

# NASCAR Media Conference

## Press Conference

Saturday, November 5, 2022

*An Interview with:*

**Noah Gragson**

**Justin Allgaier**

**THE MODERATOR:** We'll start our post-championship press conference, and we're now joined by Noah. We will go right to questions.

**Q. We'll start with the handshake. How important or why was that important for you to go over there and offer him that?**

**NOAH GRAGSON:** Because they did a good job. They beat us.

**Q. We're not that far removed I feel like from you being in kind of a similar place to Ty in that every step you turn around people are telling you you're not doing this the right way, you shouldn't say that, you shouldn't do that. Do you think there is a version of Ty that can grow from this, and if you were to have an honest conversation with him, how does he go from where he is now to where you are now going into the Cup Series and kind of turning the page?**

**NOAH GRAGSON:** Yeah, I think I've been in that position before. It takes a lot of things, and it's to be honest with yourself, it's to have honest people around you, to sit you down and say, hey, change needs to be made.

You know, I've had a conversation with Ty the day after Portland and Gateway and let him know how I felt, let him know if he gets into us, what the consequences are going to be, and just -- I used to be buddies with him when he was younger. You know, probably three, four years ago, he was a super cool kid. He really was.

But I don't know, it's just kind of changed over the last couple years, and I've told him that, and he knows that.

I don't want to really go into much more detail about that out of respect for him and whatnot, but I told him that hey, you used to be a super cool kid and you kind of turned into a little bit of a douchebag.

There's your quote, your headliners.



He can still grow from it, and he did a great job. They won the race fair and square today. It takes great people around you to learn, and I think he is capable. He has the potential to learn. He's a great race car driver, and I've been in those shoes, too, where it just seems like you can't do nothing right, and it's you against the world and whatnot. But at the end of the day, I think he's got potential, and he hasn't reached his full potential yet off the track.

**THE MODERATOR:** We're joined by Justin Allgaier, as well, and we'll continue with questions.

**Q. Noah, obviously a lot of talk about Ross Chastain's move after last week. Was there ever any consideration to try that in your position on the last lap?**

**NOAH GRAGSON:** Yeah, I looked about 10 to go into Turn 3. With the pocket, just like the straightaway is street and then it opens up to the right quite a bit. I feel like you need to be on the wall entering through the corner, you can't just bang it.

But after I saw that pocket, I knew my best opportunity was -- after the way we've raced this year and where the record stood between him finishing us off and us finishing him off, yeah, I felt like if I was any closer, I would have got him, but I wasn't, and they won fair and square. We didn't execute our day on pit road, and just got beat.

**Q. I think the last lap there was like a lap car that you had to get around --**

**NOAH GRAGSON:** Yeah, the 13.

**Q. Would that have messed anything up, or you weren't even thinking about that?**

**NOAH GRAGSON:** No, I wasn't even really thinking about -- I wanted to win it fair and square, and I didn't know what would happen if I did try it.

I was more focused on just trying to get a good run off of 2. We were just too tight and I wasn't close enough.

**Q. Noah, I think about the driver you were when you came into the Xfinity Series, the driver and the person**



**that you are now and what a big change. I just wonder now that you're moving up, what is it about the Xfinity Series that you're going to miss maybe the most and maybe what you'll take with you into the next level?**

**NOAH GRAGSON:** I think one would be JR Motorsports, obviously, but just the people in the garage, the other team members. I've grown a lot of relationships over the years with a lot of the different drivers, a lot of the different team members, pit crew guys, which we'll still see each other around the garage, and most importantly, I think Wayne Auton does an unbelievable job for our series. He really does.

I've become pretty close with him over the years and have had our hard times where it's not too fun of conversations in there, but at the end of the day, he wants the best for us. Every single driver out there.

I'm thankful to be able to have competitors like we do in the Xfinity Series. I'm thankful to have Wayne Auton as a series director and all the officials, too. I just have grown such a bond with really every member within the garage, every person throughout the garage, whether it be team member, official, and anywhere in between.

Grateful to be able to have the opportunity these last four years with JR Motorsports. Our 9 team is so tight and we have so much fun. Would have loved to close the year out with a championship, but not meant to be. We just needed to be better tonight.

One thing I'll remember in 20 years is just the relationships that we had with everybody in the garage.

**Q. Noah, on the flipside of that, you're going to the cup series racing for Petty who announced earlier this weekend Jimmie Johnson also joining in. Kind of now that this chapter closes, a new one opens, but not just a new one, probably the biggest one that anybody is going to have because racing for both seven-time champions. What are you looking forward to the most with that opportunity?**

**NOAH GRAGSON:** Well, I think the opportunity is massive for Petty GMS to be able to add Jimmie Johnson as a team owner role and teammate as he's going to be driving some races.

For a young guy like myself who's moving up to the Cup level, it's going to be a rude awakening. It really is. Justin knows the difference between Xfinity and Cup racing; everybody is good. Every lap, every restart, every trip down pit road, every single time, everybody is good in the whole entire field. You're not racing 10 guys, you're racing

30 guys, so it's a lot harder.

I think having Jimmie Johnson as a mentor and a teammate and an owner and a friend, somebody who I can look up to and learn from, I don't think there's any negatives to it. I think there's a lot of positives.

There's definitely going to be challenges. There's going to be adversity. It's not going to be easy, and we have our work cut out for us.

I think the vision that Maury Gallagher, the Petty family, Mike Beam, Joey Cohen, everybody involved, Dave Elenz, what they have, they all want to be successful, and they're actually making moves. People say I want to do this or I want to do that, but they're actually making these moves and putting it into paper and fine print and making them official.

I really do feel like the sky's the limit with this team, and we're going to have to work hard. There's no doubt about that. But excited for the opportunity.

**Q. Justin, five times you've been a contender in this Championship 4. I just can't imagine how much this hurts, to be that close and have to see someone else take away the hardware.**

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** I think tonight was a difficult one, but like Noah said, Ty had the best car. They executed all night. They made good adjustments. They beat us on pit road. They did all the right things. I was pretty disappointed we got the lead there, and there was some things I would do over if we got it back.

We made good adjustments on our car, we just -- at the end there we just -- as the sun went down, we just got a little too free. I was hanging on for all I had. I ran into the fence three or four times. Not sure that the motor isn't blowing up. I mean, we were puffing out; I could see it, I could smell it. I'm pretty sure I broke some parts going across the apron a couple times.

Wasn't the ideal race for us, for sure, but we led a bunch of laps.

And I think probably the hardest part for me, and I just told Dale this on pit road, the fact that none of us from JR Motorsports went to Victory Lane.

I look at every man and woman that works at our shop, and the passion -- I mean, Noah talked about it with relationships. The passion for our team is so incredible in all four of our teams, the late model shop, Wyatt's go-kart and micro stuff. It runs deep all the way through. I wanted

it for everybody that works there.

I know Noah did, as well. Same with Josh. We all wanted to win for our team tonight.

I lost my voice. I was yelling at myself because I let the 54 get to my outside at one point there at the end. And I don't know that that was the difference maker, but it was definitely frustrating to not be able to pull it off tonight.

Proud of our team. We'll come back next year, and we've got an opportunity to do it again. But we're going to probably be a little salty for a few days and then go right back at it.

**Q. What was going on with the dash, and were you able to correct it?**

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** No, I had no gauges from the time we rolled around in our pace lap -- I take that back. Under pace laps they started going in and out, in and out. And then after about the first 15 laps, they were completely gone.

So Jason kept putting tape on it. And we did laugh after the race: It's a lot more fun racing with no gauges. Because he just kept putting tape on it. And if something happens, you're not going to know that it's going to happen first.

Hendrick engine shop obviously does a great job. We tried to give them everything we could, Chevrolet, everybody that's a partner of this organization, we just came up short.

**Q. Noah, losing nine spots on pit road, was that kind of the nail in the coffin?**

**NOAH GRAGSON:** No, it wasn't. Because we came off pit road, we were in eighth, it was what it was. We still had laps left, and we still had opportunity. We weren't wrecked. We weren't in the garage. We still had opportunity.

Just got beat there at the end. Started getting tight, probably needed to be a little freer.

But really proud of everyone's efforts all year long. That's why I'm mad at the result a little bit, but I'm not. I don't know. I felt like last year I was way more mad just because -- I don't know, I think this year I did my absolute best, like I can lay my head down after restarting eighth with 25, 30 to go and getting up to second and almost having a shot to win the race.

I'm content with that. I don't think the driver a year ago, two years ago, three years ago would be able to do that.

I did my absolute best. I drove my ass off. I tried my best and gave it everything I had. Just got beat.

I can't really hang my head after the season that we've had. Eight wins, led a lot of laps. How many laps did we lead, do you know?

**Q. Timing and scoring went to --**

**NOAH GRAGSON:** Did I lead 25 or more? Yes, I got to 1,000 laps led in a season. We had 975.

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** These are the things we think about, just so y'all are aware. You had 10 straight top 10 finishes too to end the season, just so you know. I saw that stat on TV.

**NOAH GRAGSON:** Yeah.

**Q. After all the drama last week, do you feel like Ty raced both of you with respect, gave you room, just minded his P's and Q's so to speak?**

**NOAH GRAGSON:** I think so. After the conversation in Portland that I had with him, we raced really hard at Pocono. I've made plenty of mistakes and been overly aggressive, but Pocono proved to me that he does have the potential, and he's very, very talented.

Sometimes you've just got to put him back in his place a little bit. He races really, really hard, but really, really clean. And he raced like a champion tonight, and he deserves it.

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** Yeah, I think going to that, Noah said something earlier, is that we all make mistakes. We've all been there. We've all done that. How he comes out of this is going to be on him. Whether it be another year here, in the Cup Series.

I think we all kind of agree he's probably going Cup racing next year in the 18, but no official announcement, but I think he's going to have to right some wrongs. But it's a possibility.

As Noah said, he did the best job of any of us tonight. When we all moved up to the top, he stayed on the bottom and he ran his line.

You've also got to think like he's super young, he's lived a different lifestyle than Noah and I have, and he's making decisions based on what he thinks is best. Is that decision always best? Probably not.

But we've all been there, we've done that. He did a great job tonight. He ran the best race, and they had the best car. You can't knock them for that.

I'm disappointed. Again, I'm disappointed we couldn't beat him, but I mean, I don't -- everybody talked all this week like oh, such-and-such is going to wreck the 54 this week. I knew nobody was going to do that. It was a matter of us coming in here and trying to race it out and go for broke, and we did.

**Q. Justin, about your battle with Ty, it was extremely fierce, but it seemed like it was extremely clean. I don't know if you guys made any contact at all. Can you just give us your perspective on that, and did you expect there to be contact?**

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** I think one time we made like slight contact. I was pretty impressed because I felt like I tried to take as much room as I could without having contact.

You know, especially on some of those late race restarts, Josh and I were talking about when we were walking over here, like I pulled a couple moves to try to get clear and get to the lead, and you never know how that stuff is going to do. He had the opportunity to stick it on my door and potentially driving as hard as I do, and if he does at that point potentially we both wreck.

I thought he did a good job in that regard.

But I also felt like we all -- like I would say as a collective group, the four of us, I don't know why we end up 1, 2, 3, 4 in these races, but you look at the history of this race, whether it be here, Homestead, whatever, the Final Four rise to the top, and we were all racing our guts out.

It's not that anybody lets you go, I don't think. Maybe they did, I don't know. Maybe I look at it differently.

But just it was cool to have all four of us up there battling. Obviously I know Josh had his issue on the one restart, but it was cool to have us up there battling and have it be as clean as it was for tonight.

**Q. On you forcing the issue a few times, were you mindful of what had happened over the last week and what he's been saying? Were you maybe taking advantage of the fact that he had to be a little bit more conservative?**

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** No, he was going to get booed either way. I don't mean that in a bad way, but if I put him in a spot and he wrecks me, it's not necessarily his fault. And I think the fans weren't going to care either way.

I mean, I don't know. I don't think I put him in a spot that he couldn't get out of, but he also didn't put me in a spot I couldn't get out of, either. I felt like it was just normal racing.

**Q. That was kind of what I was going to ask you. Did you guys feel like it was such a true championship battle because really for the entire race it was, for all intents and purposes, the four of you that were going to settle it up; that it really came down to being a championship in the truest sense of the word?**

**NOAH GRAGSON:** I think so. I think we all raced with a ton of respect, and we all four raced as champions, in my mind. We raced each other really, really hard, and sometimes doored each other, coming off the tri-oval or through the dogleg or entering the corner, but we raced hard.

For me personally, that's all you can ask for is to race each other as hard as you can. But nobody -- we're all still racing our tails off. Even last night in the truck race, it was an unbelievable finish, and I think we all four raced as champions tonight.

It was really cool.

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** Oddly enough, the best car or truck has won both races. Zane won both stages, won the race. Ty won both stages, won the race. Both got the pole. I don't know if that's any omen for tomorrow, but if it is, you might want to go put some money on Joey for the Cup race.

But what's funny about that is is that when people look back at the box score at the end of the race, they're going to see who won, who got the pole, would won the stages, and it's going to be like oh, man, these two dominated these races, but it wasn't that way. It was wheel to wheel, battling it out.

I think that's why, when you start out in Daytona, we want to get here. We want to get to this Final 4.

Very rarely does it happen the way you envision it. Like I didn't envision last week being the last one in coming to the checkered. Literally we took the white and I was out; and we took the checkered and I was in.

You don't envision it that way, but we still rose to the top. And all four of us battled. And like Noah said, we all gave it everything we had, and then some.

And when you walk away from here -- Noah said he's

going to sleep good tonight. I'm going to sleep good tonight because nothing else I can do.

**THE MODERATOR:** Noah, Justin, congrats on a great season. Thank you for a great race. It was fun to watch.

**NOAH GRAGSON:** Thanks, everyone in the media, for all you guys' hard work over the year. It truly means a lot to myself and us drivers. Thanks for all the long hours and the hard work. We appreciate it.

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