

IndyCar Media Conference

Sunday May 21, 2017

Ed Carpenter

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Two drivers vying for their third poles, one of them was Ed Carpenter, and Ed, we were able to get with Dixon, and Dixon made it perfectly clear he knew you were -- not just because you went last but you were the one all along he thought he might have to dodge, and you put up a big number. Did you see that coming?

ED CARPENTER: No. No, I did not. I was surprised by some numbers yesterday when he did that 232 and I was in the car. It actually kind of made some of the pressure go away because I was like, well, I'll be way more shocked than I was yesterday if we run that fast for that many laps. So at that point, you know -- obviously wanted to be on the front row and was going to go give it everything I had, and I think we accomplished that. I don't know that we could have gotten much more out of it today in those conditions, but proud of the effort from the whole team, to have the top two qualified Chevrolets, car in the first row, car in the second row. I'm proud of that accomplishment for the team.

Won poles before, but it's great to be on the front row. Really excited that the weather looks good tomorrow and we can continue making our car better for next Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Do you think you'll work a lot tomorrow?

ED CARPENTER: I hope so. I've got a lot of tires left to use, so that's one of the things that I'll go to bed earlier tonight than Scott will. It will make tomorrow a little easier.

Q. I asked Fernando and Alexander where all the speed came from today. What's your takeaway on what Scott Dixon accomplished, the fastest four-lap average in 21 years?

ED CARPENTER: Not sure where Scott's speed came from totally, but we knew it was going to be quicker today. But the way the wind was blowing made for quicker times. When you've got -- even though it was a bit of a cross, the backside of the track is way more exposed than the front, so you get a tailwind down the back and then the front stretch is sheltered. The wind, I think, was a big part of the speeds being faster today. The track conditions were harder, so the fact that we were running quicker, one, the wind made it faster, two, the more opportunities we all get to go out and do qual

runs, we're going to refine our cars and make it a little bit better. But it's cool. It's cool to see the speeds going back up, to hear the crowd roar when Scott did those laps, when everyone put up big times. It's cool. It's what makes -- it's part of the mystique of this place is pushing the limits of the cars and us as drivers. So I enjoy that part of it. It's thrilling when it goes well and when it goes poorly like we saw yesterday, but that's part of what makes IndyCar special.

THE MODERATOR: Ed, you're a loyal Chevy guy, but obviously the last couple of years here Honda has been very good at this track. How much of today do you attribute to a Honda advantage?

ED CARPENTER: I don't know. I don't really want to get into that. I think Scott won the pole and congrats to them. You know, like I said earlier, I'm proud of the fact that we put both of our Chevrolets in the Fast Nine and gave it our best shot to win a pole for the whole group.

But it's certainly -- the level of competition in this series from teams, drivers, engine manufacturers, it's cut-throat, and you've got to be on it all the time. We're right there, so it's not for a lack of trying, it's not for a lack of speed we're on the front row. You're not going to hear me complaining, we're just going to keep getting ready to put the best 500 miles out there we can.

Q. As much as goes into race day in terms of the variables that can occur, how much does it matter where you start?

ED CARPENTER: It doesn't. You know, I think you've seen from -- the statistics will show you that you can win from anywhere, and I don't know, no one has won from a pole since, what, 2008 or '09, I think. So you can start from anywhere. But it is easier being towards the front. I started 27th or something last year, and at the point we had our mechanical problem we were up to 11th, and it's hard work going from 27th to 11th. When you can sit at the front and kind of chill out and pace yourself, save some fuel and just hang around, slowly make your car better, you have to take a lot less risks up there, so strategically I think it opens up more options, but it doesn't mean that you can't get there. It's a 500-mile race. It just makes for a little easier first part of the race.

Q. Did you have enough time to communicate with J.R. relative to his experience before you went out?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, we did. I think it was actually

ideal because we were close enough that if we needed -- the only thing we can change at that point in line is wing angles, so if we would have wanted to change wing angles we could have, but it was nice that he was close enough to us that the conditions were essentially the same. There were a couple subtle differences in our cars going out there, decisions that we made going in, and once we got his feedback we decided to hold fast where we were. But we could have had an opportunity to change, we just felt like where we came out there was where we were going to be best, and I think we made the right call. I think that's what we had today.

Q. Ed, you mentioned the conditions were pretty much perfect for what you guys did today. For what you and Scott accomplished, are we maxing out what we can see here at IMS?

ED CARPENTER: I mean, as teams that's our job to make things better and quicker and find ways to extract speed out of the car. Things are obviously going to change next year. We're coming out with a new aero kit, a new car next year, so that's going to be on track in July, I think, so we'll get it -- I think here, so we'll get a sense for what its beginning baseline capabilities will be. But I hope that we keep pushing the speeds and doing it safely. I mean, obviously Seb is in the hospital and we heard it yesterday, but at the same time, that was a major, major crash, and relatively he's in good shape. He's still there for his kids, and if he choose to come back and do this, he's fine. The technology and the safety and the amount of effort that this series and the facility puts into it, I think we're showing that we are at a place where we can try to push the limits, and it's what racing at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway is all about in my mind.

Q. I've had a chance to ask a couple drivers about their preferences, starting in middle or inside or outside. Virtually everyone said they hate starting in the middle, where you are. Do you have a preference, and if so, how do you approach Turn 1, lap 1 being in the middle when everything gets sucked into that vortex there?

ED CARPENTER: I don't really worry about it. Being in the middle in the fifth row is a lot harder than being in the middle of the front row. There will be a hole for me in there, whether I get the holeshot or am able to fall in behind Scott or whoever. There will be my 14th one of these. One thing I've learned is that you can't choreograph what you're going to do on the start of this race. It goes different every single time, so just take it as it comes.

Q. Ed, you mentioned aero kits a minute ago. We watched the Chevrolet teams go back and forth all week with the side pod aero kit, putting half of it on, putting all it on, back and forth. At the end of the day, two fastest Chevys, neither one ran it at all. Are wind tunnels a complete waste of money?

ED CARPENTER: Who said we don't go to wind

tunnels? I don't know. I mean, we do our prep and get ready for here just like Penske does and Ganassi and everybody else, and we put out there what we think is going to be best for the given day and the conditions, and that's how we make our decisions. We don't make our decisions based on what other people are doing or what we see from other teams. We trust in our process and our people, and that's what we've done around here, and that's what we'll continue to do.

So you know, as far as what everyone else is doing, I'm just focused on what we're doing.

Q. Speaking of focused on what you're doing, how good of a race car did you feel that you've had from your race running that you've done earlier this week?

ED CARPENTER: Early in the week I felt pretty good. Thursday we weren't as good as I wanted to be. I was a little concerned with everything Thursday, you know, the whole thing. But Friday I think we made some headway on a couple things, working on the qualifying car that I think will translate to the race car, so I'm really excited to get back out on track tomorrow, and we have plenty of other things we can try.

Tomorrow is always an important day to put the race car to bed and put it away feeling like you have it just where you want to be, but I'm content. I've been happier and more confident with my race car, but tomorrow is an important day.

Q. When you're in the race car, can you hear the crowd reaction?

ED CARPENTER: No, I wish I could. Everyone tells me how much support I get from the local crowd, and I wish I could hear it. I've heard it, obviously, on video, but like I mentioned when Scott did his time, sitting in the car waiting to go, I hear the crowd then, but I never hear them live for me, which is good because I'm still competing. But I certainly appreciate people telling me about it, and I appreciate the support that the community here in Indianapolis gives me, so hopefully I can give them a lot more to cheer about next Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Ed.