely a correlation between being successful on the ladder system as well as being successful in the INDYCAR.

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