

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Kyle Larson

THE MODERATOR: We welcome driver of the No. 5, Kyle Larson. Kyle, any thoughts on tonight's race?

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, it was fun. It was good to get a lot of green flag laps in. Restarts in the first half were fun. I was trying to all figure it out, and was surprised the second half ran as long as it did, too. Got crazy at the end, but able to get a top 5 again here three years in a row fifth. We'd like to be better, but I felt like our car was better. Just a good point to work on it, try to get better for the other short tracks.

Q. Just the fact that we got this race in this weekend, the decision to move it to Saturday night, what did you think about it, and just the fact that we were able to do something like this so flexibly?

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, it was awesome. I was not planning on racing anything other than a heat race today and had no thought that -- like running the whole race was actually an option.

Cliff had asked me if I had heard the rumors or whatever around 11:30 or so, and that got me excited.

Happy that they were able to do that, and obviously I'm sure they take a huge financial hit, NASCAR does, but I think at the same point, the crowd is awesome out there for a spur-of-the-moment race and free admission and all that, so hopefully a lot of these fans who have never been to a race before will now fall in love with the sport and venture out and kind of grow from there.

Maybe this could accidentally work out really well for NASCAR.

Q. Can you explain what happened between you and Bubba that sent him around there the last few laps?

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, so he was really fast there on one of the long runs there at the end and I let him go because he was way faster. The restarts get crazy. I think it was the second to last restart, and I was able to get in front of him, and then the leaders got started racing, and that was right when Ty Gibbs got back in line and Bubba just



decided to run through me and sent me through Ty and spun him. So I hate that because we were running fifth, sixth and seventh. I thought we would settle in, get to the finish.

From there, I was like, okay, whatever, that's the style of this racing.

I haven't seen any of the replays from the last restart, but he got me again and then got me again the next corner. I think at that point that was three times to my none, so I wanted to get him back before the checkered. I wasn't trying to spin him out or anything; I was just trying to shove him through the corner like he was doing to me, and he ended up going around.

Product of this racing and finally reaching my limit, I guess, but yeah, just how it goes.

Q. If this is the last Clash that's held here, how would you sum up this three-year experiment in Southern California?

KYLE LARSON: Yeah, I haven't heard what the plans for the future of this event is, but if it has ran its course, I think -- I applaud NASCAR. I think they've done -- pulled this off in a great way. I would have never expected the first year that it would have been as legit as it is and the atmosphere is great. It was not expecting the atmosphere to even be this cool tonight.

There's definitely a place for this style of event, I think, in our sport, for the Clash or whatever, if it moves around to different states or countries or whatever. They've proven that they can do it. They've proven that they can get a crowd. It's a very diverse crowd out there. I just walked through it to get to here. Having the Mexico series here also is a great thing, too.

Yeah, I hope they can take this kind of model and move it around and grow it and try and broaden our fan base some.

Q. With this being the last race with the 2023 short track package, is there much that you can take from this sort of exhibition style of race that you can carry forward to the short tracks this year?



KYLE LARSON: Honestly, I didn't even know what package we had this weekend. I just assumed it was the normal short track package -- or the new one. No, I don't know. I think we're going too slow here anyway to get a feel for the aerodynamic changes if they were to take the spoiler off or do anything to the car.

No, I don't think there's much you can learn. Just more on probably the car like geometry and stuff like that with your setup that way. But the aero changes I don't think would have made a difference at all.

Q. Like you said, you and Bubba kind of got into it at the end there, but with this being an exhibition race, do you think the drivers are a little more open to forgive and forget because now you have a pretty extended break before you get into Daytona and the actual real racing?

KYLE LARSON: I don't know. Obviously Bubba and I have had a history in the past, so I'm sure -- I don't really know. Hopefully forgive and forget. Like I said, he ran through me three times. I was just the one who happened to get him at the end. I hope he understands that part of it.

Given our history, who knows. But I'm over it. I probably would have been over it, too, if roles were reversed and I ran through him three times and he finally spun me out the last corner. But we have different personalities, too. We all do out there. Everybody handles it differently.

But yeah, it's just a product of this racing really. I try to tell myself to let things slide a little bit more just knowing that hits are coming from behind and stuff, but usually when you're out there you can get a good sense of when it's happening from the car directly behind you or four back.

It's just kind of the way it goes with this race. It's just the Clash.

Q. A couple years ago there was so much talk about the low speed impacts with this car were really causing some of the head problems and the impacts were so jarring. There was a lot of contact tonight. Is that a thing of the past? Does it still hurt?

KYLE LARSON: Well, it doesn't feel like the old style car because you never would have done that with the old stock car. We wouldn't be running into the back of people because we would damage our cars.

I didn't think about that much during the race, but it definitely felt a little bit softer, the direct hits from behind compared to last year. It's still a lot, but I would say yeah, it felt a little bit softer, so it makes a difference. Hopefully

over time if we have another Next-Gen car we can keep all that in mind and make something even softer and safer and all that.

Q. They changed the mufflers for this race. I'm curious if you could tell any difference with the heat.

KYLE LARSON: I wasn't sweating at all after the race, and I don't remember being crazy hot last year, either, but probably a little bit hotter than this year.

Yeah, I would say it had to have been an improvement. I know fans hate it, but I love mufflers on these Cup cars. I think they're too loud. Yeah, keep them coming.

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