

IndyCar Media Conference

Thursday October 26, 2017

Ed Jones

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, to today's IndyCar media teleconference. Wednesday Chip Ganassi Racing announced that 2017 Verizon IndyCar Series Rookie of the Year Ed Jones would be the driver of the No. 10 NTT Data Honda in the 2018 Verizon IndyCar Series season. We're happy to be joined this afternoon by Ed Jones.

Ed, welcome to the call.

ED JONES: Thank you for having the call. It's a great honor to be part of Chip Ganassi Racing for the 2018 season. It's a fantastic opportunity. I'm really grateful. It's going to be really good to work with the team. It's my first day at the track actually, learning how they all operate.

I'm just going to love being part of the No. 10 car. What a fantastic history that's been with drivers like Wheldon, Franchitti at the 500. I'm also excited to meet the CEO of NTT Data, John McCain, and everyone else at the company. They've been a great partner with the team and IndyCar for quite a while. In addition to that, I think they have the best-looking car on the grid.

It's going to be great to get going. Really looking forward to it for a long time now. Just trying to do everything we can to prepare as well as possible. Yeah, have a great time next year.

THE MODERATOR: Ed, it's only been three years since you moved to America to race full-time. After two years in Indy Lights, last year you were the Rookie of the Year, now for your second season in the Verizon IndyCar Series, you're with one of the marquee teams in the history of IndyCar racing. Are you surprised at the rise up to Chip Ganassi Racing that's happened so fast for you?

ED JONES: Yeah, it's great to be able to be picked to drive for a team like Chip Ganassi Racing. As you said, it's one of the top teams in IndyCar, has always been that way.

It's been a lot of hard work, you know, coming to the States, as you said, three years ago, racing in Indy Lights, winning that championship, rookie last year in IndyCar. It's been a very quick progression. I think everything has gone to plan, if not better than that.

It's just about maintaining that hard work and embracing the group of people I'm going to have around me and learning from the wealth of knowledge and experience that comes from this team.

So going to take it in my stride, you know, take everything in. I realize that I have a fantastic opportunity to win races and fight at the front the whole year in 2018. That's my aim. We're going to do everything we can to make that happen.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned today is your first day working with the team here at the track. You're at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. How valuable an asset to you as a young driver is being able to see how Scott Dixon and the team operate before you actually get in the car yourself in January?

ED JONES: Yeah, Scott is a legend of IndyCar racing. Been so successful over the years. He's one of if not the best person you can learn from. So I'm really going to take advantage of that, try and scrape every bit of knowledge out of him, and take it to my advantage.

Yeah, the wealth of resources in this team, it's really going to be helpful. I think Scott is also a great guy off the track. Looking forward to working with him.

THE MODERATOR: You're a product of the Mazda Road to Indy. It seems like you guys like Josef Newgarden, Spencer Pigot, have kind of become the poster children of the Mazda Road to Indy. What does it mean to represent the Mazda Road to Indy in the Verizon IndyCar Series?

ED JONES: It's so great to have a ladder system like the Mazda Road to Indy. There's no other ladder series like it like in the world, in my opinion. It was a perfect scenario for me coming from Europe to the States. Gave me a clear goal. I knew what I had to achieve. If I achieved that, I'd have a chance at IndyCar. That's exactly what it gave me. It gave me not only that, but a great learning place for the skills, all the experience you need to do well in IndyCar.

I'm really thankful for that. I'm sure there's going to be many more drivers like myself coming through the ladder and doing well in IndyCar in years to come.

THE MODERATOR: We will open it up for questions for Ed Jones.

Q. Do you have any expectations going into the 2018 season, given that you're going to be paired alongside Scott Dixon, one of the most experienced drivers on the grid?

ED JONES: Yeah, it's going to be pretty tough. You know, it's my second year. But I've been given this opportunity in the sense that they expect me to perform. That's exactly what I plan on doing.

I want to be able to work and be as useful to the team as Scott is. The aim is so that the pairing works well together and can improve both of us all together.

So, yeah, like you said, there's going to be more pressure, but at the same time that's what you want when you're in a sport like this because, yeah, you need to show what you're capable of. I have the perfect opportunity to show just that.

Q. You're coming from a small team. You were Rookie of the Year in Indy. How can your experience help you to perform better at Chip Ganassi?

ED JONES: I think starting with Dale Coyne Racing was a great way for me to move into the IndyCar Series. I learned a huge amount. I had another experienced teammate there in Sebastien Bourdais. To us, a season with Dale Coyne Racing, as a rookie season goes, it was very eventful. Obviously his injury came, I had to leave the team for a while, then he came back at the end.

I learned a huge amount, very different scenarios. I think that's going to be really helpful for me working with Chip Ganassi and also Scott because, yeah, I have quite a bit of experience now. I'm still open to everything that's thrown at me, and I'm going to try to improve as best as I can, do everything the team wants me to do.

Q. What was the biggest surprise of the timing of this? Being with Dale Coyne, then coming to Ganassi, this all happened pretty quickly, what was the biggest surprise of getting on their radar?

ED JONES: Yeah, you know, obviously everything came at me pretty fast. Initially it was a bit of a surprise. At the same time I felt that I worked really hard for this. I tried to prove what I could do. They've acknowledged that. Surprising on one hand, but on the other hand it was very satisfying that they had realized my potential.

So, yeah, it's a great thing for me. It's what I've been working for my whole racing career, is to be in a position like this. I'm going to take it in the best way I can.

Q. When you look at the new car, do you think it's going to be very similar to what you were able to succeed with in Indy Lights, kind of the way the braking is?

ED JONES: Yeah, I think the car, overall it has a lot less downforce, so it's going to be a different driving style as to how the car was this year. And so I'm really looking forward to that challenge. Like you said, it should be more similar to the Indy Lights car in a sense, so that could help me.

In addition to that, for the whole team, it's a new starting point. What makes this a great opportunity for teams, you know, for me to be with Chip Ganassi Racing, I think the team has one of the best resources out of the whole field. They're going to have a great go at making the car perform really well from the get-go. It's a perfect place for me to be at right now.

Q. Which are you more kind of looking forward to next season in terms of the new aero kit, racing on ovals or racing on road and street courses, or are you just excited to be running the new aero kit all together?

ED JONES: Yeah, for me, obviously there's more of an idea now what to expect on the different tracks, more testing having been done. Still I think we're not quite sure what to expect on all those different circuits in the sense that when the car has been tested, it's only been (indiscernible) two at a time. It's going to be a whole different matter when there's the whole field out there.

I am really looking forward to how the car performs on the different circuits. On the ovals, it should make racing especially on the short ovals a lot better, at least that's what everyone thinks is going to happen. So I think that's what I'm really looking forward to, how we can race better.

In addition, it will make it more challenging for the road courses and street courses in the sense that the car's going to be sliding around a lot more, should in a sense be more degradation as a result. So it should open up the racing and the fighting for positions even more, and make the racing more exciting.

So I think, you know, on every type of circuit there's going to be changes which will only benefit the racing. It will make it even more exciting for the drivers.

Q. From last year's running with Bourdais, what was the number one thing you learned there? Then transferring into this season, what do you think is going to be the greatest piece of advice or learning process you'll get from Scott Dixon?

ED JONES: I learned a lot from Sebastien. There wasn't one in particular thing. It was more in the way when I moved up to IndyCar from Indy Lights, there's a lot more going on, a huge amount more going on. You have much longer races, you have pit stops, the data is a lot more intense. There's more things you can change in the car.

What I found really different, what Sebastien did very well, he knew a lot about the car, what setup changes

to make, things like that. He knew as soon as he went out, he could tell it very quickly just from the experience he's gained. That was something where I really tried to work hard on to improve that. As you can see, it's very beneficial.

In every aspect, there's different things to learn. I think from Scott, you know, he's proven to be one of the best in the sport. So, yeah, I'm sure I'm going to pick up a lot on his driving, areas where I can improve myself. I think his driving style, looking at it from the outside, it seems quite the opposite to how I usually drive, so it will be a great place for me to learn how he drives that way and how I can work it into my own driving, make myself better.

Q. After a year racing for Indy, can you tell us what is your favorite track, what track you feel more comfortable with?

ED JONES: For sure my favorite track is the Indy 500. There's nothing else like it. The whole experience, the whole atmosphere, and the track itself, it promotes good racing. I had some great battles out there this year in my rookie year, to be fighting for the win. It was amazing.

I think this is my favorite track overall. I really enjoyed Long Beach, as well, the street course. That was a great race. Again, great atmosphere there, as well. I think those two are probably my favorite of the whole season.

Yeah, but I did enjoy all of them for their different aspects. That's another thing that makes the IndyCar Series so great, is the diversity of the tracks. You go from an oval to road course to street course and back to the other. It's great to be transitioning between those all the time. Creates excitement for the drivers. Actually makes you keep sharp.

Q. Obviously you got on really well with Sebastien and Dale Coyne Racing last year as a rookie. Learning a new car, maybe it feels like you're a rookie all over again. With that new car, is that what made this decision a little bit easier to move to Chip Ganassi Racing?

ED JONES: You know, yeah, it's a new car for me. At the same time it's a new car for everyone else. I think it's going to make it more level again. Those guys have already driven the car last year, I think it was two years or so. Yeah, it will make it more level. I think resources from Ganassi Racing will give them an edge over a lot of other teams. Yeah, the main reason it was just a great opportunity for me, something which will benefit my long-term career massively.

THE MODERATOR: Seeing as we have no further questions, we'll wrap up today's media teleconference and thank Ed Jones for his time.

ED JONES: Thank you.