

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Christopher Bell

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by our race winner, Christopher Bell. Questions, please.

Q. Just talk about your dominance here. After the race we were interviewing other drivers, and they said you're the GOAT, and you won this thing yesterday. What was it like out there, and what were your thoughts on the restarts as well?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: I mean, what race do we want to talk about? Do we want to talk about Loudon dry or Loudon wet (laughing)?

It was literally the tale of two completely different events. Obviously the rain completely shook up what was going on track, and in the dry we started off really well. I was able to get the lead in the first stage, and then Martin really came on there in stage two.

Definitely I think that we had some room to improve on the dry stuff. Like, I'm not sure that I -- well, I definitely didn't have the dominant car. Then whenever the wet came, it was just like -- I mean, we might as well have been at somewhere completely different.

It was just so fun to get to experience that, run a whatever it was, 80 laps in wet tires and wet, damp conditions. Yeah, just a lot of fun. That was so much fun.

Q. So much happened in this race. I mean, it would take you an hour to start and go to the end. What stands out when you think back, okay, what's the things that leap to your mind about the highlights of winning a race like this?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Just how historic it was. For NASCAR to run in the rain like that -- or not in the rain, but run in the damp conditions on an oval, I mean, it ended up being hopefully a good show. You can answer that more than me, but I had a blast. It made it different.

That's what the key is to having successful races and entertainment. Hopefully that was entertaining because it was something different, something new, and nobody knew what to expect and what to do. The guys that figured it out



the quickest were the most successful.

Q. You've won three races this season. You talked about last year, We're capable of more... having a four, five, or more win type season. Do you feel like you are on the way to a record-setting season for you and a move up to where you are going to get the kind of race wins you think this team is capable of in the season?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Well, we're certainly on our way. What sucks is looking back at the races that have slipped away so far in this year. You look at COTA. You look at Richmond. I mean, those are the two that really come to mind. It's pretty easy to star stacking the wins up, right?

So it's been a fun ride, and I feel like we're close to hitting our stride. I'm excited about what's to come. That's for sure.

Q. Did you think you had a good chance, if it didn't go back to -- I guess if the rain doesn't come, do you have a good chance to win this race, or is it a better chance once they go to these wet weather tires? If so, why?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Well, it certainly became a lot -- my chances got a lot higher once they went to the wet weather tires. We lost all of our track position in stage three with the strategies, the way that they played out, all the yellow flags.

Early on in the race I was good, and then Martin got by me, and I wasn't out of it by any means, but then it was going to get a lot harder once we got mired back in traffic there at the start of stage three. Then whenever the wet weather came in, it really made it anybody's ball game.

Q. After that restart, we saw guys use the apron, the high lane. Do you feel like that has started to become a trend here because last year we saw some guys use the high lane, that third lane here at the track.

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Yeah, I mean, all it is is that it's just the old PJ1 residue. Not in the wet conditions, but in the dry conditions that old PJ1 residue -- I think we looked it up, and the last time they sprayed it was 2019 or something, but nobody had run that line since they sprayed it.



Then last year was the first year that it got worked in. Then it just came back this year. So we're learning as we're going through the races and the years of what's up with the track prep, and looking at Pocono and Texas and even Phoenix, all of these places that we've used the PJ1 spray. Even if they don't spray it, it's there for years to come.

It's remarkable how much grip is up there, and I would expect us to continue to use that lane into the future until that stuff burns off.

Q. How pivotal was Stevie when you came back from the rain delay and working your way around the track?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Yeah, he was vital and just kind of coaching me through what lanes people were running. Whenever you're the guy behind, you are able to go on offense, right, and you are able to search around the racetrack, try different lanes, and see what's working.

But then whenever you get out front and you are leading, you're not able to see what other guys are doing. So just having him kind of walk me through what lanes are coming and going and where guys are being good and I'm beating them at was vital to win that race today.

Q. It ultimately didn't matter today, but how close was the track to being dry and being able to go back on slicks, and how close was it to being too dark to race?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: It was dark. It was very, very dark. That was creeping up in a hurry to being too dark to race.

I don't know. Certainly there were dry parts on the track, but there were still a lot of wet parts on the track too. I can't tell you how far away it was, but in my opinion I didn't think it was ready for the dry tires yet.

Q. How did you attack the track and kind of find the limits once you went back out there?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: I don't know. Very cautiously (smiling). Yeah, everybody was taking it really easy in the rain tires. You certainly don't want to overstep the ledge and get into the wall, and I almost did.

I think it was lap two on the rain tires. So lap one I went up high. I felt like there was going to be more grip up there, and there was. I was able to pass a bunch of guys. Then I got a little bit too overconfident into three, and I got in a death slide and almost slid into the wall.

I mean, I don't know what to say other than it's just a knife's edge. You're going to keep trying, pushing your entries,

pushing your mid-corner speeds, pushing your exits until you find out the limit and what's too much.

Yeah, it was just all about being cautious and trying to creep up to your limits.

Q. For those of us who don't go 100-plus miles an hour on wet race conditions or in a car, period, what was it like on the wet tires out there? We've heard drivers talk about the slicks, but in wet conditions, what were these tires like?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Yeah, they're just a lot of fun. What we've lost in the Next Gen car of being able to slide the car around and run the car really loose, yeah, I can't describe it better than that, but we get that back on the rain tires.

Whenever the track is damp, you're able to slide the car around more and drive it hanging out more, drive it on the right rear more. It's a lot of fun doing that for sure.

Q. Kind of like dirt racing, right?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Similar. More similar than what we do with the Next Gen car on dry conditions, yes.

Q. Going forward, would you want them to dry pit road so you could have competitive pit stops and maybe have a choice and leave it in the driver's team's hands on whether to go wet to slicks, or do you think the way they did it today was okay?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: I honestly thought that they handled it perfectly. I don't know. It's going to be so tough whenever you start introducing competitive pit stops because you run the risk of really injuring people.

I mean, I tell you it's all about being cautious, right, but there's such a reward in executing pit road good that I don't think it's worth the -- the juice isn't worth the squeeze, right?

That's just walking a tight rope whenever you start introducing wet pit roads and slick tires on damp pit roads. I don't know what the answer is, but I would be really afraid of having to execute pit road without injuring people or hitting people.

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