

NTT IndyCar Series News Conference

Friday April 12, 2019

Ed Jones, Ed Carpenter Racing Spencer Pigot, Ed Carpenter Racing Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach

The transcript below is from a news conference at the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach on the streets of Long Beach, California with Spencer Pigot and Ed Jones of Ed Carpenter Racing.

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with our NTT IndyCar Series media availability. We'd like to welcome to the podium drivers from Ed Carpenter Racing, Spencer Pigot and Ed Jones.

Start out talking a little bit about the first practice session this morning. Spencer, I believe you were 17th on the time sheet. Talk us through your session.

SPENCER PIGOT: Yeah, first off, it's great to be back in Long Beach. It's a place that I really enjoy driving. I think pretty much everyone feels the same way.

But, yeah, this morning was okay. We made a few changes throughout the session. We have a pretty good idea of where we need to get better, how we're going to do that.

Obviously not super high up there, but not really concerned too much yet. We're all pretty confident in the team that we can make the changes we need to make for this afternoon and be a lot higher up.

THE MODERATOR: Ed, same question for you. 23rd, so I'm sure you want to do better.

ED JONES: I think last time I was in this room I just finished third. Being down there, last probably isn't the nicest way to be back. It's kind of been same story all season so far: we're trying to fix the issues with the car. It's been the same problem everywhere. To fix that, we're just compromising other places.

It's very tough, but keep working, trying to find a solution. This is one of my favorite tracks. I'm sure once we work things out, as long as we have a good racecar, we can have a good race on Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Your two races here previously



you finished third and sixth. You won the Indy Lights race here in 2016. What is it about this circuit that you like so much?

ED JONES: It's not a track I necessarily qualified my best on. In the races I've been able to manage the cars quite well with tire degradation, just how this race plays out. Times you can overtake, quite a few opportunities throughout the race. We've always just been there at the end.

Like I said, it's one of my favorites. Atmosphere is always great here coming to Sunday. Hopefully we can qualify a bit better than in the past, be working for another top finish.

THE MODERATOR: Spencer, you finished second in the Lights race a few years ago. Your best NTT IndyCar Series finish is eighth. What is it about this track that you like?

SPENCER PIGOT: Well, I think it's a pretty unique street course. Obviously it's fairly bumpy in places, but it's got a lot of tight, technical sections. Always changing. The last sector, it's all kind of one, long corner. If you mess up one area, definitely plays a big effect on the rest of the section. It really rewards being very precise and accurate with the car, having a car that can consistently work and do different things around the lap.

I think it's a challenge for the drivers and the engineers alike, which to me is exciting and a lot of fun.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously the first season the two of you are working together as teammates. How would you say the season has gone?

SPENCER PIGOT: Yeah, it's been great so far. Obviously I've raced against Ed for a while now back in Indy Lights. We've known each other, but never worked together.

I think it's been really good so far. More often than not we are kind of looking for the same things out of the car, which is nice to be able to work together in one direction.

As far as the season goes, it's been a little frustrating at times. We seem to have had some good finishes going, especially the last couple weekends, then pit lane seems to be a big struggle for us right now,

whether it's getting caught up in someone else's mess or kind of causing our own mess. That's kind of been detrimental to our races.

Hopefully from here on out we can just have nice, smooth races with no issues, really just put a nice, clean string of races together.

ED JONES: As Spencer said, we've raced together for quite a while. It's good to be racing together for a change. I think it's been tough so far. Good working with Spencer. I think the consistency between the two cars has really not been there.

Yeah, it's been a bit confusing in certain ways. I'm sure as the season progresses, we'll start to figure that out, be able to make things work together.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. How close together are your setups? Did you change as the session went on?

ED JONES: Every other race, we've kind of started exactly the same. But a few of them, it's been completely different feedback after FP1. We've had to change, which confuses things a bit.

Here we start slightly different, but still pretty close. I guess we'll test out different items. If one of us prefers that or needs the same setting to improve the car, we'll go like that.

Q. Honda appear to have an advantage. Where might Honda have an advantage over Chevrolets? What are you doing to counteract that?

SPENCER PIGOT: I don't know if I 100% agree with that. If you look at the season on the whole, Chevy has been on pole twice. Last weekend in Barber, I actually had the fastest lap of the whole qualifying session. Obviously it wasn't in round three, but the pace was very encouraging and very good.

I think it's probably closer than it appears. Sometimes the sessions are a little heavy at the top end with one manufacturer or the other, but I think there's a lot of different reasons and things that go into that.

As far as I'm concerned, I think Chevrolet has done a really good job over the winter, and we've come pretty much with an improvement in all areas.

I think we've got the package we need to win races.

ED JONES: I think the same thing. If you look at last year, I guess Chevy struggled a little bit more on the street courses. If you look at St. Pete, they seemed to be a bit stronger than Honda even.

Yeah, again, it was just FP1, so it's hard to tell from that. Once we get into qualifying, that's the first time each weekend where you know where everyone is at. I

think they made big strides from last year, should be strong once it comes qualifying time.

Q. How is the different rubber affecting getting around in the last sector?

SPENCER PIGOT: For me, I thought it was incredibly slippery the last couple corners. You can see the rubber on the track. I thought turn 10 and 11 were really low grip, really slick, really challenging. I think that will improve as the weekend goes on and we get some more kind of normal rubber laid down. I don't know if it was from the IMSA Series or the Drifters. I thought that last sector was pretty tricky.

ED JONES: Every year we come here, similar to that, the Drifters rubber down. I don't think it's as bad as it's been in some other years. I remember two years ago there were huge chunks of rubber down. FP1 and FP2, you feel it a bit. As the NTT IndyCar Series rubber goes down, even the IMSA one, it helps us out a bit in that section.

Q. Is there a particular aspect of the car that you're working on? Under braking, slow corners, fast corners? Anything in particular you feel like you're chasing?

SPENCER PIGOT: Yeah, I think based on FP1, for me it's kind of some compliance with the car. Over the bumps, it's a lot bumpier than St. Pete. Just trying to get the car to behave a little bit better on the bumps, not get quite upset so easily. Whether it's a fast corner, a universal thing we're trying to address.

ED JONES: For me, it's more just entry stability in all of the corners really. That's kind of been the struggle from everywhere we've gone this year. Of course, once you start fixing that, you start to compromise the slow speed. It's something that's been challenging for us. Once we sort that out, should be a lot better.

Q. Spencer, how old were you when you left Pasadena to go to Florida?

SPENCER PIGOT: I left Pasadena to go to North Carolina. I was like one, so...

Q. You don't have much recollection?

SPENCER PIGOT: No, not from when I was one.

Q. The fact that your family used to live here, how important is this?

SPENCER PIGOT: Really cool race for us. My dad moved to L.A. from England in like 1980 or something. This is the first race he ever took my mom to. My dad has been to, I don't know, 20 or 30 of these races. It's cool to have that kind of family tie. It's a special event for my parents. For me, it's a race that I always was begging to go to ever since I was young.

To be here racing is really neat for me. And I know my parents, they're really excited every year when we get to come back, as well.

Q. At Barber, there were eight out of ten races that we've had where the pole winner has gone on to win the race. Out of 36 events here with open-wheel, only five times has the driver on the pole won the race. Seems to be unpredictable results here. Seems like a two-stop race is what drivers would want to do here. At Barber, there was only one yellow. It seemed some drivers were on two stops, some on three. Put everybody on the same strategy. What do you expect to have happen in the race on Sunday?

SPENCER PIGOT: Yeah, I think Bourdais and I were the only two guys trying a two-stopper. I think here you'll see a lot more people doing two stops.

First of all, I think the race is a little bit shorter, 85 laps versus 90. I don't think fuel mileage is much of an issue. That's probably the preferred strategy because you won't need to save a lot of fuel, hopefully you save a pit stop. It's a long pit lane here, as well. That's what I assume most people will try to do.

Until we really get a good sense of what the reds will do this afternoon, it's hard to say for sure or not. There's always people trying new things, trying to get creative. So far based on last year, I would assume mainly a two-stopper.

ED JONES: Yeah, I think it's a mixture. It depends, like you said, the yellows for the race is upside down at times. You can never predict if the race is going to be full of them or not. In Barber, the practice sessions, there were a lot of yellows. The race, only one. In some races, no yellows in practice and loads in the race.

It's very hard to predict what's going to happen. I think this race is, again, one where there's quite a bit of opportunity. There's usually one or two yellows. You just got to be there for those opportunities.

Some people try two stops, three stops. The guys on the three stops have to push a lot harder to make that worth it. It's creates a bit more risk. I think that's where you see the races change up quite a bit.

Q. Speaking of yellows, I know at COTA there was a big controversy with the yellow coming out, leaders got stuck in that. At Barber, they seemed to keep the pits open until the leaders pitted. Have they told you in the drivers meeting that's what they're going to do now? Was that a split decision they decided to make at Barber, not the policy going forward?

SPENCER PIGOT: From the way I understand it, it seems to be dependent on the circumstances. At COTA, the crash was covering pit entrance, so you couldn't really leave the pits open in that situation because there was a car and safety crew right there at pit entrance. Barber was a little bit different with Graham stopped on the other side of the track.

Obviously Max ended in the wall at pit end.

Whether or not race control deems it as a dangerous situation, if they can keep the pits open until everyone gets a chance to pit, I think they will. If it could be more dangerous than it is, if it's not worth the risk, I think they'll close it right away.

There's nothing set in stone, as soon as there's a yellow they're going to automatically close the pits right away. They might, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much. Best of luck the rest of the weekend.