

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Steve Phelps

Steve O'Donnell

THE MODERATOR: Good morning. Thank you for being here with us in lovely Phoenix. I'm here with NASCAR president Steve Phelps and chief operating officer Steve O'Donnell for our annual state of the sport.

Steve.

STEVE PHELPS: First of all, welcome to Phoenix. It's great to have you all here, as we typically do to take a moment and thank our media corps for all of you do for our great sport. Whether this is your 38th weekend or your first, each of you play a role in bringing our sport closer to our race fans. So I want to thank you for all you do.

Secondly, before we get into this weekend and the season overall, I did want to take a moment to congratulate Kevin Harvick on his amazing career, and Aric Almirola. We're super excited to have Kevin in the booth next year. Not exactly sure what Aric's plans are, but I'm sure we'll see him around the racetrack somewhere.

This is the fourth year that we've been in Phoenix for our championship. I think this community has embraced our championship. If you think about what happened from a fan perspective, we've been sold out of the race on Sunday since June. Early sellouts last year and the year before as well. So it's great to be in Phoenix.

Also the local community, what the local community has done for our sport. When you walk off the airplane here and you see the city of Phoenix, the pageantry and displays and whatnot that they have, despite it being a World Series market, we feel welcome here. We also feel welcome by the corporate community.

A big shout-out to Latasha Causey, who has been here a little over a year. Latasha and her entire team have done a spectacular job in making sure that this facility looks like it does, which is spectacular.

We're looking forward to crowning three champions on their national series with our Craftsman Truck Series, our Xfinity Series and obviously our Cup Series on Sunday.



75th anniversary season. I think it has been an extraordinary season in a lot of different levels. I promised Steve I would not steal all of his portions on the competition side, which he is going to speak to.

I think the competition itself has been as it was last year: extraordinary. I think it really is a testament to the Next Gen car. I won't get into a lot further of that because Steve will handle that.

I think about this championship. You think about our racing. When we crown our champion on Sunday, we'll talk specifically about Cup right now, we're going to have a Playoff system that I believe is the toughest in sports.

If you think about the style of racing that we have and the incredible competition on the racetrack, think about the variety that our drivers had to go through, right? They raced on dirt, they raced on concrete, they raced on asphalt, they raced on short tracks, street courses, road courses, superspeedways. Is there another racing series on the planet that can say that? I don't think there is. I think we've got the best racing in the world, and I think it's the most competitive racing in the world.

When we crown that champion on Sunday, that champion is going to be very deserving. I've heard some things, there were people like, Hey, listen, this is gimmicky. It's not. It's an incredible, incredible Playoff system that rewards the best drivers in our sport.

As I think about the 70th anniversary, as well, I think a moment of reflection around what are the key objectives or key metrics that we have. I talked about competition briefly. I would also go to attendance. I talked sellouts here. 50% more sellouts this year than we had last year.

I think everyone who goes to the racetrack can agree that not only do the crowds look better, and they do, but the energy level coming to a NASCAR race is as good as it's been in a decade. It is our goal to continue to have growth in attendance at all of our racetracks.

Other would be consumption. If you look at digital and social consumption for NASCAR for this year, it's up. Television has been a bit of a mixed bag with the Cup being down, low single digits, as well as our Craftsman



Truck Series, low single digits, the Xfinity Series is up.

I wouldn't say we haven't had great luck particularly in the first half with weather. Weather wasn't our friend. But I'm super excited to get us back on a growth pattern from a television perspective next year because we'll have lower comps than we did this year. Excited about that.

NBC came back in a powerful way. Those metrics are up. If you consider back in March we were down 15%, now we're down mid single digits, we're happy with where that is.

One thing I want to talk to right up front, I'm sure there may or may not be a question on this, is where we stand with our media rights. Our media rights, the amount of interest in attaining our media rights for '25 and beyond exceeded our expectations.

It is our expectation that not only having a great result with the CW with our Xfinity Series, and what's going to be an incredible 33-race schedule on broadcast television, we believe that we're going to have a very strong result with media partners that will look at a combination of broadcast, cable and streaming to some degree.

What that looks like, I don't know. Are we getting towards the end of this process? We are. Did I think we would have a result earlier? I did. But we haven't. It's an incredibly competitive marketplace.

With that said, I want to assure all our race fans, anyone who is listening, certainly the media corps here, we have had tremendous interest in our sport from a media rights standpoint.

The next one I want to talk to is charters. I'm not going to get into the negotiations, but I will give you kind of where we are to the degree that I can without getting into too much specificity.

If you would ask the race teams do we think we're making progress with NASCAR on where things stand in the extension of our charters, I think our race teams would say yes.

We understand that race teams want three things. I'll talk about charters specifically or Cup specifically. Honestly, it's the same thing for Xfinity and Trucks.

If you think about race teams, what do they want? They want to be competitive on the racetrack, they want to make sure they're break-even or profitable. As it relates to the charter specifically, they want to increase their enterprise value.

I won't get into numbers where we stand from an enterprise value standpoint, but when the charters change hands at the end of the year, we know at least one will, there will be a significant multiple that race teams will have from a charter enterprise value standpoint.

Again, as I said, Xfinity and Trucks want the same thing, right? They want to make sure they are competitive on the racetrack and that there is an opportunity to seek profitability.

I think that goes into what will be my last area, which is industry collaboration. On a lot of different fronts, and Steve can talk to this, the collaboration with our industry has never been better, whether you're talk about OEs, racetracks, teams or you're talking about drivers. There is an energy level and excitement level that we are moving together as one.

If we're going to optimize the growth of this sport, we need to continue to do that in '24 and '25 and beyond. We are putting plans in place to make sure that we do that. So charter extensions in addition to having fast race cars coming to the racetrack to be competitive, we need to make sure our race teams are helping to grow the sport. We need to do the same thing from a driver perspective. What things can we put in place that allow us to be most successful with the drivers, having the drivers help promote the sport to the degree that they're not doing today. We think there's room there.

As it relates to the racetracks, to make sure our racetracks are also putting their best foot forward, whether the racetracks that we own, Speedway Motorsports, Independence. The collaboration there also has never been better. Can we do better? We can and we will.

Lastly, I wanted to acknowledge Steve O'Donnell and Steve's leadership for this sport. Steve currently oversees competition, strategy, innovation, our racetracks, international. Recently have announced that Steve will add some responsibilities in the areas of sales, marketing, content, digital, social, broadcast. Steve's title won't be changing, but his responsibilities are changing. I'm super excited to have Steve take those additional roles.

The last thing I would say, so I can embarrass Steve, is today is Steve's birthday. So please be nice to Steve when you ask questions (smiling).

Over to you.

STEVE O'DONNELL: Thank you, sir.



I would echo what Steve said. The time and energy not lost on us, how many races we have through all of our portfolio of races. I saw some of you over in France covering Garage 56 and Le Mans. Huge effort. All of that has really been helpful for the sport. Thank you. I would echo what Steve said.

I'm going to be brief because we have a championship coming up. Cool to see the ladder system. Sean Hingorani, shot at an are ARCA championship today. Joey Denowitz in the back who has come onboard to help us really work on that ladder system with youth racing. It's going to be huge for us as we look at how someone gets into racing, how they go up through the ladder system, clean that up a little bit. A huge focus for us going forward. Appreciate Joey coming onboard and looking at that.

I also want to give some credit, Steve talked about the collaboration. We have what I think is the most trust in the garage area we've ever had. That's a testament to John Probst, Elton Sawyer, Tom Bryant here as well.

The only way we get better is by collaborating with the industry. They have to have the trust of our leadership to be able to come to them, whether it be rules packages, safety initiatives, to be able to work together.

I think there's an understanding that we are not always going to get things right, but we're open-minded, we're going to look at things and react quickly where we need to. I believe you're seeing that.

If you look at the second year on the Cup side of our Next Gen car, where we are today, if you look at last year to this year, what did we want to see? Clearly a focus on safety. Wanted to make improvements there. Wanted to see continued excellence on the racetrack in terms of the number of drivers that are able to win, and probably even more importantly the number of organizations that were going out and being able to compete, not have a fluke win, but really compete for race wins race in and race out.

You're seeing 23XI, Roush Racing, Trackhouse, JTG go out there and really have a shot to compete. We saw 15 different winners. 10 of the 16 organizations won a race this year. That's incredible. The OEMs have all been represented. All three OEMs are in our Final 4.

Going back to Steve's point, you have to win and perform on the racetrack. All of our OEMs know that. Three of the four had the most wins for the season, second most wins for the season, tied for third most wins in the season for our four championship contenders. A lot of quality throughout the year that built up through the championship. So we're really proud of what we've seen on the racetrack

and the results that we've seen, as well.

Are there some things we're going to continue to look at? Absolutely. Short track, road courses. You've seen some improvements that we've looked at, not exactly where we want to be, but Goodyear and our partnerships worked really well. The drivers will be meeting with Goodyear today at 5:30 to continue to work together on the race and rules package around our short tracks and road courses.

A lot of different things we're going to look at both from an efficiency standpoint for the race teams then what you see on track as far as quality of racing. Certainly like the momentum we're seeing. Really important that we saw what we did at Martinsville, competitive race. That's the momentum we want to continue to build on.

Probably the last piece I want to address is a lot of questions last year, rightly so, on the safety aspects of the car. The work by Dr. John Patalak and the teams together collectively talking about what we've learned, what we could do, and quickly reacting to new parts and pieces on that car, the front and rear clip.

We had two really, really severe incidents this year. That car held up. We were able to learn from that. As I've said, will repeatedly say, I think everyone on our team will say, it's an endless journey for us. We want to be on the forefront of safety. We are going to continue to learn. When we find something, we're going to implement it and react. Proud of the group and the effort.

I think most proud of all four championships here and the quality of drivers we have, not only in the ARCA West Series, but you look at Trucks, Xfinity and Cup. Really exciting group of drivers coming up, both young and some seasoned veterans.

But the future is really bright when we look at the ability these teams have and the momentum they're bringing to the sport, not only for our championship but for years beyond.

With that...

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, birthday boy. We'll say your questions.

Q. Charter negotiations. When you look at the deal, when ideally would you like to see a deal completed by with the teams?

STEVE PHELPS: I think the first thing we need to do is get through our media rights. I think the race teams have seen that.



With that said, we're currently having discussions with our race teams. We had a meeting last Wednesday with a team owner council where the entirety of the meeting was about charters, charter extensions.

We've acknowledged that we want to change the paradigm for our race teams and we need to make sure our race teams are profitable, competing on the racetracks. We are interested in having their enterprise value climb, as I said earlier.

No timeline, but we are as we're finalizing our media rights talking about other portions of what our charters would look like that are not financial.

Q. One of the sticking points during the negotiations is about the length of the contract. The teams have said they would like it in perpetuity. My understanding is NASCAR is not in favor of that. Is NASCAR okay with teams having franchises forever or would you like to see a cap on that? If not, why would you want to see a cap on that?

STEVE PHELPS: We won't get into the negotiations specifically, but I would say that I'm confident that the teams and NASCAR will come to an agreement that is fair for race teams, fair for NASCAR, and help grow the sport. I think that's what we're going to do.

Q. Talking about the short track and road courses, you've tried a lot of things. One thing you haven't tried is to increase horsepower, yet that is what money drivers often say needs to be done. Some of the engine builders are open to it. Is that under consideration at all, and why or why not?

STEVE O'DONNELL: I think everything is up for consideration. We've proven that. You have to factor in what are the costs involved as well, right? It's not as simple as just upping the horsepower. You better be ready for all your OEs to be onboard. It better make sense for any potential new OEM and technology. It's not just a short-term answer.

For us, we're going to look at shifting specifically around that at our next test and see what we can do. There will be variations. Also some aero things we do with the underbody. There's some things we found in Richmond from an aero standpoint that could work as well.

Nothing to report in terms of yes we're going to do that. Open to everything, but I would say short-term more around shifting and the aero package.

Q. You've talked about interest internationally, wanting to go international. There was a lot of talk about going to Montreal next year. Why is NASCAR not going to Montreal next year? Is that opportunity still open? What does 2025 look like internationally?

STEVE O'DONNELL: I think 2025 and really beyond look like there's a number of opportunities. So when we looked at Montreal, absolutely there was interest on both sides. I wanted to dispel kind of some of the rumors that were out there that Iowa came in in place of Montreal. It's not the case. In an ideal world we actually wanted to potentially bring on both racetracks.

When you look at our sport, and the ability to go into a marketplace, really grow the sport, we want to make sure we have all the levers in place to not just kind of come in and out, we want to build NASCAR within that particular country or marketplace.

As we continued to talk in Montreal, we probably realized a little quick to be able to make that happen. In the meantime there's been a lot of discussions in other areas not only in the U.S. but other opportunities in North America and outside the U.S.

For us it was a little bit of a pause and let's evaluate all those opportunities together, look at what's in the best interest of all of our fans for '25 and beyond to make sure that we put the most exciting schedule together possible.

Q. OD, there's been times this year where there have been issues with the officiating in the tower, inconsistencies. This off-season, is there going to be some time to review or take some steps to button up what's been going on in the tower to not have as many of those issues?

STEVE O'DONNELL: So I would take a little bit of issue with many of those issues.

I think as a sport, I put our officials up against any sport in the world. I'd also put our officials from an integrity standpoint up against anyone in the world.

When they make a mistake, they don't hide. They go to the media. They go to a race team and they correct it. Doesn't happen in all sports.

Do we want to get everything right? We do. But I would remind everyone there's no timeouts, there's no going back to New York to review something. You're racing. Every second of every race you got to make a call. You got to be able to defend that. They're able to come in and defend the call they made. If we made a mistake, we're going to

address it.

We meet every Tuesday. We go over everything that happened in race control. We talk to the drivers, the owners. We want to be perfect for sure, but we're not going to get everything right. We're not going to get everything right in '24 or '25 as well.

But I promise you that the best interests of getting it right every single second of every race, it's always our goal.

Q. With the short track package, OD, would you be up to just having something other than a one-size-fits-all type of car to improve the product on the short tracks and the road courses? If that meant a different engine package in that car or different aerodynamic parameters for that car, is that something that NASCAR would entertain?

STEVE O'DONNELL: Yeah, I think that's one of the things you saw with the test. Looking at the underbody of the car, certain areas we could remove on short tracks and road courses that would make an improvement, we would absolutely do that.

Q. Regarding Fontana, we've recently seen visual evidence that the demolition of the two-mile oval in Fontana has begun. Can you confirm that? Can you also provide an update on if the plan is still to put a short track there, if the parameters of that layout would be like a Richmond, Martinsville, Bristol hybrid? If that's going to happen, what is the target for a complete date?

STEVE PHELPS: I like the three-part question, but at least they're all together. A common thread, right (smiling)?

I will take this one.

I would say, yes, I will confirm that demolition has begun. I would say that we are still planning on building a short track in Fontana. What the timing of that is, I don't know. This isn't the best time to be building based on inflation, the cost of capital, et cetera. But our intention is to continue to be in the southern California market. For 2024 will be at the Coliseum. It is our intention to build a short track in the Inland Empire.

Q. (No microphone.)

STEVE PHELPS: Yeah, it's going to be a short track. Most likely be a half-mile racetrack. What exactly that looks like... We've got renderings, we've got what it looks like. We are ready to go when the time is right.

Q. (No microphone.)

STEVE PHELPS: That's a good question that we're not ready to talk about because we're not going to talk about the '25 schedule. Steve alluded to a couple things we could potentially look at. But the southern California market is important to us.

Q. I talk a lot with fans on the radio, and it seems to me that the fans that are iconic, long-time fans are understanding change and embracing it more than I recall them doing. What is your feedback saying about that? How can the drivers help sell the sport more than they are now, what you envision they could do that they're not doing?

STEVE PHELPS: Go ahead and take that (laughter). I'm just kidding. It's his birthday, we'll be nice.

Let me start with a ladder. I think what can drivers do? I think as we look forward in '24, '25 and beyond, this is a question that Jenna asked last year with respect to 'driver star power'.

I think for us, our drivers are fantastic. They're interesting. They're heroes when they get into the race car. We need to expose them in a greater way to both existing fans, nurturing that relationship with the existing fans, and future fans.

How do you do that? One of the ways we can do that is we have a brand-new production facility that we're building out in Concord next to our R&D facility, which will have two main components to it. It will be kind of the live broadcast component, then something we call NASCAR Studios, which is essentially content.

We think the opportunity to create content, interesting content, whether it's short form or series like what we're doing with Netflix or whatever that may be, to serve fans where they are is an important component to it.

Our drivers are cool. They're interesting. We think we've got the best racing in the world. So all those combinations together we think will allow our drivers to build their own brands. If we build our driver brands, then the sport's going to have the best success for long-term growth.

Your first question with respect to the racing?

Q. Fans understanding change.

STEVE PHELPS: I think that's fair. I think for every Chicago street race that we've done, you juxtapose that



with North Wilkesboro and the All-Star Race. I would say those two events were fairly significant events, but very different from each other.

80% of the people who bought a ticket to the Chicago street race had never been to a NASCAR race in their life. I would suggest if you went to North Wilkesboro, you probably had a number that was like 80 people that had never been to a NASCAR race. It's a very different animal and that's okay.

Why wouldn't we want to do that? You think of the short track in the hills, a major metro downtown in Chicago, I think that's a cool thing.

Yes, I listen to your show often, and you hear race fans talking about that. Hey, maybe Chicago street race wasn't everyone's cup of tea, but it was interesting. After we announced Chicago, with our research, the number of fans that said, That was a whole lot better than I thought it was or would be. That's an important thing, too.

We're trying to serve over our 38 weekends across three national series all kinds of opportunities for fans to be engaged in our sport.

I think that we do a better job than most sports, honestly, at listening to our race fans, what's important to them, how do we serve them, because it's important to us.

STEVE O'DONNELL: I would add one thing that we really want to focus on going forward, too, with our broadcast partners and others is just how hard the sport really is. I think for some of the new fans coming in, there's not a lot of difference between our 'fans who have been with us' and new fans.

When someone is talking about Kyle Larson, he's able to hit his mark, what does that mean? If Kyle Larson gets out here on Sunday and is able to hit a spot that's an inch wide on a racetrack, lap after lap, that's hard. Showcasing that, why he's so talented, why he's different from other drivers is going to be really important for us going forward.

I think that's an opportunity for us to really showcase the skill that's involved on any form of racetrack, as Steve talked about, but particularly on ovals and what happens is going to be an important area for us to focus on going forward.

Q. You talked about driver star power. The industry lately has had a conversation around the topic of whose responsibility it is to build. You talked about NASCAR, Netflix, what you guys are doing. Where does the responsibility come from? Are you supposed

to be building this, are the teams, the drivers supposed to be doing it themselves? Who is lacking in that area, and what needs to happen to make that better?

STEVE PHELPS: Listen, the answer is yes. The responsibility is with NASCAR, the responsibility is with our race teams, the responsibility is with our drivers.

I think that as we move forward, putting things in place that will allow for the success there is important because we will not optimize our growth if the entire industry doesn't come together. I include racetracks in that, too, which is why I included that in my up front.

It's important to grow driver brands. I've heard from others, the race teams, saying, Hey, we want to build our own brands as race teams. I'm for that, too. If Hendrick Motorsports can build Hendrick Motorsports, and it leads to more engagement from our race fans, I love that.

I do know that drivers becoming more popular, increasing driver star power, is absolutely going to grow the sport, as well. So we need to make sure that we're putting things in place that will allow that to happen.

Q. Yesterday unprompted Blaney said to us, Unfortunately for you guys there's just no drama, there's no excitement, it's just the four of us. There's no bad blood. Dale Jr., I think the phrase he used is 'These guys are just not very dynamic and aggressive'. How do you overcome that? You've been talking about the energy on-site is good at events. When you have the participants and the people here saying these four could have been more dynamic, this is who we're stuck with, how do you overcome that?

STEVE O'DONNELL: I guess I would say, What does that mean? You have arguably two of the best race car drivers in the world going out to compete for a championship. I'm a little bit confused.

Q. (No microphone.)

STEVE O'DONNELL: I'd say you've heard from Kyle Larson and Christopher Bell in terms of the U.S. what they're doing on different surfaces. You have Ryan Blaney who has gone out there and won. I'd say pretty dynamic. I think you've spent some time with Ryan Blaney, he's a pretty fun guy. William Byron, what he's done, what he stands for.

Everyone is not going to be a certain personality that drives things. I think we've got to look at what they do to represent our sport. I'm proud of those four drivers and



what they do to represent our sport.

I think going back to what Steve said, there's things that we've got to do as a sport to really showcase their talent more on the racetrack, right? I think that will help us. We're not going to be a soap opera. We're a sport that's going to go out there and race and showcase the talent of our athletes. With that will come personality. With that will come some storytelling. We've got to do a better job certainly around storytelling.

I think I can speak for Steve on this, I'm proud of the Final 4 we have in all of our series. Certainly some people do some things differently, right, outside of a race car. That's for us I think as a sport. You asked the right question, and we've talked about it's on everybody, race teams, the tracks, what we're doing at track to showcase our drivers.

Going back a little bit old school, some of the things we used to have this stages at tracks, autograph sessions, things we may have gotten away from. Getting the drivers with their helmets off, getting that personality out there a little bit more.

I'd reverse it a little bit. I think we have a big opportunity as a sport because we have a crop of young drivers for fans to come in and embrace. Now we have to do the job, as do they, to say, Hey, come root for me, come along for the ride. It's a lot of young drivers that we need to have fans embrace and latch onto and show them why.

STEVE PHELPS: I think that's an important component as well about the young drivers. The average age of our Championship 4 on the Cup side is 28. The oldest driver is 31. You have either a two-time champion in Kyle Larson or a first-time champion in the other three.

I will go back to my opening. I think these guys, if you get here and you're the Championship 4, you deserve it, honestly in all three series, national series. I'm excited about what we're going to see on the racetrack Friday, Saturday and Sunday. I think there's going to be incredible drama.

I don't think that any of those four drivers in any of the four series is just going to lay over and let someone win. They're not going to. They put the helmets on, they strap in, and it's game on. That's what they do and they do it better than anybody in the world.

Q. Having covered this sport for four decades, having seen how much good NASCAR's diversity program has done in the last two decades, how is the America First legal complaints to the EEOC going to affect NASCAR's diversity program?

STEVE PHELPS: I'm proud of the work that we've done in the areas of diversity inclusion to broaden our sport. Our sport is about welcoming all race fans, right? That's what we want to do. We are going to continue efforts to have the entire country, the entire world, come to our facilities, watch on television, because it's about a love for racing.

I think our racing and our sport in general, but racing specifically, is a great opportunity for people to come together. That's what we want to do.

We're going to continue to make sure that we are broadening our fan base, and broadening our fan base across every segment of this population - young, old, black, white, male, female, all of it - because that's how we're going to grow.

Our job when we wake up in the morning, How can we grow this sport? We're going to do it with all kinds of programs to meet potential race fans where they are, or existing race fans where they are. I think that's the responsibility of anyone who works within this sport, certainly those that work in NASCAR.

Q. OD, we saw that NASCAR brought stage breaks back to the road courses in October. Is that going to continue into 2024?

STEVE O'DONNELL: I would say that we are strongly looking at that. I would say 99% there will be some type of stage break. We do want to look at the incentives during the race. There was a lot of challenges from the race teams of strategy, who stays out or points. I think we want to take some time with the teams and drivers to figure out what's the best use of that, maybe looking at the points system as well. But would anticipate stages, for sure.

Q. Steve O'Donnell, if I understood you correctly, you said earlier there is a possibility that NASCAR leaves the American continent to race somewhere else in a foreign country. Can you tell me how is the cooperation with the FIA especially on the safety side of construction of race cars, including NASCAR Cup cars?

STEVE O'DONNELL: I would say first of all, really proud of what we've done in North America in terms of safety and working with the FIA. We go through (indiscernible). We have great cooperation between NASCAR and INDYCAR and all of the forms of motorsports in the U.S. I think you're seeing some of the technology we've actually come up with be utilized in other forms of racing, which is terrific to see.

For us, it will be a delicate balance depending on where we go, closer relationships with certain FIA leaders in specific countries, some we have to get to know.

We'll continue to look at what forms of racing we would bring outside the U.S., what technology is under the hood. A lot of opportunities for us as a sport, be it alternative fuels, electric, hydrogen. Everything's on the table, which is unique for I think us as a sanctioning body in terms of having that Garage 56 program, having our Next Gen car designed specifically for all kinds of different power units.

We're excited about the opportunities and can vary those depending on where we're at, country or continent.

Q. OD, a year or so ago there was a lot of talk about EV cars, that shelved. My understanding is you have made strides in that department. Can you elaborate, confirm what's going on there?

STEVE O'DONNELL: Yeah, a lot of work's gone on at the R&D department around EV. We have a car. We have an alternative body style with that car. I would not look for us specifically to go racing with it. I think you could see it showcased at certain events next year. But there's other forms that we want to look at.

I'm actually headed to Japan Thursday to go look at hydrogen racing specifically. We've got a contingent heading over to Japan to look at that.

We want to kind of test each and every form. Really excited about what our teams put together around an electric car. Again, wanted to showcase that to the fans and explore other technologies, as well.

Q. In 2017 you said there's increasing excitement around NASCAR. We continue to have ongoing dialogue with a number of auto manufacturers with their interest in joining the sport. Where do we stand with OEMs so many years later?

STEVE O'DONNELL: It's a question that we keep getting. Rightly so.

There is certainly interest. I think one of the reasons we went over with Garage 56 was to continue to spur that interest.

The challenge remains for us what engine package are we going to be running, specifically around Cup. The good news is all of our existing OEs are very open to dialogue now about where the new technologies are going.

As everybody here reads about the auto industry. It's in

flux, right? There's a lot of technologies being looked at. Things change almost monthly in terms of what is going to be in the hands of consumers.

We need to get that right. I think the dialogue that we're having now with our OEs is allowing us to have those conversations with potential new partners.

It's part of the trip when we go over to Japan to look at that.

It was part of the trip when we went to Le Mans, to have conversations with new OEs. As Steve talked about earlier with the charter discussions, as we look at our team owners, to be able to see a new OEM or two with our car owners and bring some interest into the sport. It remains a goal.

Q. Birthday Steve, earlier you said about the effort of not wanting to be a soap opera, more that we're a professional racing organization. In a world which sadly seems to gravitate towards soap opera, whether it be media entities or what people like to talk about, how difficult is the balance to stay relevant when you want to rely on the competition on the track, but there may be another element of society that gravitates towards the drama and the other stuff?

STEVE O'DONNELL: Yeah, I think it's a great question. It's something that we look at.

We want to do both. I don't mean be a soap opera. We need to at all the off-track stories of who our drivers are, who our race teams are, what goes into the sport.

When they're tuning in on the weekend, we want to continue that storyline. We want to have a great product on the track. We want both of those to marry up. If there's interest in a specific driver or team, make sure that we're delivering across all platforms so we're able to tell the story, we're able to deliver that week in, week out on the racetrack and build that momentum throughout the season.

It's going to be important for us to do both in a smart way that relates to not only our existing fans but potential new fans. That's around the schedule, what you see on track, then telling the stories that go on from Monday through Friday, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your questions. Thank you for being with us today. Steve, any parting words?

STEVE PHELPS: We didn't practice this part (smiling).

All I would say is, again, appreciate you all being here. I think, as I said, we're going to have a great ARCA race this afternoon. The race this evening... It's the culmination of

what started back in February, and here we stand
somehow at our championship race. We're excited about
what that looks like.

Again, want to say thank you to each and every one of you
for what you do for our sport. Thanks.

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