

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

Sunday, April 24, 2022

Talladega Superspeedway

An Interview with:

Phil Surgen

THE MODERATOR: We're going to get started with our post-race press conference here at Talladega Superspeedway, at the GEICO 500, with our race-winning crew chief, Phil Surgen.

Take us through those last laps from your seat on the pit box.

PHIL SURGEN: It's a speedway race, so I've grown to expect that with five to go, you can't tell what's going to happen at the end. With two to go, you can't tell what's going to happen at the end.

Frankly, coming off of four in the top group of cars, you don't really know what to expect yet. You know there's going to be a wreck at the start/finish line. So many times I've been on the other end of it.

Unlike downforce races or road course races where you know you have a good car, a bad car, here you don't know what's going to happen.

It's a little bit nerve-wracking, but you kind of stay calm. As it transpires, it's like, Man, it becomes more and more clear in the last few seconds that we won the race. A great day for us.

THE MODERATOR: Based on some of the notes we have, this car that you won with today is the same car you won with in COTA, is that correct?

PHIL SURGEN: That's correct.

THE MODERATOR: Can you tell us about that.

PHIL SURGEN: Really comes down to just the whole Next Gen platform. All the cars are the same, have the same range of adjustments, same group of parts.

All the cars right now are essentially universal. We took that car after it was done at COTA, cleaned it up, set it up a little bit differently to come here. There's no reason it can't race at a different type of track, an oval, next time,



downforce oval.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. Ross was saying he was going to stay there and not move. He didn't want to make a mistake. Did you talk about that or did he come to that decision on his own?

PHIL SURGEN: In the moment he comes to that decision on his own. Obviously leading up to the event, we've talked through a lot of different scenarios. One word that keeps reoccurring is "patience." You have to be calculated in your moves and have patience. That's exactly what he did. He executed perfectly.

Q. Two wins. Did you have any idea you guys had that in you?

PHIL SURGEN: I knew this group of guys had the potential in them. Whether we were going to get 'em or not is a different story. After the first win and really after the consistency in the top five, the instances we haven't finished in the top five, honestly it's been engine, it's been wrecks. We've had strong-performing cars everywhere.

I have all the confidence in the world in this group that we can continue to run, be a contender every week.

Q. Can you use this car every week?

PHIL SURGEN: It would be really difficult to turn it around every week. Every third or fourth week, with the cleanup and the prep time that goes into it, you could use it every third or fourth week pretty easily.

Q. Do you know, is this car, for whatever reason, a better car than the others in your fleet?

PHIL SURGEN: No, I would say it's exactly the same. In fact, there's so many parts on 'em that are interchangeable, there's likely a different group of parts on this car than there was, on the chassis element, than there was on the car when it raced at COTA.

Q. Ross has talked about he's always been an aggressive driver, but trying to control that in certain situations. Patience may have played a role in what he



was able to do today where maybe he wouldn't have been able to have done as well at some other point.

PHIL SURGEN: I've certainly seen a little evolution in my time with Ross. I didn't work with Ross before the start of the '21 season. Likely it was different prior to that.

But just from last year to this year, I certainly have seen that evolve a little bit. His patience inside the car has been better. He's just generally calm. That comes with confidence and that comes with us providing him cars that are capable and crews that are capable of working on 'em and pitting 'em.

Q. These 20-something-year-old drivers are winning week after week. From your time in the sport, are you continuing to be surprised about this? Is it the new car? Are you riding that wave with Ross right now?

PHIL SURGEN: There certainly is an element of the new car this year. It's kind of mixed things up a little bit.

I'm not surprised to see the younger drivers contending every week. If you look back maybe over the last 20 years, the level of preparation has changed over time.

Right now the guys that are the 20-somethings got into the sport when that level of preparation had elevated itself. The guys that are 20-somethings right now are doing things a lot differently than the veterans have in the past.

Some of the veterans have tried to adapt, but that's an edge that the younger drivers have.

Q. When the season started, would you have picked a road course and a superspeedway as the two tracks where Ross would break through?

PHIL SURGEN: In my opinion, superspeedway, no. Road course, yes. I think you look back at our results from last year, we were strong at all the road courses, arguably stronger than we were on the ovals. I expected to be strong on the road courses this year.

Superspeedways, I feel like we have all of the elements to compete, but there's always that element of luck that you never can count on.

Q. What was the mindset or strategy, how pitting worked? Seemed like passing was difficult, it was kind of about leapfrogging on pit road.

PHIL SURGEN: Yeah, generally speaking, when it comes to the manufacturer's strategies, it's a pretty tall order to get that many people organized and communicated

appropriately to choose a pit lap or to choose a pit scenario, how many tires, how much fuel. You use more fuel in the front of the pack than you do in the middle of the pack.

Trying to accommodate the group you're going to pit with, communicate all that well, and execute, is the most difficult element of that.

We can look back at history, we can look back at early in this race. When we were in stage three, we looked back early in the race to see what happened to try to identify any elements of that that might be advantageous to incorporate in the strategy in the closing laps.

THE MODERATOR: Phil, congratulations. Thank you.

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