

In their own words: Carpenter's season review



By Ed Carpenter

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IZOD IndyCar Series drivers review their 2012 season. Today it's Ed Carpenter, driver of the No. 20 Ed Carpenter Racing car.

It is hard believe that it hasn't even been a full year since we started Ed Carpenter Racing with the association with Fuzzy's Ultra Premium Vodka.

Boy, looking back on the last year, we had just come off winning with Sarah Fisher's team at Kentucky Speedway and scoring my first IZOD IndyCar Series win. Then we announced the new team in the first week of November.

It is almost like whirlwind. But I'm so pleased and proud of our new organization and the development of the Fuzzy's team.

Just to win in the IZOD IndyCar Series is very difficult. But to win a race in the team's very first year is quite an achievement. I think many people were shocked when Bryan Herta and Steve Newey won at Indy last year with Dan Wheldon on the controls. That is still a tremendous performance. They worked with a car and engine that had been in the series since 2003. So some things were already developed.

I think our performance with the first year of a new chassis and the new Chevrolet engine also opened many folks' eyes, too.

Winning at Fontana in the season finale was a great feeling for a brand new team that just started last November. I feel the Ed Carpenter Racing/Fuzzy's Vodka Chevy team stuck together through the ups and downs of the first year. The 500-mile win at Fontana is a tribute to their hard work all year.

I think to be where we are right now as a first-year team is pretty remarkable. It's something that's extremely hard to do, win in this series anytime. To do it as a new team is pretty special. We had been working with an old car since 2003 and everyone we hired brought a lot of experience with the old car into the team.

Going into this season with the new car as a single-car team, there was a lot of catching up to do and the multiple-car teams had an advantage. So we were pretty much on our own. To be honest, I never really thought about the owner-

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driver element of our program until somebody mentioned after the Fontana win. At the track, I really don't think of myself as an owner, only a driver.

I just try to continue to do my same routine, as a driver. I try to keep the owner stuff to the weekdays when we're not at the racetrack. Having people such as Derrick Walker, my dad (Tony George), Tim Broyles, Bret Schmitt, Matt Barnes, Lee Bentham and others behind the scenes helping our team produce a solid team effort is a big deal for me. We couldn't have done it without all of those people on the ECR/Fuzzy's team.

We wouldn't be here without Derrick. His thumbprint is all over our team. Tim is the team manager and he called the strategy all year long with Derrick's guidance at times. Derrick wasn't there for every race but we built this team to operate the same if Derrick was on site or not.

More than anything, Derrick likes to refer to himself as the rudder of the team. I would call him an architect of helping shape us here in year one.

We were good on the ovals at nearly every race this year. At Indy, we came from 28th to third with 20 laps to go. A part failure hurt us late in that one. And we worked hard to prepare for Fontana. That was our goal after Iowa. We had a car to win at Iowa but we had a few problems in the race. So we worked hard to get ready for the finale. It feels so good to win a race after studying so hard and preparing for all of the aspects of a 500-mile race.

We were able to make some progress throughout the year with our road and street setups, too. I think we are gaining respect and closing the gap on the front-runners on the roads. I think I've gotten better, but it's just the competition is much better, too. We have Matt (Barnes), Brent Harvey, Joe Howard and Lee (Bentham) working with me to develop our road racing program.

We had a good progression all year and I felt like after the Sonoma test that we were really in sync. It showed an improvement at Sonoma and then obviously at Baltimore we had a much better weekend.

It is always fun seeing a young guy like Matt Barnes get a chance to develop as a race engineer. Sometimes you get those young engineers and they've worked as assistants for so long. They have so much drive and desire to be a race engineer. It's amazing what they can do.

Now our team's goals for 2013 are to keep improving. Obviously, it's hard to win in this series, yet we won this year. Winning is always going to be the goal and winning the Indy 500 is one of the main goals. We have won a 500-mile race now and we want the Brickyard victory badly.

However, we think we really can improve a little bit more all-around and become more consistent. We probably could've had some more podiums on the ovals this year. There were times when I wasn't as good as I needed to be and there were times that we made other mistakes as a unit. We seemed to get better all-around and we need to limit our mistakes.

Hopefully we'll find our way into becoming a 'top 10 in the championship' kind of team. I think that's really the next step for us, being a little stronger in the points and not just the oval championship side. Then we will be able to grow as a team.

Season in a nutshell

Average start: 20.6

Average finish: 16.3

Best qualifying: Ninth (Auto Club Speedway)

Best finish: 1st (Auto Club Speedway)

Standings: 18th

Of note

Completed first season as owner-driver. ... Also won the season finale in 2011. ... Barber Motorsports Park event in 2013 will be his 130th in IZOD IndyCar Series. ... Best start of season (Baltimore) was nullified by first and only DNF of the season. ... Completed 1,885 of 1,968 laps during the 15-race season. ... Tied for lead in running at the finish with 14.