

# NASCAR Media Conference

## Press Conference

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An Interview with:

## Rick Hendrick

**THE MODERATOR:** We are now joined by Rick Hendrick of Hendrick Motorsports, who is celebrating their 269th win as an organization tonight. Their cars placed in four of the top five positions tonight. We're going to go straight to questions here.

**Q. Rick, can you describe kind of the vibe at Hendrick Motorsports with all four drivers seem to be racing at the top of their game?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** You know, you work hard, you hope you can pull that off and all the cars be fairly close and run the race together, and boy, I don't know what turned it on all of a sudden, but all the hard work and the cars are fast, the guys are doing a great job. Pit crews are doing well. It feels good. I can't believe we got 269. It was kind of neat to -- I want any one of them to win, but the first one was 5 and this one was the number 5. I just remember how close it was not to finish out the first year.

But you work towards having this kind of communication and the cars running that way all together, but it's just hard to do.

**Q. I know you love all your guys, but where do you think Kyle Larson could end up being among all the drivers that you've had?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Well, I've had a lot of really good drivers. I've been really blessed if you look at everybody that's won a race with us, from Bodine to Tim Richmond to Waltrip. You can look at Jeff Gordon and Jimmie Johnson with seven championships. All of them have unique features.

I think Kyle is going to win a lot of races. Chase is already a champion. I'm really excited about how William is running every single week and Alex, too.

It's like having a bunch of kids. You love them all the same. It's just each one of them has different strengths and characteristics, but at the end of the day they work well together.



**Q. The record that you guys broke has been -- Petty Enterprises has had the most wins in NASCAR since 1960. You've talked before at times about how you have come close, even shortly after you started, of stepping away. What makes you continue to want to do this year after year?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** You know, I kind of grew up racing with my dad, and I raced when I was 14, and I've raced all my life. That's been -- that and the automobile business, I tell everybody I'm really fortunate to be able to do the two things in life I love outside of my family, and that's the car business and racing.

From really humble beginnings and not having money to buy tires and riding in the back of a truck in Trenton, New Jersey, to watch a modified race to today, I was thinking out there on pit road hoping it wasn't going to be a caution and we could get it done tonight, how fortunate I've been to have the talent that's been at our organization.

I think we've got a lot more races to win, and the organization is really pumped up right now, and we've got good momentum, and we're going to ride this wave as long as we can.

**Q. After Kyle spoke at the start-finish line, he said something to the effect of whatever I expected this year, I've already surpassed all my expectations. I was just wondering, what did you kind of expect? And how has it played out for Kyle?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Kyle is an awesome talent. I mean, he is just -- some of the moves he makes, what he can do with a car in different situations, find a place to run on the track, he's got an awesome amount of talent.

I knew he was talented, but you see him in sprint cars and midgets and everything else; he races almost three or four times a week, but the guy is just -- he wants to win. He's super dedicated. He's all business. Yeah, he's just got a tremendous amount of talent.

Cliff has got a lot of talent, and the chemistry there has been much better and quicker than I thought it could be. I just see great things between those two the rest of this year and into the future.



**Q. I'm curious how you feel like it could impact sponsorship going forward, Kyle dominating this race and having fans back and more people at the track.**

**RICK HENDRICK:** It feels so good to walk down pit road and be able to go on pit road and to see the fans in the stands and just the excitement in the air. When we go to the track at a race with no fans, it's like you're at a test. That's exactly what a test feels like.

Just the excitement in the air, the fans coming in today -- I've met a lot of fans through motorsports, and having the military here, that was special. It's always a special day to pay tribute to those folks. It just feels like we're back. We've been cooped up for a year and not being able to go out and do things. It's just good to see folks enjoying themselves and not having to wear a mask.

**Q. Do you feel like this win is going to be able to create more sponsorship opportunities?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Yeah, we've got a lot of things working with Kyle. Selfishly I like having Hendrick cars on it because I like for our business the -- all of the hits we have on the internet and all the fans, we're selling cars and having -- we're having a lot of fun with it.

Listen, we've talked to a lot of people. There's not going to be any problem getting a sponsor for Kyle.

**Q. With your relationship with each of the drivers, I'm sure each one is unique and special. Obviously you haven't been with Kyle as long, but can you describe the relationship with Kyle and what it means that he was the one to deliver you this historic win?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Well, I think he's run so good this year. If you look, I think I saw that he led over 1,000 laps, more laps than anybody this year, and he was in position to win two or three times, and it didn't come together. He's been through a lot, and to see him come out here and run like that and make a statement and show his talent, I think the guy has been through a whole lot, and I'm just excited that he just really feels good and really got a great vibe right now with he and Cliff. I'm looking for a lot of wins the rest of this year.

**Q. Certainly a dominant performance the last few weeks, but all these tracks that you guys have been dominant at the last three weeks are not playoff tracks, maybe not as strong as some of the playoff tracks earlier this year. What is the value of being strong at these tracks? Is it as much about winning and morale back at the shop, or what does a win like here mean**

**compared to maybe not running as well at the playoff tracks earlier this year?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Well, I think we get better every week, and every time we go to a track we come back and I think we're better.

You know, I think as -- we won Richmond. That was a tough -- I'm looking at the different tracks we've raced on, road courses, mile-and-a-half. I don't think we're weak anywhere. I think when the time comes, we'll be ready.

**Q. Just wanted to know if there's anybody in particular that Kyle's driving style reminds you of in particular.**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Tim Richmond.

**Q. Any reason why? Can you kind of expand on that?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Put a car in places that you don't think it'll go and having fun and wanting to win, wanting to lead every lap. He just reminds me a lot of Tim.

I mean, all of our guys have unique talent, but he is a racer. I look at William and how far William has come. William has been every single week, he's been there. I think they're just getting stronger together. But Kyle has probably got more racing experience than the other guys. He races everything there is to race, and he says it makes him better.

I mean, when you can climb in any kind of car and go to a track and win when you've got the guys that win all the races there, I think he's made a statement of how much talent he has.

**Q. Kyle said that all four drivers wanted to deliver this milestone, and he felt the aggression between the other guys. Was there a time at Hendrick maybe back in the Jeb and Jimmie days or Jeff, Jimmie and Mark days that you felt these guys pushed each other to a new level?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** I think, yeah, listen, they all want to win, and when you lead laps and you win races that motivates the other guys. They know exactly what's in the cars. They share a ton of information. They debrief together. Yeah, if any one of them wins, it motivates the other guys. There's nothing like -- look, they want the company to win, but they want to win. They want to beat the other guy.

It's one of those things that everybody wants to be number one in the herd, so just let them all win races and we'll see how it comes out on the other end.

**Q. You mentioned earlier about the 5 winning today and it being its first win for Hendrick. When you look at that accomplishment, that number, the history that it has, how extra special is this, and did you think maybe this is where you hoped it might end up?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** I didn't care who broke the record. I just wanted to win it. Any one of them, I pull for them all the same. It's tough when they're battling each other for the lead, but the objective in this race was to win it. Whoever could win it, that was great.

The fact that the 5 was my first number and we decided to go back to it this year, it's pretty neat that that was the car number. But 24 has got a lot of history with us, Chase's number, Alex's number with Jimmie's 48. So I didn't care who won it, just so one of them won it.

**Q. When you look at 269 wins, and I want to kind of ask you, what do you think Ricky would have thought about the way that Hendrick Motorsports is right now and breaking this record?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Well, he would be very proud of the fact that the company has done as well as it has. I wish he and Randy and all the folks on that plane were here to celebrate it.

You know, we never -- when we were like 200 wins, just thinking that you're going to win 269 and beat Richard's number, I never thought we'd get there, and then all of a sudden the momentum started and we had a good run last year and this year.

I want to say this about Richard: He's a class act. He has done more for the sport than anybody I know of in the sport. He's still the same Richard to all the fans. He and I were together -- when I started I thought he was going to drive the car, and it didn't work out.

I have tremendous respect for the Petty family and what they've accomplished. Someone will probably break my record, so it's just -- records are made to be broken.

**Q. Your drivers seem to be a camaraderie right now that has never existed throughout all of them; seemed like you had two drivers that got along or whatever. They're all under 30; do you think that plays a role in that even though they're so competitive that you can kind of guide them and mold them?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Well, number one, I'm very fortunate to have these guys because they're good, good people. I mean, I've seen -- I've worked with Chase since he was 14.

William walked up to me at the JRM shop when he was about 15 and said he wanted to drive one day. Alex, Dale picked him and he and I are car nuts and we worked together. You know, and Kyle is a racer.

I think they have tremendous respect for each other because I sit in the debriefs and listen to them sharing information, and I think the age does have a lot to do with it. I think that they respect each other, and each one offers a little bit that maybe the other one doesn't have.

But I'm really proud of the way they work together, and I know there's a lot of teams out here that don't, and I've been one of those teams in the past that you worried about the friction. There's no friction right now, so that's a good thing.

**Q. What's the stress level like as a team owner to have all four cars compete for wins this year?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Well, it's a lot of stress when they get close together and if they try to block. The fear I have is wrecking each other because that destroys the organization's ability to pull together. I've had that happen, and I had to get them in a room and say, you can't -- don't touch each other. If you're going for the win, okay, but just remember what you're getting ready to do to the organization. It's going to break us down if we have a lot of friction and we're not working together.

They want to win, but they race each other clean. I've heard all of them say, you've seen them on the track, they don't push people around and they try to pass clean, and that's the way we like to race.

**Q. I have a question not related to your record win tonight, but I'm curious about your conversation with Pitbull on pit road and what that was like. Also you and Tony Robbins, seemed like you guys had a connection there, something about a helicopter?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Yeah, he was looking for a helicopter to charter, and they called us and said, could we help him, and I told him, yeah, we could give him a lift in and a lift out, and he said I could come to his resort, but it's in Fiji, I think.

**Q. And the Pitbull conversation?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Yeah, I just told him it was neat to have him in the sport, that we're glad to have him, and they've done a great job. It's fun to meet those kind of folks, and I'm glad they like our sport.

You know, he didn't know that was my helicopter when he

started talking to me. Then somebody said, well, he's the guy that gave you the helicopter to get in here. Then it was a different conversation.

**Q. You stopped me in my tracks a minute ago when you said that Richard Petty almost drove your car; did I hear that right or did I hear you wrong? We need to know that story.**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Well, ask Richard. (Laughter.)

**Q. I want to hear your side of it.**

**RICK HENDRICK:** We were over here in the garage in Charlotte, and I thought we had a deal, and I went out of the country and I came back, and he went with Curb, I think, Records, but I thought he was going to drive the car. Let Richard tell you the story.

**Q. When you look at where you started in 1985 to where you guys are now, when you think back on those early days with Jeff Bodine, what in that formative period do you feel like laid this foundation now for 269 wins? What was the point in the 80s that you could have seen any of this coming?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Well, I was very fortunate when I started, I thought we had another deal that was coming together that didn't, and so I was there with no sponsor, and I think we started with five people, and Harry was making 500 a week. You can put that in today's terms.

You know, I think Randy Dorton had a little engine shop, and he came on board, and so Randy was a big part of the foundation of our company.

Then we brought Tim Richmond in, and it just -- it's been one brick at a time. I've got a lot of people that have been there forever. Look at Chad and Jeff Andrews and all these guys. We just kind of have built it from 5,000 square feet to what it is today, and from five people to over 600.

It's been a lot of years but a lot of just -- any business you're in, it's all about people, getting people to work together, and I preach this to them all the time, you'll never tear down a good organization from the outside, it'll happen from the inside.

We've stuck together through some really tough times like the crash, but we stayed together. Sometimes you have -- the biggest problem I have, I have drivers retiring, Darrell Waltrip and then Dale, then Jeff, Jimmie, then you start again. You see these kids that are 14 years old and you take a shot.

I think I'm good for the future. I think at my age I don't have to -- with the average age of 26, I think I'm set.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**RICK HENDRICK:** My dad always told me your biggest asset are your folks. You put key people together with good communication and good things will happen, and if you remember, I had a one-car team and I went to two, and everybody said, you can't win with a two-car team, but I did it. In the automobile business you have good people, you spread them out and they got great experience, then you add another and another, and together if they communicate, they're stronger.

I think we kind of broke that mold, but it's just -- I've been very fortunate, too, to see Jeff Gordon, to see Jimmie Johnson, Darrell comes on board, Tim -- Jeff Bodine. If he hadn't won that race in Martinsville, we wouldn't be here today.

Luck, and God has blessed our company, and we've had a lot of great luck, and I don't take that for granted. We've had a lot of good breaks along the way and just good people.

**Q. When you look back on this race at any point in time, what are you going to remember most about tonight's victory?**

**RICK HENDRICK:** Well, I'm going to remember that I really wanted to break the record at home. I really wanted to do it in Charlotte. When the cars -- when the race started and it looked like we were going to be really strong and all of them running in the top 5, I thought we've really got a shot tonight.

I didn't like seeing Kyle up there, Kyle Busch, but I'll remember that I started about a mile from here in a little tin building and never thought I'd win a NASCAR race. I didn't think I belonged when I got to Daytona the first time when I looked at the Wood Brothers and Junior Johnson and Richard Petty, and I'm like, I don't know what I'm doing here.

You know, I think about all those things, and I think about breaking this record, because again, it's huge for our company to win 269 races.

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