

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Adam Stevens

THE MODERATOR: We've been joined by Adam Stevens, crew chief for Christopher Bell.

We'll go ahead to questions.

Q. Obviously you weren't very good, at least what we saw on the charts. Do you feel like you're behind, or do you read something different than what we see?

ADAM STEVENS: No, I think that's fair to say. We just didn't unload as good as we hoped or thought that we would.

The speed charts showed it. I think that assessment of the speed on the charts was close to how we felt our car was.

But they're not handing out any trophies today. We feel like we can definitely identify our issues and find some differences between our cars and setups, our car and our teammates' that were a little bit more competitive. Should be able to exploit those overnight and be more competitive tomorrow.

Certainly not what we wanted for the first part of the weekend.

Q. With the way you keep coming back, after today you got everybody where you want 'em?

ADAM STEVENS: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's right. We're just setting the trap (laughter).

No, not quite exactly. I'd have preferred to be P1 and sit on the pole. Jury is still out on the pole, that's for sure. But you want to unload as good as you can. It is not uncommon for us or anyone to not unload as good as you need to be.

It just takes a small error in judgment or fundamental flaw in your thought process to get off as far as we were off. We made one change. It was definitely better. Made one change that was definitely worse. One change didn't really move the needle.

Wish we could have covered a little bit more ground, but I



think we covered enough to be able to help ourselves for tomorrow.

Q. With having won at New Hampshire with it being the tire here, is there much that it falls back on?

ADAM STEVENS: It's not helping right now, I could tell you that (smiling).

Certainly, we leaned heavily on our New Hampshire and Richmond notes, and Gateway, too, on this tire, and Phoenix one. We just didn't push the right buttons or we pushed the wrong combination of buttons, pushed them too hard or not hard enough. One of those things.

It's just part of the process. With this schedule we felt like we could try to optimize the way we were going to unload. We just didn't hit it quite right, so...

We're not worried about it. I don't think you should be either. We got the whole rest of the weekend to figure it out. I got all the confidence in my guys and our tools, and certainly Bell. Doesn't have to be perfect. That's the good thing. We just got to get it close.

Q. The observation throughout the week has basically just been how laid back Logano is because he's been there before. You have won two championships. Even though Christopher has not been to the Final 4, does that help you just be able to know how to get the most out of him?

ADAM STEVENS: I think there's probably some truth to that. But you have to understand, too, he's been through this process, this Final 4 style Playoff system, in the Xfinity cars and the Truck Series.

It's very much the same. The lights are a little brighter, there's a lot more people, a few more obligations the further up the food chain you get. But it's the same type of deal.

Very similar from whatever the routine is in the truck on a weekly basis to the Championship 4. Same thing Xfinity to the Championship 4. It's just an order of magnitude higher in each series probably.

He's certainly been through it. He knows how to roll with



the punches as far as that goes. It's been going smoothly from my seat this week. But I haven't been with him every second of the day. He's had a lot of obligations that weren't required of me.

Q. 10 years since he won the first USAC midget championship. To see how Toyota has helped develop somebody that had tremendous talent, but was clearly raw, to bring them to this level, what kind of a testament is that Toyota's involvement, how they invest in finding young talent?

ADAM STEVENS: Yeah, I mean, I can only answer that from my point of view, obviously. I don't know all that that entails from their point of view.

You can certainly see the effort they've put into acquiring young talent, giving them opportunities. Not just an opportunity to go run a couple races, but an opportunity to learn and grow. They've done an exceptional job at that and have found some really good, young drivers.

Certainly Bell is leading that charge right now. But there's been some other pretty good ones that have come up through our ranks and gone on to other places, too.

They're definitely committed to that, which is important, too. A lot of these other guys, their last race is coming, you know what I mean? I don't mean this weekend, but you know what I mean. To find young guys that are capable, talented, dedicated, grow them, that shows a lot of dedication.

Q. How important is where everybody stacks up in practice? How important is qualifying then?

ADAM STEVENS: I'm not going to tell you it's not important because it is. Everybody did their jobs to the best of their abilities to come here and be as quick as they could be off the truck. All three of them hit it better than we did.

So not going to understate that. But at the end of the day, I'd be surprised if the rank ordering from practice is the ranked ordering for our finish and qualifying.

We just got to see how those chips fall. We haven't really been tested yet, you know? We'll see how that goes.

Qualifying? I don't think all the cars made a mock run. I know we didn't. The track conditions just aren't similar to what we're going to see tomorrow. The track was so crowded, too, the chances you were going to get a good piece of real estate were probably pretty slim.

There's a little bit of lap time probably layered in there, but most guys were quicker in race trim than the guys that made mock runs late.

A lot of questions left to be answered, and I can't wait to see what happens tomorrow.

Q. What has it been like preparing for this Championship 4 compared to the first one you and Kyle made back in 2015?

ADAM STEVENS: Gosh, they're all a little bit different. I don't think we have time to go through all of them.

Specifically in the past with the -- I think it was maybe five in a row that KB and I were part of, they were different because we'd done a fair amount of winning early in the season, scored a lot of points.

At some point in time, bonus points started. I don't know what year that was, maybe '17. It was different because once the Playoffs started, you kind of knew what you had to do. It was about not making mistakes, and just executing. It wasn't about going all out and trying to win.

At some point in this year, after the first round, we had not much drama, good finishes, I won't say breeze through, but performed exactly how we were attempting to perform.

The second round we had some drama, and had to have that walk-off win. Same thing happened in the third round.

I told Bell before the Playoffs started that most years you have that one kind of skin-of-your-teeth moment, where you get through one round just by a couple points. For us it's been in the past with good finishes, it hasn't been with oh, my goodness, we have to win today.

We had two of those moments this year. That was unusual. That's a totally different feeling coming in here, too, because there was twice when we were pretty much dead in the water and didn't even see an avenue to get to the final race, knowing we had to win.

It just felt a little bit out of reach. Then we made it happen. You get a new lease on life. You get kicked down again the next round, then make it happen again.

It's definitely different than winning a bunch of races all year long and taking that momentum with you into the Playoffs.

Q. Christopher said he gets really hard on himself, gets super deflated. You have a never-quit attitude that permeates the team. Can you provide some more

insight into that relationship and the role you've earned as the motivator?

ADAM STEVENS: Oh, boy.

I've never really considered myself that. Every driver I've worked with has been a little bit different. A lot of similarities certainly behind the wheel and mental approach, but a little bit different in the off time, for sure.

Myself, I don't ever feel like I put a car in the truck that's not capable of winning. I know we have some tracks that are stronger for us as a company, as a manufacturer, and some that are weaker. That's never been an excuse to feel like you're not doing your job capable enough to win.

When I look around the shop and see the 450 or 500 employees working their guts out every day, bringing their best to the table, it motivates you to bring your best to the table. Hopefully they see my light on in my office late at night when they're leaving and that motivates them to do a good job.

It's certainly been that way. That's the way Coach expects it. I think it kind of feeds on itself and breeds on itself.

But Christopher, for the example you described, he described himself, I'm taking that as, but that might be true for a very short moment in time during the week, but once we put the past week behind us, he sets his sights on the next weekend, he doesn't look back much.

I think he's a little bit stronger than maybe he gives himself credit for in that regard.

Q. With the struggle in the practice session, do you feel that with this being a weekend where you have that practice session compared to where you probably would have found this out during the race, so do you feel that this is a lifesaver moment for you guys as a team?

ADAM STEVENS: We would have had a 20-minute session at all the tracks except for the superspeedways this year. 20 minutes would have been long enough to figure out how far off we were, for sure. We wouldn't have had all the tools at our disposal to adjust. We haven't even had real tech yet. We have real tech tomorrow. We can change shocks, springs, ride heights, and present it for tech. On a normal weekend we would normally have been through tech, and the list of thing we could change would be pretty small.

We've unloaded further off than what we feel like we are now and been able to make a pretty good day out of it.

Have high hopes in our abilities here.

Q. (No microphone.)

ADAM STEVENS: We didn't really have a plan B. We kind of come up with that as we go. All our hard work, we didn't know we were going to be this far off on balance. It's just infinite plan Bs after plan A doesn't work.

THE MODERATOR: Adam, thank you so much for your time.

ADAM STEVENS: Thank you, guys.

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