

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Denny Hamlin

Billy Scott



THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by the winning crew chief and the winning owner from 23XI. Billy Scott the crew chief and Denny Hamlin the owner. Congratulations, gentlemen, on the big win here at COTA.

We'll get right to questions.

Q. Talk a little bit about being able to reach this point today after the rough start that you've had to the season.

BILLY SCOTT: Yeah, it was a rough start in some respects. Certainly on the finishing positions. But I think the important thing is that we always knew it was there for speed. So I think we always had the speed there. Daytona, crashed racing for the lead. Vegas, had an incident running inside the top five.

I think it was just a matter of time. It's not like we were wrecking out of races, running in the back. Yeah, nice to finally finish it off, though.

DENNY HAMLIN: Yeah, I mean, it looks bad on the scorecard for the first three races, but he kind of explained it. We knew it was too small of a sample size to honestly judge where they were at. We knew that they were fast, knew it was a matter of time before they kind of marched their way up towards the front.

It's good for them to finally get the finishes they deserve, even though at the beginning of the year they had finishes that probably they didn't.

Certainly they got an opportunity to build a lot of Playoff points between now and the start of the Playoffs and hopefully make a run.

Q. Denny, you had probably a good view of all the craziness there in the three overtimes. How would you describe it? Do you feel fortunate that Reddick won that race? How rare is it to hold everybody off for four restarts?

DENNY HAMLIN: Yeah, I mean, certainly it's a big pressure situation probably for Tyler because you've been the dominant car all weekend, you've had the field covered, and you know at that point when you're leading the race, it's your race to lose.

There's not much to gain. There's only a lot to lose if he doesn't execute, right? For him to manage those pressure situations, execute on restarts, it's huge.

I mean, trust me, you get back where I'm at in the middle of the field and it's just chaos, right? It's just a matter of whether the lane you pick, there's a car sitting in the middle of the track or not whether you're going to get through.

It seems like the racing is a lot cleaner in the first few rows. The one time the strategy worked out perfect, started third on the first green-white-checked, got a caught tire. Just bad luck and whatnot.

I think this says a lot about Tyler's poise. It's what I saw all week in his performance, not only the simulator, he just slows everything down. He's running fast, but he's doing it in slow-motion, which is just a sign of someone that's in control.

Q. (No microphone.)

DENNY HAMLIN: Yeah, I don't know if it's good chaos or not, right? We had two laps to go two hours ago. It just felt like it just kept going on and on.

Again, I don't know what we do about it. I'll talk about it tomorrow (smiling).

Q. How validating is this victory knowing what you saw in Tyler long before he got to be in the 45 ride with the circumstances surrounding Kurt Busch?

BILLY SCOTT: Yeah, no, I think it's why they got him, right? We knew what his potential was. Road courses is where he's shown it in the last six, eight months, being pretty dominant on several occasions. We know he's got that ability everywhere. The last two weeks show that. Had a shot to win it coming down to the last green-white-checked.

Again, it's nice to finish it off here, but that's completely



what we knew he was capable of. Expect there's more to come.

DENNY HAMLIN: Yeah, I mean, it's why I went after him as early as I did. I wanted to get the jump on all the other teams because I knew he was going to be the most coveted free agent in a very, very long time. That's why I got the jump on it. It cost me a lot of money to do it, but it pays dividends.

You have to have that driver that you feel like can carry you to championships and wins for decades. I think we have that guy. It's not going to stop at road courses. Dirt racing, short tracks, speedways, he's got what it takes on every racetrack we go to.

Q. Billy, were you planning on three stops the whole time? Was that something where you didn't mean to get off strategy from everybody else?

BILLY SCOTT: Yes, it was most likely three. Not at those particular laps (smiling).

So, yeah, when the yellow come out early, obviously you expect everybody else in a situation like that that's kind of on the fence to do the opposite of you when you've been the dominant car all weekend.

Kudos to Tyler for staying focused. That was really the only time we were back in traffic, and he dealt with it really well. Made quick work of it, kept the car in one piece.

We still thought it was going to work out the best, even without the way the yellows fell. So we did that with the plan of two-stopping from there, right? That still fell into the three-stop strategy window we looked at in the beginning.

Untimely caution right outside the last fuel window that made it more of a close race than we were wanting. But we had already got the lead at that point. Fortunately able to run some heads up and he had speed.

Q. Billy, walk me through your emotions after Tyler crossed the finish line. You seemed almost relieved, got the water bath. What was it like for you? Is it relief? It feels like it's different for you.

BILLY SCOTT: Well, a little bit of everything. Relief, for sure, especially this weekend when you have the dominant car, he's fastest in practice and qualifying. Didn't get the pole there. That's one element of it.

But the other one is just to kind of put that note that everybody is bringing up of the bad luck to start the year, the bad finishes, the bad points position. Everybody's

heard all that. The team's had to endure that.

We know where the potential was. But the guys that are working on this car, the guys back at the shop, they don't always get to live it and feel the emotion that we do, know where the potential is.

For that to happen, for him to dominate the race, have to endure those restarts, come home like that, it's just very validating, very rewarding for everybody that puts the work in behind the scenes.

We've wondered where we were at on our road course program now for a while. We struggled last year. To bring him here, that was one of the hopes, too, was that he could help guide us in the right direction. Certainly did.

It's nice when all that comes together.

Q. Billy, obviously you were watching on top of the box. With all the cautions, overtime after overtime, there were some cars that pitted for tires, made their way back up. Ross had gone from spinning to the top five at the end. Did a sense of fear of the cars with new tires overtaking you as the cautions kept coming out?

BILLY SCOTT: No, I think it was more the fear of what level of aggression guys behind us were willing to use.

We felt confident in Tyler's speed, once we cleared him off of turn two, that it was over. But that was a lot of opportunities for people to do otherwise entering one.

For the most part the guys that we were around raced very clean. They gave each other lanes to navigate through there. But it can go otherwise in a hurry.

I think that was the most nerve-wracking part, was getting through turn one.

Q. Denny, I don't know if you heard but Kurt got really emotional and choked up on the last lap of the broadcast, said that the team was in good hands, he was proud to be part of the organization. I was wondering what this moment is like to have Kurt in a different role for 23XI?

DENNY HAMLIN: Yeah, I mean, it for sure would be for Kurt. He was supposed to be in this car this year. Obviously with his full-time career being cut short, it's different. It makes you feel different when you see your car going around the racetrack.

As a team, we've been thrown a lot of curve balls. I think

we had last year five drivers in our cars, when we had two full-time drivers, and that's all we were planning on.

Kurt has been an integral part of what we do week in, week out. He shows up to practices. He shows up to our debriefs. Really helps with our partners. Just a great asset to our team.

If he can just bring one thought or idea to our drivers in a weekend of something that he sees from the outside, then he's worth his weight in gold to us.

We love having Kurt. He's a great teammate. He really bonds the team. He brings RC cars to the race shop, has the guys involved in doing that. He's still a driver for 23XI and team member for life.

THE MODERATOR: Denny, Billy, congratulations on the big win. Good luck next weekend at Richmond.

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