

IndyCar Media Days

Tuesday February 2, 2016

Ed Carpenter

Media Day Presser



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by team owner/driver Ed Carpenter.

You had some team changes earlier in the week. What will look different for 2016?

ED CARPENTER: Yeah, seems like big changes, but organizationally not huge internally. We had operated as Ed Carpenter Racing from 2012 through 2014, merged with Sarah Fisher Hartman Racing to form CFH Racing. Then as we got into the off-season, towards the end of it, all sorts of things we don't need to get into related to different things, partnership changes, structure changes that really precipitated us to going back to Ed Carpenter Racing when everything shook out.

The important thing I think for me, to have everyone understand, is that the plans that we have now are the same as what the plans were when we were CFH. We're running Josef full time. I'm going to be running ovals. Hopefully we'll run the 20 car at a full-time level. We're not there yet, but we still have a little time to make it happen. That's the biggest thing.

We're in good shape. We have all our people essentially back in key positions. We're excited for a strong 2016.

THE MODERATOR: Before we talk about your driving program, you mentioned Josef, somebody that gave your team one of its breakout seasons last year. What can we expect from him in 2016?

ED CARPENTER: What we're hoping for is just continued growth. As much as anything, consistency. Really he was great all of last season.

As the season went on, he came into his own and was more consistent whether we were at a short oval, Speedway, road course, street court. He had speed and raced well everywhere. At the end of the season at Sonoma, he was one of seven guys that were still eligible for the title. That was really, I think, important for him to know that he can be in that discussion, be a part of that championship mix.

He is one of the few guys in the series that has the versatility as a driver and the pace on all circuits to be able to contend for a championship.

That's what we're working towards with Josef. Hopefully a lot more pins, a lot more poles, have a consistent season. If all that goes well, we should be in the mix for another chance at a championship.

THE MODERATOR: You've only held this dual position for a short time now. Are there still things you're adjusting to or do you miss just focusing on the driver aspects?

ED CARPENTER: This will be the start of the fifth year of owning-driving combination. Four years is a long time, going into the fifth year. There are times when it would be nice just to be worried about driving. At the same time the rewards you get from ownership and the organization and all the people we get to work with, it's a lot of fun when things go well.

We're really dedicated to making our team successful long-term, sustainable, having good results on track and winning races.

I'm enjoying it. I think you continue to learn. Each and every year you try to get better, analyze yourself, figure out what we can do to do a better job. But I do enjoy it.

THE MODERATOR: Four years is a long time in racing years.

ED CARPENTER: It is.

THE MODERATOR: Focusing on your specific driving program for 2016, we know how much Indianapolis means to you, how much it would mean to you to get to the 100th running, but in your own words, what would the significance of that be?

ED CARPENTER: The Indianapolis 500 every year is the highlight of my racing professional season. If I'm fortunate enough to qualify, this will be my 13th, which I'm very proud of. Every year I add on, the list gets smaller of guys that have done that many. Every year we've been here, we've had competitive situations. We're getting better and closer on figuring out how to win the race.

Just excited that race season's getting closer. I'm excited that Indy won't be my first race of the season,

that we get to go to Phoenix before we get here, which is fun.

As far as the hundredth, I think it's obviously a huge deal. You look around and see all the improvements and energy that's going in to making it an even more special event than it is every year. But from the drivers' perspective, it's the Indy 500, the highlight of our year.

From the outside, there is going to be more going on, a little more excitement, a little more buildup.

But when it comes to preparation, all the things we're working and focusing on, you try to tune that out and get prepared like you normally would.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned Phoenix. IndyCar would be kicking off its training in late February.

ED CARPENTER: I grew up going to Phoenix pretty much every spring break through my youth, then when I was running midgets, Silver Crown, started racing there in '99. I was there for the last IndyCar race in 2005. I have a lot of fond memories.

I haven't been back since they made some changes. We'll be there testing on Monday. I'm excited to get reacclimated with the track.

It's a great place to race. I think it will be better now with the changes they made, with our cars relative to how they are compared to 2005.

Looking forward to it. From what I'm hearing, it will be a great event.

THE MODERATOR: Chevy test coming up. You'll be watching the Super Bowl in Phoenix?

ED CARPENTER: Obviously pulling for Peyton, but when the Colts aren't in there, not that worried about it. Time to shift focus to things that are more important, and that's our race team.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Ed.

Q. You mentioned working on funding to continue the 20 car running on the road and street courses. Are you still looking at Luca or are you looking at a different driver?

ED CARPENTER: We're looking at all scenarios. I talk to Luca and his management team frequently. I wouldn't say that's off the table. It's trying to find the right deal and a deal that we all feel comfortable with. We'll see what happens.

Q. You said you don't want to talk about what

happened, but can you talk about how much of a setback it was for you or was it a setback?

ED CARPENTER: I don't think it was a setback. That's where I think there's some misconception. The announcement that you're changing names seems dramatic, like there's a whole lot going on.

The reality is our off-season started after Sonoma was over. Our preparation for this year started. It's been continuous and ongoing and very productive.

We changed names, but everything going on in the race shop, employees, preparation, plan, it's been ongoing. Changing logos around. Key positions, management, structure, for the most part it's the same.

It's a different group of owners that we report to as management, the team. But I don't feel like it's a setback as far as getting ready for the season or changing our goals or changing our focus. That's been a continuation from the start of 2015 to now.

Q. For the 500 this year, how many cars are you planning on running?

ED CARPENTER: I try to just to stay focused on what I know what we can do, what we have the funding and budget to do, to do at a high level, to the standards we hold ourselves to.

At this point we're planning on running two cars. Things can always change. But until they do change, I'm not really totally focusing on that.

There's always conversations going around, different things. You take every phone call. Obviously I talk to Hildebrand a lot and would like to get him more ingrained in our team. Until things happen, we're focused on what we're going to be doing, which is running Josef for the full championship and running the 20 car on ovals.

THE MODERATOR: Ed, thank you very much. We'll see you in Phoenix.

ED CARPENTER: Thank you.