

# IndyCar Media Conference

Wednesday May 17, 2017

## Ed Carpenter J.R. Hildebrand Press Conference



**Q. Ed, I was thinking about you as I was watching the speeds here over the last couple of days, particularly your no-tow speed. I saw you at Phoenix when you were grumpy, which is unusual for you. Then later after Phoenix you felt a little bit better, and I had the sense that you felt as a platform coming here you were on something that, at least a better trajectory.**

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, I felt pretty strong about our preparation coming into here. You never really know until you get here and start running whether that means anything or not.

We've had years where we thought we had done a good job and had good work and preparation and gotten here and didn't exactly have it figured out. But so far I'm happy with the car. I'm happy with the way it's driving. I feel comfortable.

I think that's why I thought it was important to run on a day like today just because it is a challenge. The wind was very, very gusty, variable. And to me, if you can go out and get comfortable in conditions like that, I think it bodes well for the car, the race car and how comfortable you can be.

And you never know, it could be this windy on race day. So I thought it was important to go out and run. And I think, J.R. and I, was it challenging? Yeah, but I do think there's things you can do to help the car in these conditions. And just trying to always learn and be as prepared as we can for the end of the month.

**Q. We say in here often, J.R., that we don't know what speeds particularly mean, but I noticed the last couple of days your name is far up on the queue. My experience is if you're coming in at the end of the day that's always generally a pretty good sign?**

J.R. HILDEBRAND: Yeah, I think you're obviously sensitive to what's a tow lap, what's not and what can you do in various conditions. I think as a team and within the teams you're very aware of what those different things are like. But being -- I think if you look at the stackup during practice over the last handful of years, the cars that are running in the top 10 frequently tend to actually be the cars, one way or the other, that are running in the top 10 during the race.

So I feel great about the preparation that the team has done. It has a lot to do with how you roll out here. But also just the speed that you have in the cars. And to Ed's point, today, I think, it was important to get out and run a little bit just because it could be like this, even whether it's over qualifying weekend or it's next Monday or it's Carb Day or it's the race.

It helps to be able to increase your understanding of how variability like this affects the car. And that allows for you to make better decisions later on, because you know some of those things a little bit better rather than just having to kind of guess.

So I'm glad we ran today. I think we were able to make progress. And we had to shift our plan for the day a little bit because the wind was as gusty as it was. But I think in the end I still feel good about where we're at and where we're heading into the next couple of days.

**Q. Ed, how sensitive are the cars for side wind? Is there a possibility to change the aero package, aero settings to make it less sensitive?**

ED CARPENTER: For a side wind? I mean, you feel it from a crosswind. Really, I think, depending on which way it's blowing, it's more about kind of when the air starts blowing on the back of the car or the front is really when you feel it more.

The crosswind on the straightaways I think you'll feel it more. The car will drift around a little bit on the straightaways. But depending which way it's blowing, I think today, for most part of the day, Turns 2 and 4 were pretty challenging just because how the wind was hitting you. Then late in the day, as it picked up and was just more of a straight wind from the south, I thought Turn 3 got much harder. But that was me.

So it's more just a function of which way it's blowing and understanding how that's going to change the way the car drives, and maybe what you need to do to adapt to that.

**Q. You also have pushing winds, as the car goes faster at one time off the track?**

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, with the shape of this track it hits you from all sides.

J.R. HILDEBRAND: Somewhere.

**Q. J.R., having more time to build up this week, is that a benefit for your engineers and his first Indy**

## **experience?**

J.R. HILDEBRAND: I think so. I think Justin comes into this, you know, with a very open mind, obviously, knowing that the team's done a lot of really good work here to sort of develop the cars to where they are, where we start.

So there's a little bit of comfort in knowing that these guys have been here, either with Ed and Matt, they've run together here for a long time.

I've tended to -- Ed and I, whether it's been with Joseph in the mix or just the two of us, like it was back in 2014, we've always tended to sort of gravitate towards the same things.

So there's definitely -- I think we've been able to kind of settle into the fact that we don't have to like crank away at 100 things to try a bunch of different stuff. We can trust what the 20 car does and hopefully we can come up with some additional things on our car that benefit them as well.

So it's all a little bit -- it's all new, obviously. But we've got a great base to work from, which as folks that drive and engineer around here definitely know, that goes a super long way to kind of just like having your stuff together over a long week of practice, because it can easily go the other way. You can start to just wind yourself out of control trying all kinds of stuff and then not having any idea what's really working at the end of it all.

**Q. Ed, one of the things I think about always when I see you here at the speedway is talking to you when you were a very young man about your plan to get here from every step you were going to take, which you did. Now, when you come here, you're one of the veterans. Been on the pole twice. Does it seem odd to you to think of yourself in that way?**

ED CARPENTER: It kind of does, because this is my 14th year. And I really have to think about it, because I think about each year, it goes by so fast, which I think makes me that much more fortunate to still be here.

I certainly have the gray hairs to prove it from all the years, through the good times and the bad. But this race and track is still what drives me to be better all the time and trying to figure out a way to win this race. It's what's made me want to be an IndyCar driver to begin with. And it's still what fuels me today. It's what makes me want to be out running on a crappy day like today, just to figure that out.

So, it's gone by fast, I guess. I kind of wish it would have gone by slower to be able to enjoy it maybe more than I have. But I'm enjoying it. But not done yet.

**Q. I believe that the aero package is the same as it was last year that you're running here. I don't know if there are any different parts that are**

**approved that you could switch around that you would want to. But do you notice anything since the offseason, has Chevy made any improvements that you can tell from last year?**

ED CARPENTER: As far as the aero kit it's the same. The aero rules were frozen. There's certain things you can develop as far as wickers or different whatever, different configurations of all the parts that we had available in our toolkit. But that's all the same. So I think it can be helpful or not depending on where you are.

But there weren't really any changes to what's available on the car side. Engine-wise, Chevy is developing nonstop. So I do think there's some differences from last year to this year, just in power level. Chevy and Ilmor have worked very hard, but I think there's some other things race-wise, whether it's fuel economy or different settings, that I think are more refined and better that will hopefully come into play as the month goes on.

But those guys work hard. Even though the aero kit hasn't changed, the longer you have something the more you develop it and the smarter you get with it. So I like where we're at.

**Q. Once everybody starts trimming out on Friday and getting the extra boost, what do you see the speeds getting up to?**

ED CARPENTER: I really think it's going to be weather-dependent. I don't see it being a whole lot faster than what it's been the past couple of years.

I mean, I guess perfect day, perfect weather maybe you could see a 232. Unless some other guys have something up their sleeve, that's kind of where I see it. I would say 229 to 232, in there, given the day, the weather, wind, track temps, all that good stuff.

Hopefully Chevy surprises me and we run like a 234 or 5, that would be cool.

**Q. We've heard the up-the-sleeve line here a couple times already this scenario, this setting. Do you think somebody has something up their sleeve?**

ED CARPENTER: I don't know. I really don't know. Definitely people were speculating yesterday. And I really try to just stay out of that speculation. We have a test plan and we're working through things and we're trying to be the best that we can be because that's all that we can control. So it's been an interesting month.

I don't think -- even with a day like today where a lot of guys didn't run. Yesterday, when a lot of cars were running, it was primarily all race running.

I think whether you're talking engine manufacturers or teams or drivers, I think everyone's playing their cards pretty tight right now. So I guess we'll find out Friday, Saturday, Sunday, if it's dry.

**Q. Could the adjunct professor from Stanford answer the speed question?**

J.R. HILDEBRAND: No, not any better than my partner here. I think, like Ed said, it's just going to come down to -- the wind really plays, I would say, the most dominant factor around this place.

So a day with lighter winds allows for you to sort of test the limits of the grip that the car has in all four corners. The wind -- if the wind is high like it is today and you're doing qualifying running, usually one corner somewhere really ends up dictating how much downforce you can run, because it will make one corner or maybe two corners, depending on just wind direction, really tough.

So if the wind is a little lower and the temps are kind of average for what we tend to see during the month of May, then you could see -- you could definitely -- especially because on Friday's practice you'll see a little bit of -- guys will be getting a little bit of help from somebody else on track somewhere. I think you could see some speeds up in the 230 range. But it's really hard to say right now for sure.

I would say if the conditions were like they are today and we get more boost and you're just trying to rip off qual sums, I think it will be difficult to trim the cars out to a level of -- trim the downforce to a level of drag that you'd see those kind of numbers and be able to put together four good laps.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.