

IndyCar Media Conference

Thursday January 4, 2018

Ed Carpenter Jordan King

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, to today's IndyCar media teleconference. Earlier today, Ed Carpenter Racing completed its 2018 Verizon IndyCar Series lineup by announcing that rising British driver Jordan King, the 2013 British F3 champion and a race winner in Formula 2/DP 2 will race in the 11 road and street course events in the No. 20 Fuzzy's Vodka Chevrolet. We're pleased to be joined today by ECR owner and driver Ed Carpenter and Jordan King. Thank you for taking the time to join us today.

We'll start with Ed. I know you had a lot of choices when it came time to pick the driver who you would share the No. 20 car with this season. What attracted you to Jordan King?

ED CARPENTER: Well, like I mentioned in the release, Jordan and I met at Sonoma in 2016. A kind of mutual acquaintance introduced us then when he was just over kind of taking a look at IndyCar and what it had to offer. We met way back then. And I think what really moved it from there was Jordan works with Mark Blundell, who I have a history with. We worked with Mark when Mike Conway was part of the team and the ECR family in 2014, so that connection definitely helped speed things along and give me a high level of comfort with Jordan.

It's always a little hard; I'm an American-based guy that's really just competed here, and I follow what's going on in European series but don't have as deep of a knowledge, so to have someone like Mark involved that I really trust and value his feedback and guys that he brings to the table when we had an opening -- he played a big role in it. Jordan came over to Indianapolis earlier, in December I guess it was, and we had some quality time together talking racing, talking about his career, life in general, what his goals are, and I think we all got really comfortable with each other at that point, and here we are now.

THE MODERATOR: Jordan, congratulations on today's announcement, and welcome to the Verizon IndyCar Series. I know you've pointed your career on the path to Formula 1, but now that you've decided to move over to America, how much are you looking forward to taking this step in your racing career?

JORDAN KING: Well, I've always had a very wide view

on my sport career as a general, and as Ed said, when I popped out to Sonoma at the end of 2016, it was really to kind of get a feel, understand what the series was all about, and really get to know kind of the people behind it and how it all works. That really did kind of start the fire inside me for it.

I started spending the next year or so towards making that a go, and I'm really pleased to finally get it to pay off, and yeah, really excited to fly over and get started.

THE MODERATOR: I read as you were doing your due diligence and learning about IndyCar, you talked to several friends you have who race over in IndyCar. One of them I think was Alexander Rossi, who's had success and followed a similar path to you. What did you learn about the American racing scene from your friends that intrigued you about IndyCar?

JORDAN KING: I suppose it was more reassurance. There's always a bit of skepticism changing paths, and obviously for me it's actually moving country and a couple of things like that, and for me someone likes Alexander Rossi, he's done it, but the other way around. He came over to Europe and I raced with him and I was teammates with him. I kind of trust him and believe what he's saying, so I spoke to him quite a bit. From everything down to the car, how did the car drive, what's it feel like, all the way through to what's it like living in the U.S.

So just filling in all the gaps was quite reassuring to speak to someone who has done it and I know his driving style and things like that, you know?

THE MODERATOR: Ed, you are one of the few guys who has had time in the new 2018 car that debuts later this year. What are your thoughts on the car, and how do you think it is a change from what we've been racing in the past?

ED CARPENTER: Well, we have been fortunate to be able to do some of the testing for Chevrolet over the course of the off-season, so it's been fun. The car is definitely different.

I think when it comes to high downforce tracks, whether it's short ovals, street courses, high downforce road courses, it's quite different to drive, and the feel is quite a bit different.

The speedway stuff, we did a test at Texas. I haven't

been at IMS yet, but it's a little bit less different at those places than the high downforce tracks. But I think IndyCar, Dallara, everyone involved in the process has done a good job trying to accomplish the outcomes that they're wanting. But it's still early. I mean, all the tests were done -- never been on track with more than just one car. So there's still a lot to learn. But it has been nice to get a little bit of an early start to it to have an idea of what we need to address and even just to get used to the feel of the new car.

But it's a good time for Jordan to come in just because he's going to have a lot to learn about a new car, the car, the tracks, but with everyone now there's going to be having a bit of a reset from how you drive to car to what the cars need from a setup standpoint. It'll put him on a little more equal footing than if he was coming in in year where we're all picking up where we left off the year before.

I'm excited to keep the development process going with the car, excited for Jordan to get a chance to get started with the team and be a part of that process coming up at the beginning of February.

Q. Jordan, in working with Mark Blundell, obviously he has a history in driving IndyCars. If you could go into a little bit of detail maybe about what he told you about it, how his experience and his knowledge of the series helped you make this decision.

JORDAN KING: I think with Mark, he was very straight to the point with me. We sat down numerous times during the season, the season in 2017, and talking about my next options for the following year. He just said, look, if it were me, this is what I would do. I've done it, this is why I did it, this is what happened, this is what I achieved, this is how much fun I had, all of those things. And he really just reassured me that it was the right path for me to take for my career, and for him it was a no-brainer, so it was quite good to hear that from somebody who I trust and I've known for a long time.

Q. Do you have any immediate goals, or what are your expectations for the season?

JORDAN KING: For the season, I'd like to keep myself a little bit more open. I don't want to put blinkers on myself straightaway before I've got in the car. I want to be like a sponge, absorb everything I can, try everything I can, and obviously do -- certainly if I can win races, perfect, but it's very much going to be a learning year for me, and the longer goal is to become a full-time IndyCar driver and work towards greater things in the future. For me, it's really just being a sponge next year and having the best success I can have in my rookie year.

Q. Ed, I just wanted to ask you real quick, having got a chance to test the car, like you said, did that change what you were looking for in a driver, and what were you looking for in a driver, and did that

change after you had been able to test the new car?

ED CARPENTER: I wouldn't say it changed when it came to what we were looking for in a driver. I think, like I said earlier, it maybe gives you a little more comfort bringing a guy like Jordan who's going to be new to IndyCar in just because there is opportunity for everyone to catch on to the new package quicker, and it is different. You know, but more than anything, just looking for the right fit. With us, with Spencer having been in the role the past couple years and moving him up into a full-time position, you know, we talked to quite a few people, and really it was just -- came down to a comfort level of how we can all work together and the quality of driver that we're getting in Jordan.

Although he doesn't have a lot of experience over here, he has a lot of experience in Europe, and he's been -- he's raced and been teammates and competed with a lot of guys that have come over here and had success, and like I said earlier, I think probably more so than anything, I really, really value Mark's opinion as an evaluator of talent and even other people that I've talked to who know Jordan or who have worked with Jordan over there.

That was the biggest thing was just finding someone we felt like was a quality candidate that could come in and be a good teammate to Spencer on the road course races when I'm not in the car and try to deliver results for our team and our partners in 2018, and obviously one of the other things that I was happy to hear when Jordan and I were speaking and getting to know each other more was that he's looking to come over here and build a career in America. It's not a stopgap to get back to something in Europe or to redirect a career to F1. He's looking to make a change and come over here and be a part of this series, and I think that's the right attitude to approach this with.

Q. Just to kind of piggy-back after the last question, what are your expectations for what Jordan is going to be able to do early on as he's learning everything, and Jordan mentioned talking to Alex Rossi. Did you speak to anybody he drove against before hiring him?

ED CARPENTER: I more tried to reach out to some people through engineers and whatnot that I knew he'd worked with to get an idea for how that dynamic was. But as far as the -- what was the first part of your question?

Q. The expectations early on in the season.

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, I think obviously as a team, we have expectations to win races. We underperformed in that regard last year. But at the same time, I think we have to be realistic with Jordan, and it's really -- I think we'll all have a better idea and be able to set some goals for himself and us as a team as we get further into this process of working together and with the new car.

But I always have an expectation of winning races, and from my viewpoint, Jordan wouldn't be a part of the team if we didn't feel like he was the caliber driver to be able to make that happen.

Q. I have a question for Ed. Will Jordan be able to run any of the ovals this year, or will he be testing on any ovals?

ED CARPENTER: There's no plans for Jordan to be doing any of the oval races, but we do have a plan and are working on plans to get him in the car on an oval, to start developing that part of his career as he looks to -- like he mentioned earlier, he wants to be able to run full-time at some point in IndyCar. So that was an important part of the process, knowing that we could get him in the car for some oval testing. So we're still nailing down when exactly that'll be, but he will get the opportunity to do a little bit of oval testing to get his feet wet with that. I think it'll be a good drill to go through, also, just to give him a better idea of what the total capabilities of the car are, even if he's not racing on ovals, just to have an understanding of what the car is capable of when it comes to some of the higher speed road courses, as well.

Q. I just wondered, I hadn't seen your press release, and I wondered if you were maybe going to run him in an extra car at Indy this year.

ED CARPENTER: There's no plan for that at this point. We don't have any third car plans. For us the biggest gap and thing we needed to focus on was getting this program put in place with Jordan in the 20 car for the road and street courses, and if there's an opportunity that makes sense, you know, with Jordan or anyone else for that matter to run an extra car at Indy, we'll evaluate that. But it wasn't part of these discussions.

Q. Jordan, you were teammates with Rossi back in 2015; what kind of friendly advice did he give you about coming over?

JORDAN KING: I think the most friendly advice he gave me was actually just you'll love it out here. More from the sense of, I think, how much he's enjoyed himself as he was very focused on Formula 1 at one point in his life and he's gone over there and had some great success. Yeah, it was quite nice to hear that from him. We spoke about the car a little bit, driving styles, the feeling you get within the car, what to expect, a little bit more technical stuff, how much it weighs, how that affects the driving style, where you can find performance in general. So it was quite nice to hear his view compared to cars that we've both driven before and kind of get my head around how I need to drive it when the day comes.