

# Meet 8-year-old racing reporter Asher Farris. He's here to ask questions and race fast



By Alison Sneag (/author/alison-sneag/) 1m ago



Eagle-eyed observers of NBC's Indy 500 qualifying broadcast might have seen Ed Carpenter talking to a boy with a microphone, described by Leigh Diffey as a "young fan," after Carpenter's early qualifying run on Saturday.

Eight-year-old Asher Farris is many things — a race fan, a karter, a burgeoning live-streaming Facebook show host and an advanced student — but he's more than a young fan. Meet the youngest member of IndyCar's media corps.

In late March, A.J. Foyt Enterprises team president Larry Foyt was nearly done with a Zoom call to unveil a primary marketing partner for Sebastien Bourdais' No. 14 Chevrolet when Asher raised his virtual hand.

“How do you or the drivers go about landing a new sponsor? What is the process like?”

“Well, thanks for your question, Asher, good to see you,” Foyt said, before answering that deals like the one with ROKit, a new business incubator whose portfolio of companies in technology includes WiFi deployment, beverages, and 3D content production, can take years to put together.

And with that, motorsports' youngest reporter had done his job for the day. That is, besides his schoolwork.

For the past two years, the Fortville, Indiana native has been asking questions of and interviewing race car drivers at Indy and nearby tracks like Mid-Ohio — an idea that his parents, Kristin and Brandon, got on the way to 2019 Indy 500 qualifying. Asher, 6 at the time, asked Juncos Racing's Kyle Kaiser (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6vWkn5jzTc>) that day, “What do you like to do while you're in Indy?”

“Go fast on qualifying day! What's better than going fast on qualifying day?” he said.

“Probably going faster on race day!” was Asher's response.

A connection of Brandon's from his job at an automotive store repair shop caught wind of what Asher was doing, which led to interviews with Alexander Rossi and later, days before the Brickyard 400, an exclusive sit-down with Chase Elliott (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YefgmFOpf0c>).

There's no trepidation on Asher's part, and for aspiring young journalists, Asher offers this advice: “They're just normal people.”





Amid the pressure of qualifying, IndyCar drivers treated Asher Farris the same as regular media members at Indianapolis Motor Speedway this weekend. (Screenshot courtesy NBCSN)

What started as an at-track exercise to help talk to race car drivers has quickly morphed into Asher's Racing Channel (<https://www.ashersracingchannel.com/about>), a multimedia "empire," with live Facebook shows co-hosted by his father, Brandon, along with videos of Asher's interviews and highlights from his own kart races that his parents edit and produce. And it's continued during the Zoom age. An invitation to IndyCar's 2019 year-end victory banquet by a local TV station helped Asher meet IndyCar media relations coordinator Arni Sribhen, who observed that Farris knew exactly who the drivers were.

"I thought that was super impressive," Sribhen said. "I remember being a kid (thinking) it would be really cool if I could meet Rick Mears or something like that, so to me, it was a little bit of that."

“When we went virtual it was easier for him to join in and be part of it as a media member and learn about what it’s like to be a journalist. ... He’s prepared, he acts like it’s something that he wants; being a media member is something that he enjoys doing; he’s not being forced to do it because he’s a kid.”

During a time when fan access has been restricted across sports because of the pandemic, IndyCar’s drivers and the series’ communications teams have embraced the rising reporter. He is sometimes, but not always, called on to ask questions, and the drivers take him seriously.

In a recent session, Asher asked Ed Carpenter what he knows now that he wished he knew as a rookie. “Patience,” Carpenter answered.

“If I could have developed that trait earlier I think it would have served me well, but I’m here now,” he said. “You’re probably teaching the same lessons to your parents, Asher, and you don’t even know it.”

Sage Karam, who qualified 31st in Dreyer & Reinbold’s Chevrolet for this year’s Indianapolis 500, was too scared to approach drivers when he was younger.

“One of the drivers that always gave me the time of day was Dan Wheldon, and that always stuck with me, how I wanted to be off the track, and so when I saw this kid, I just wanted to help,” he said.

The Farris family balances the interviews and racing time with home-schooling. “Asher’s actually in fifth and sixth grade right now,” Brandon Farris said. “The schooling actually came long before the racing. We realized when he was 2 and reading that traditional school’s not gonna work.”

“For the longest time we thought he was just memorizing books,” Kristin said, “but then I got him a new book once, and he just started reading the words to me and I’m like, wait a minute! So we don’t know how long he was reading before that when we thought he was just reciting books from memory to us.”

There was another revelation as a toddler: Asher would take people’s keys and tell them exactly what kind of car they drove.

“We’re walking into the grocery store, and he goes look dad, it’s a (Toyota) Scion — how do you know what a Scion is?!” Brandon recalls. “He was really young (about 2 or 3). So young that you’re wondering hey, how did he read the name, and then B, how did he know that it was a car?”

Home-schooling allows the family flexibility to complete Asher’s schoolwork. Asher can do it anywhere — including in the car on the way to IMS.

“Let’s say we’re going to Indianapolis Motor Speedway at 10:30 a.m. when I start school,” he said. “We’re on our way to the track, we’re on the interstate, I am sitting there writing down my effort for math as I’m going to the track. I get done basically just in time. When I’m going to the kart track and practice I have to do my schoolwork on the way, and we get onto the road that it’s on and I’m done.”

“It makes the month of May a lot easier too,” Brandon said.

From his home “race room” studio (Kristin and Brandon have dedicated their loft for media ventures, complete with the Asher’s Racing Channel website logo behind him and directors chairs for this and other interviews), Asher said the key to asking a good question is to “try to switch up our questions to not be the same question every time.”

“We’re trying to find good questions,” he said. “I come up with them last-minute (to differentiate from what’s already been asked). Three quarters, halfway through the press conference and I’m like oh, how about this one. And then we raise our hand and we normally get called on, last or maybe even not.”

So who gives the best answers? “If I can say one driver it’s definitely Will Power,” Farris said. “Because sometimes he’s really funny and sometimes he takes over the press conference. And it’s also a really experienced answer.”

Asher’s done some thinking about his future, and he hopes to keep up the two ventures: racing, and writing about motorsports.

“It’s been a fun experience for me because my lifelong journey had only been being a race car driver,” he said. “I’d never thought about the interviewing articles until that 500 qualifying day (2019) that we went to the track. And that’s where it all started.”



Asher races up to several times a week in a kart with a 4-cycle engine. So far this year he's finished as high as second and in the cadet/sportsman at Whiteland Raceway Park; last season he had five heat wins and three feature wins in kid kart. There was also a big crash in December during a national race at Daytona; they had five minutes to fix the kart in order to get back on track before the race went green, and it still produced about the same amount of speed.

"I can tell you one thing he's learned," Brandon said, as Asher interjected: "Go fast!" "There *are* tough days and sometimes those tough days are really, really bad. But just having the courage to get back on that horse and get back in the kart or get back in the Zoom conference after you haven't been called on for two months, he has learned all of that through this."



Asher has two podium finishes so far this season. (Courtesy of the Farris family)

“We’ve been teaching him it’s not always about if you win every race, but it’s about your attitude,” Kristin said, “whether you win or you lose (“unlike Kyle Busch,” Asher added). “It’s about if you lose being a good sport, and if you win, still being a good sport and congratulating all the others.”

There’s one other cool part to this story. Asher has interviewed Karam several times through the Lionheart Racing Series, and Karam’s appeared on Asher’s Facebook show — mostly before Asher started karting. When Asher and his family decided to try and race nationally (at the Daytona race), Karam donated to Asher’s GoFundMe page to help cover some of the cost, and shared it on social media, which gave the campaign a big boost.

“I know how hard it can be, getting money together, especially at a young age and for families,” Karam said. “He’s a good friend, and probably in a few years, he’ll be trying to take my seat from me and stuff in racing, which is fine.

“I just wanted to show I helped and show that I cared. I think the most important thing to him is that he saw that an IndyCar driver cared and wanted to see him race.”

Which is why Karam is one of Asher’s favorite drivers, along with Power and Alexander Rossi, because he drives for Andretti Autosport.

“And he just drives that thing like he stole it.”

*(Top photo of Asher Farris interviewing Marcus Ericsson: Marc Lebryk / USA Today)*

### What did you think of this story?



MEH



SOLID



AWESOME

**Alison Sneag** ([/author/alison-sneag/](#)) is the managing editor of The Athletic Motorsports. Her two-decade-long career in sports journalism began in studio production at ESPN in Bristol, Connecticut. She has covered the sports world as an