

# NASCAR Media Conference

## Press Conference

Sunday, March 14, 2021

Phoenix, Arizona, USA

Phoenix Raceway

An Interview with:

## Joey Logano

## Denny Hamlin

**THE MODERATOR:** We are now joined by our second-place finisher, Joey Logano. Thank you for taking some time with us. We are going to get right into questions for you.

**Q. Can you talk about why you chose the inside on that last restart? Did you think you had enough momentum to keep Truex at bay?**

**JOEY LOGANO:** I chose the bottom because I've chose the bottom every time I've been the leader, and it's worked every single time. I was batting a thousand on the bottom the last, I don't know, two years here. I was kind of actually surprised that Truex was still out there. Felt like I created enough distance down there on the bottom shortcut in the dogleg that typically I can have someone at my quarter to where I can control them.

Looked down, gosh, he's still door-to-door with me. Their car accelerated really well, surprisingly well. Didn't see that one coming.

They just had a fast car all the way through. They had a fast car from the get-go. Once they tuned it in the end of the second stage, they were lights out.

To be honest with you, I'm not sure even if we got in front of him in that last restart, I'm not sure I'd have been able to hold him off or not. Would have been a hell of a battle. He probably would have gotten me eventually.

**Q. How would you evaluate the PJ1, the traction compound? Did it work like you thought it would?**

**JOEY LOGANO:** Yeah, I mean, the traction compound was really strong in the beginning. It seemed like especially down in three and four towards the end of the race was less and less. It was just wearing off.

Kind of what you would expect there. Yeah, I thought



towards the end of the race, you run a few laps on the bottom, four or five laps maybe on restarts before you moved up. I felt like it was pretty racy at the end.

**THE MODERATOR:** We are also joined here by Denny Hamlin. If you have a question for Denny, as well.

**Q. Last pit stop you said you had a power steering issue. Can you elaborate on that? Did it have any bearing on the outcome?**

**JOEY LOGANO:** Beats me. We did have a power steering issue. It fixed itself. Never had that before (laughter). I don't know. I guess my prayers were answered inside the race car. I don't know. It came right back. Maybe just something with lower rpm and hot temperatures or something. I'm not sure.

**Q. Denny, where do you equate your performance this year for the early part of the season compared to last year when you and Kevin Harvick were dominating?**

**DENNY HAMLIN:** I mean, our consistency is really good. Really every week last year we had a chance to win most weeks. It's just whether we took ourselves out of it through mistakes or not. So far this year, knock on wood, we have been good on the mistake front.

We haven't had that dominant car like we've had during some races last year yet, other than Daytona. I thought our car was very, very good. We've just been hanging around that second, third, fourth all year.

It's a good start because we got something to build on here.

**Q. When you won this race last year, Joey, I asked you if you thought the drivers and the people in the garage area were taking a sigh of relief in terms of how competitive the track would be for the championship race. You had a memorable quote that you thought everybody was taking a sigh of relief. After today, what are your expectations or concerns about the competitiveness of the track, PJ1, this tire, the package in general for November?**

**JOEY LOGANO:** I'd say I think you'll probably expect the same thing you saw last year. The tire has a decent



amount of falloff which presents an opportunity for some strategy, as we saw today, if the caution comes out five, ten laps into a run, creates quite the questions on what to do. That's a good thing, where it's not just a no-brainer type of pit call. I like how that kind of splits the field up. That part's good.

I think fastest car is able to win the race. I think that's happened probably the last three or four times here, the fastest car has won. I think that's fair. That's what we all want. But it's the opportunity to make something happen if you're in the hunt towards the end, have a good pit stop, a good restart, you can do some big moves as well.

I think the track is pretty racy. I think it definitely evolves throughout the race as the traction compound wears off. That definitely changes what you need in your race car as you tune your car.

And the tire itself, like I said, it has some falloff. I still get these weird vibrating runs, I don't know what that is, that one cost us a championship, and I got another one today. We definitely have to look into the tire, for sure.

#### **Q. Denny, what do you think about that?**

**DENNY HAMLIN:** I don't know. I'm more of a probably a purist on these short tracks. It's the dominant lane. Originally when PJ1 came out, it was meant to be an option when you come up on lap traffic or when you come up on a car and you're faster, it's an option to try to get around. It's the dominant lane here at this racetrack. Again, you run in and out of it at times, but still if it doesn't wear off, it's the fastest way around the racetrack.

The first time here, they had it higher. We used the bottom mostly, just used the top every now and then. They sprayed it just a little bit lower for the championship race, I believe, and I don't know, take some still pictures of pretty much all the races, everyone is kind of running in a train up top.

I don't know. I also agree with Joey, as well, the fastest car has won for the last handful of races. But if you put Martin in traffic, he might have gotten around, I'm not sure.

I guess I'm indifferent on it is the long answer. I'd prefer it to be probably a little bit higher and less grippy.

**Q. Joey, I hate to beat a dead horse, to follow up on the vibration, you told the team it was as bad as it was in the fall. Earlier in the week on radio you said it was vibrating so bad at times in the fall that you couldn't see. What do you have to do to get this car in order so when you do come back it's not something that keeps**

#### **you up at night?**

**JOEY LOGANO:** Yeah, definitely keeping me up right now. I wish I knew what it is. A lot of times you change the tires, it goes away. It's not a loose wheel. We don't believe it's a misbalanced tire or wheel either. Not sure what it is.

When it happens, the lights shut off for a little bit and the car goes backwards quickly. It cost us a championship. It didn't cost us the race today, but we lost some track position in the beginning of the final stage here.

I don't know. I wish I knew what the answer was on that. I don't know. Maybe we can take a look at it, cut the tire apart. I don't know how you fix it. I'm not a tire engineer. I don't know if it's consistent through the field, if other cars have the issues or not. I know a lot of cars had it in the fall race. I know my teammate had it in the fall race as well.

Just something we need to look into, at least try to find the answer. I don't know if we have the capability to fix that. I think it might be out of our hands. At least try to help find it.

**Q. The mile-and-a-half tracks, there were these underdogs and surprises. The first short track, all the usual suspects, no surprises. Any reason for the difference, you think?**

**JOEY LOGANO:** I'll let Denny speak to it too. I think the 750 package is harder to drive. I think experience probably comes out more. There's different techniques that I think the experienced guys have learned over the years racing cars that don't have much downforce, a lot of horsepower.

When you come to a short track, there's comers and goers. Knowing how to go fast on a short run versus a long run, Denny is probably one of the best at figuring that balance out. I think probably that experience behind the wheel helps, kind of knowing what you need in your race car to go as fast as possible.

Probably experience comes into play more just because it's something we've done a lot the last forever.

**DENNY HAMLIN:** I mean, most of the experienced guys, the guys that have been around for four-plus years, ran this whole package in 2017. If you have less experience than that, this is kind of a new thing for you, other than we cut the spoilers off on the short track last year.

I agree with Joey. You kind of build a notebook on it. You understand how to manipulate the car when it's not handling perfectly. You can move your line around and

change some things. That's stuff that takes experience.

I think experience in this sport is just so underrated simply because you see so many things. We've all been through tire changes, car changes, aerodynamic changes, track changes, that we're ahead of the game, I guess you could say. Especially now that we have no practice, I mean, it lends itself even more to experience.

Definitely agree with that take.

**Q. Denny, do you have any thoughts on late in the race Bubba stayed out and you had a little bit of a chance to race together, your thoughts on your car with Bubba up there?**

**DENNY HAMLIN:** Yeah, I mean, I think there was only 10 laps on his tires. I probably would agree with that call. I don't know where he netted out on that. I knew taking off was going to be the biggest challenge. I thought once he got to the first couple corners, he was going to be fine.

I think he's one of those drivers, if you can put him up front somehow, some way, likely going to happen more on like a 750 track, he'll be a hard guy to pass. I was racing with them there. I was just trying to figure out how I could get around him just as quick as I could because I know I was in a very important part of the race.

I don't know where they finished. I think they had a solid day, had some decent speed my team said. It was good. I mean, again, we were pouring the concrete of the foundation for that thing, that team over there. Got a long way to go, but we're working really hard to get them in a position by fall where they're competing inside the top 10 on a regular basis.

**Q. Joey, your thoughts as a veteran driver, being through this before, to have a car that led all the laps, it kind of slips away at the end, your thoughts about that happening again today, how frustrating that is.**

**JOEY LOGANO:** It's frustrating in some ways, and in other ways you got to look at the positives and move forward. I'm usually the one that's going to probably beat myself up a little bit on the parts where we missed it, but the positives will keep the momentum going. We need to just move on after we figure out where we made mistakes today.

As far as positives, boy, I couldn't be more prouder of our pit crew today. They're animals. That's great. They really kept us in the race when we started to lose a little bit of handling in our car. I'm not even sure if we were a few balance adjustments off of beating the 19. He was fast.

Really, like I said earlier, it started to show the end of the second stage where he ran us down from 4 seconds. He's going to be really quick.

I was just hoping on the short run maybe I could get him on the short run there. But once he got out a second ahead of me, he went to cruise control and started saving his stuff.

Like I said, we're just not fast enough right now. That's probably the biggest thing that stands out. We were able to get our balance pretty close after the second run of the race. Just seemed like the 19, even the 11 at times, just were able to roll in more speed, have more grip to still be able to turn. Just had more overall, so...

That's a hard thing to find, by the way (laughter).

**Q. Denny, this place has been a track position type of track in years past. Do you see that evolving with the PJ1? Chase go from the back to the front to win last year. Is the track evolving or is it a case that those cars were just so strong?**

**DENNY HAMLIN:** It's tough to say. I think if you get the lead and you have the next-fastest car behind you, the next-fastest car has to wait 20 laps, 25 laps for the pace really to lose a half a second. Again, the dominant line is run around the top in PJ1. It's very difficult.

When we were running around the bottom here, you could force the guy off the bottom. You could pack air and really kind of force the leader off the bottom, you could get position, next thing you know you're on the bottom in three and four, that's where you want to be, you complete the pass.

Here you have to run in their wake. Most of the time you're just worried about losing a position if someone is right behind you. You don't even want to make a move to run low and make a move on the leader because you're likely to lose a spot.

The fastest car can get to the front, but he needs long runs to do it.

**Q. You seem to be at times able to use the bottom pretty well, especially the first part of the race. Is that something you feel like you guys kind of hit on that went away as the race went on?**

**DENNY HAMLIN:** Yeah, maybe went away a little bit, but not bad. Again, the tire is kind of weird. You just don't want to run a whole lot in the rubber that gets laid down.

But the bottom lane, yeah, you can run fast for a couple



laps, but it just heats everything up so much you can't sustain it. You can use it to try to complete a pass. That's the thing, most of these passes were all slide jobs. It was all just overdriving the entry just to get position and clear yourself. Not a lot of passes were made because you just got a good run off the corner, went down low in the next corner at a reasonable speed, and you cleared them. You had to drive in there at an unreasonable speed and cut off the person behind you.

**Q. Denny, can you speak on your teammate getting a victory after a long streak of losses, not winning ever here at Phoenix.**

**DENNY HAMLIN:** Yeah, I mean, the 19 has had a good car. Their short track program, I think they stand out to me as one of our best short track teams at JGR. I mean, it was encouraging for me that we did run in the top five all day. The 19 ran in the top five all day. We were not good on the short tracks last year. In 2019 I think our worst finish in the 11 on a short track was fourth, maybe fifth. We had all top fives at every short track.

Last year, if we could run sixth or seventh, it was probably a decent day for us. Hopefully this is a sign that we kind of worked on the right things and are heading in the right direction.

But good for him for winning. I wish it was me.

**Q. Denny, your career has been different this year compared to previous years now that you're a team owner?**

**DENNY HAMLIN:** Ask your question again.

**Q. I was curious how this year has been different for you in your career than previous years now that you're co-owner of a team?**

**DENNY HAMLIN:** Just no days off.

Typically when I was just a driver, I would get between Tuesday afternoon and Thursday night, Friday morning off, relatively off. Maybe a few things here and there. But now the middle part of the week is really where I focus on 23, 11, go to the shop, talk to the team, the engineers, crew chiefs, figure out how we can be better, what do we need to go faster.

This is such a growing process for everyone. Everyone is working together for the first time. This is a new team. This is not an inherited team. This is a team built from scratch.

It's a building process. They're trying not to overload Bubba with too much information because he's got already so much he has to learn on a weekly basis. I try to do everything I can to help curb that learning curve. If I can help him out, give him some advice on a track that's coming up, some notes out of the book that I keep, hopefully maybe it's a help to him.

**Q. Could you talk about how different this race would have been today without the traction compound.**

**JOEY LOGANO:** That's probably the million dollar question trying to know that. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think the last time we ran without the traction compound, we had big spoilers on the car. It was bad. I think the thing we fixed the most was taking the spoiler off the car, creating smaller wake, being able to manipulate other people's cars by stacking air on them or whatever, that created a lot of passing.

I think the biggest adjustment, the best adjustment has definitely been taking the spoilers off the car for the short tracks and adding horsepower.

What would it be like if you didn't have the traction compound? I don't know.

It's either your dominant lane is going to be on the bottom or up in PJ1. Pick your poison. I don't know. You've got to eventually look at it and say, Was the racing good today? Yes. Did the fastest car win? Yes. That must mean there must be some passing out there. Yes, you've got to be patient because if you make a move and you're not able to clear, you're probably going to lose a spot. But that's part of the game.

I'd be hard to say that we shouldn't have it. I'm kind of a fan of it personally, thinking that it actually -- I think it helps the racing, widens the group out. Towards late in the race, it's pretty good.

**Q. Denny?**

**DENNY HAMLIN:** Yeah, I mean, listen, we started using it for a reason. The tracks weren't getting the passing that they wanted. I think there's an absolute need for it at some tracks. I'm 50/50 on it here. It absolutely has helped racing at some racetracks we've gone through.

I don't know. Hard for me to make a case for it or against it, to be honest with you. We'll just keep digging and keep learning, try to put on the best race we possibly can no matter what the conditions.

**THE MODERATOR:** Joey and Denny, thank you so much

for taking some time with us. We'll see you in Atlanta.

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