

# IndyCar Media

## Conference

Friday February 10, 2017

## Ed Carpenter

## JR Hildebrand

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: And we'll bring up our representatives from Ed Carpenter Racing, team owner-driver Ed Carpenter and full-time newcomer JR Hildebrand. Ed, some impressive results in the first session. I know obviously it's just a couple hours of running, but your thoughts from the first session of testing?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, it was a good start to the test. We had good cars here last year, and Josef (Newgarden) and I both qualified well and both were a factor in the race. I made a mistake in the race, otherwise I think we probably would have been on the podium. Coming here, we did a tire test here in the offseason, so we felt pretty good about where we were as a team coming in here, which I think is good for JR, too, coming in, to make that transition back to full-time guy a little easier, going into a place where, like Tony (Kanaan) was just complaining about, Chevy does have a good package here, and we're thankful for that.

But it's a good place for us to start. We have a good handle on this track, and hopefully we can keep it rolling.

THE MODERATOR: I know that you in particular have a bit of a history with this track, spending some time here with your family as you were growing up. What does this track mean to you in the fact that it's such a historical part of Indy car and now we're back here for the second year in a row?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, it's great to be back here. I grew up pretty much all my spring breaks growing up as a kid were coming out to the Copper World Classic and Indy car race here. So through the very end of the 80s and pretty much all of the 90s I was either coming here to watch the Indy car race or then participate in the Copper World Classic in the USAC series, so I spent a lot of time out here when I was young to not come at all really from 2006 until last year. Really, really happy to be back at this racetrack, and I'm really excited about the changes that they've announced that they're making. Their renderings look really cool. It's great to see racetracks across the U.S. investing in



facilities and making it better for the fans.

THE MODERATOR: What has JR's addition full time to the team brought to Ed Carpenter Racing?

ED CARPENTER: It's obviously something we've talked about a lot, and everyone wants to talk about all the change we've had this off-season, but in a lot of ways, I don't really feel like it's that much change, because JR has been a part of this team the past three years, even though he hasn't been in the car as much as we wanted, he was still kind of in tune with what we were doing all the time, communicating with myself, Josef, the engineers. So it's not your typical like new driver coming into a team. He's pretty familiar with how we operate, and with most of the key people. We've had couple changes in engineering, so that's really where the biggest change is at is getting those relationships built and familiarity with the car and driver.

But it feels good. We've worked together the past three years at Indy, and obviously JR helped us a lot more last year with some testing. It's just nice to finally be able to give him an opportunity to be back full-time IndyCar racing.

THE MODERATOR: JR, I know during your term as a part-time Verizon IndyCar Series driver, you busy yourself with STEM programs, education programs, kind of furthering the education of the sport, but how great does it feel to be back full time in a Verizon IndyCar Series car?

JR HILDEBRAND: Yeah, it's great. You definitely -- it starts to hit you like this time of year that it's like, oh, we're going to St. Pete and I'm going to race. It's like, we're not just going to hang out. So it's definitely a different level of commitment but something that I've been used to before, and I think as Ed was alluding to just being around and being up to speed basically on kind of what the team has done, how they do things, personnel, all that kind of stuff, you know, it feels like a pretty easy transition to be making. We've got some challenges ahead of us. I think to be totally prepped and on the same page and ready to rock and roll when it starts to really matter, but that's what tests like this are great for. I mean, I think a lot of guys are kind of sitting around like, oh, man, it's too bad we don't have a few more sets of tires and can do a little bit more

running.

We've got two whole days here. Honestly for us I think it's great because it gives us that little bit of extra time to kind of make sure that we're just hitting our marks along the way, and as Ed said, here at Phoenix in particular, you know, I had every confidence getting in the car first session that we were going to start in the window. It's just about I think all of us together being smart about how we approach it, and for me it's an awesome sort of little change of pace to be back at it full-time.

THE MODERATOR: Did anything stick out to you from the first session or things that you'll start trying in the night session when the conditions are more like what they'll be for the race on April 29th?

JR HILDEBRAND: Yeah, I mean, I think here the race itself is such a -- can be such a difficult thing to sort of plan for where everybody -- I think it's a little bit of an unknown for everybody in terms of how you're going to approach it, what downforce level everybody is going to be on, what is the competition level between Hondas and Chevys and on either side of that, how are people approaching that looking at the race. So I think you'll see a lot more cars on track out there together trying to figure that out, running in traffic in the evening sessions in particular.

But you know, I think for us, it's kind of, like I was saying earlier, just about starting to build the communication, working with the new engineers on the team or on the 21 car, and I feel great about the couple of guys that have been brought in, Justin Taylor and Dan Hobbs. But we're all just kind of getting familiar with each other at the same time. You know, definitely a nice way to be able to do that when we know that we've got a good package to start with.

**Q. Physically how was the drive? You did over 50 laps, 61 laps, I think. How was it, and how was that broken down?**

JR HILDEBRAND: Yeah, so we haven't done any like true long runs or anything yet, so that's probably more when we'll know what it feels like. But I've been training with St. Vincent's Sports Performance out of Indianapolis, which is where Ed and Josef and a bunch of -- I trained there the tail end of racing full-time and even quite a while after that. In terms of my sort of preseason prep, everything that I can -- could have been doing up until this point, feel really good about that and know that it's comparative to what other guys that have been racing full-time have been doing from terms of their physical prep in the car.

You know, I'm sure -- we're doing a day at Sonoma on Tuesday. I'm sure the neck will be a little stiff, first time

on the road course for sure. But I think we'll -- I'll have a better answer to that probably the end of the day tomorrow after we've done some longer runs.

**Q. JR, how did your testing development work last year keep your racing sharp and knowing that you weren't just prepping but you wound up having the couple of months you were filling in for Josef?**

JR HILDEBRAND: Yeah, it helped a lot for me, both the diversion at this of tracks and situations that were a part of that. I'd been used to running as a GP and obviously on the speedway, but running at Iowa, running at Road America and then again at Mid-Ohio, you definitely -- those are all places where you're doing something fairly different, and so for me to have that added familiarity with the types of things, particularly, that Josef was looking for in the race car, somebody who clearly had been finding what he was looking for, knew what he was looking for and was making good on that on the track, you know, that was really valuable for me, actually, to be coming into this year and have a little bit more of a sense of what's fast, what's not, what do I need for the car to be able to do and have started that process ahead of time.

Definitely one of the more significant differences between now and when I was racing full time last is just that we're in the full aero kit program now. I think that that definitely helped me, and I think will continue to be something that helps going forward.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much. We appreciate your time.