

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Paul Wolfe

Walter Czarnecki



THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by team members of our race-winning team, Walter Czarnecki, vice chairman of Team Penske, and crew chief of the No. 22, Paul Wolfe.

Not a bad way to start the Playoffs. Walter, what does this mean for Team Penske to enter the Playoffs with a win? Paul, if you would take us through the last few laps.

WALTER CZARNECKI: Before I answer that question, on behalf of Team Penske, I want to dedicate this win and this race to the memory of a gentleman named Roy McCauley. Some of you may know Roy. Roy was with our organization for 20 years. Started as a race engineer. Was a crew chief for Ryan Newman, then became our assembly shop manager in 2010 and served in that role until about two weeks ago when he passed away.

This one is for Roy McCauley on behalf of the whole team.

How does it get any better than this to start the Playoffs with a win? I was telling Joey in Victory Lane that I thought his experience really showed. He hung back, had a great race car. We had three great race cars. Blaney coming from the back to finish second, and Austin was strong all day long. I think he finished in the top 10 as well.

I think that Paul did a tremendous job, as he always does, making that call in the third stage to leave Joey out. He can speak more about that. Joey did the rest managing fuel until his crew chief said it's time to go, and he did.

That pretty well summarizes it.

But a great team effort on behalf of Team Penske and a great way to go to Watkins Glen next week.

THE MODERATOR: Paul?

PAUL WOLFE: Yeah, like Walt said, obviously it came down to fuel mileage, what we were able to do throughout that stage. I've got my engineers on the box that have gotten really good at calculating the mileage,

understanding what Joey is doing out there on the track.

For Joey, as we've talked plenty of times pre-race, he just needs to have the information. With his experience and what he can do behind the wheel, if you give him the information, he can execute it for you.

We understood what we were able to do early in the race and save fuel to give him an idea of what we expect and what we needed in that third stage. That put ourselves in a good enough position there towards the end when we could go hard, understanding how much we had saved to go into the green-white-checked situation that we thought was highly likely.

Yeah, just a total team effort. When it comes down to fuel mileage, like it did, no different than Nashville earlier this year for us. It's not how you always want to win 'em, but we'll take 'em when we can.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. Paul, in the last restart, you have Logano in front, Blaney behind him. There was radio communication about, Let's execute the plan we talked about earlier. What was that plan?

PAUL WOLFE: Well, I think as we come to these tracks, whether it's here or Daytona, Talladega, superspeedway style racetracks where a teammate is so important to be able to win like we did today or have good finishes, I think we do a good job as a company making sure everyone understands what the expectations and how things should play out at the end of the race.

I think all the drivers have their feedback of what they think it takes to win these races and what types of moves. I think there's a lot of good dialogue pre-race understanding that we know we have fast cars. When it comes down to the end of these races, it's highly likely it's going to be some of our car at the front of the field.

Making sure we've talked through a lot of scenarios that have happened to make sure we can execute it properly and make sure one Penske car wins the race. I think it just goes back to the great teamwork and communication leading up to this.



Q. What is it about superspeedway races that Penske is so strong in?

PAUL WOLFE: There's multiple reasons. One is the Ford Mustang right now, the aero package we have, they're very fast on these style racetracks. The downforce drag, where that level is on these cars, as you see other Fords are fast. You can look at qualifying and understand when you see the Fords up front in qualifying.

These cars right now, the way our body is, lends to fast cars. Then, like I said, you put experienced drivers and drivers that work really well together, communicate. I mean, Austin doesn't have nearly the experience that Joey and Ryan do. But I think the way they all work together and communicate and learn from one another speeds that process up and makes it where all our guys are really good now.

I think it's all the hard work they put in understanding this style of racing, then we're able to give them fast cars. Obviously you put those two together, it's a pretty good combination.

Q. Paul, one of the first things that Joey said after the race was, When it is Playoff time, it is our time. What does he mean by that? How does he have that belief in himself?

PAUL WOLFE: Yeah, I think confidence in his team, our experience, what we've been able to do in the past in big moments, big situations where there's a lot on the line.

I said that to some people earlier this week, that when we get to Playoff time, like worrying about is Joey Logano going to be performing where I need him to be is the last thing on my mind. You know when it's Playoff time, he's going to show up and give you all he's got, can handle situations like this.

If anything, he thrives on this. He loves these big moments like this and is able to somehow get to another level of performance when you get to these situations.

I think just the experience level. Obviously I've been doing this a long time now with him and my experience prior with Brad. We've been there, done that. We know how to do it.

I think there's teams that maybe have more speed at times, but I think we take our experience and try to use that as our strength and move us through these Playoffs. I think it's very, very likely that we will continue to move on.

Q. Do you talk about the opportunity he has to become the only active three-time champion?

PAUL WOLFE: We haven't discussed that, no. We don't really talk a whole lot about stats. I guess maybe that's probably why we hadn't really thought about it or realized it.

Q. Paul, Joey is a big-time, big-race driver. What qualities in him do you see that kind of reflects that?

PAUL WOLFE: It's the mental game, for sure. There's guys that can handle the pressure situations and not make mistakes, right? That's really what it comes down to.

Obviously he's capable from the driving standpoint, but it's the mental game. You'll see guys that make mistakes when they get in these moments, whether it's on a restart or making bad decisions or wrong moves, especially at this style of racing. Obviously we had our teammate with us, but we knew the correct moves to make, and we were able to execute 'em.

There's guys that obviously do better at it than others. He's proven time and time again that he's one of the elite guys when it comes down to the mental aspect of this and being able to execute on the big stage.

Q. Paul, last year you don't make the Playoffs. Did you use that as fuel or like the warning, you've been warned once? Was it fuel or fear that got this team ready for round one?

PAUL WOLFE: Well, I mean, that's a good question. I don't know if I could say it's one or the other for sure.

I think the message to the guys this week was we're capable of doing this, but it's going to take everyone almost perfect, right? Like, no mistakes. That's really what got us out so early last year.

Obviously the wreck at Bristol was out of our control. But leading up to Bristol, we should have had ourselves in a better situation, right? You can always look at the last race. It's what happened leading up to that, right?

I think our goal was to take it one race at a time but make sure we're maximizing what we're capable of. That may not be winning that day, right? That may not be the fastest pit stop on pit road. But understand what our goal is for the day for the race, and make sure we maximize it. If we can do that in each race, we can find ourselves into the next round.

Obviously it was nice to capitalize here. We knew this was a race we could win. We've showed the speed at this style of racetrack. Joey has shown he's capable. You kind of take it race by race and understand your strengths and

weaknesses and make sure you execute.

Q. For Team Penske, you have so many big moments year after year, other motorsports programs that you have. What is it like to be involved in an organization that just has all these big moments all the time?

WALTER CZARNECKI: It's all about the people. It's all about the Paul Wolfes and Joey Loganos and Will Powers, everybody else that is part of it.

I think from an organizational standpoint, we've tried to do our best to first of all bring the very best people into the organization.

I mentioned Roy McCauley a little bit ago. Roy started with us 20 years ago. 20 years later, he was still with the company. There are stories like that throughout the organization. It's building on that culture, that teamwork.

We don't change the starting lineup. Everybody knows what the expectations are. Somebody has a bad race, we don't put them on the bench. We bring them back and go to the next game with the same mindset that we have an opportunity to win. If we feel, as Paul said, we can win a race, we'll do our best to do it. If we have a third-place car, they realize that's the expectation, that's what they should do.

That's a pretty broad statement. Again, it's all part of the culture.

Q. Paul, coming into the Playoffs, you're 14th or 15th in regular-season points, does it matter? Did you feel like you have enough on the intermediates and Martinsville to get out of the third round assuming you get there?

PAUL WOLFE: Yeah, are you asking from like a points perspective that I feel like we have enough points?

Q. I'm asking like do you feel like you're strong enough.

JOEY LOGANO: From a speed perspective? Yeah, I mean, I think the intermediates for sure are our weakness. I think the way it mixes up there's opportunity. We've continued to try to find more speed at those tracks. I think we've closed the gap some.

Am I going to sit here and say we're going to have the best cars when we go to those tracks? No. Like I said before, we have to play to our strengths. Without mistakes, I think we have enough speed to make it. That's really where we're at at this point, is get into each round, minimize

mistakes, get all the we can each day. I think we can do it.

Q. Walt, what do you think your organization's chances are of sweeping both INDYCAR and Cup titles?

WALTER CZARNECKI: I think realistically next week at Nashville it's going to be an uphill climb. 33-point deficit. Look, we saw what happened at Milwaukee, so anything can happen. I'm not discounting Will. I think that Scottie, if Palou starts the race, Scottie is automatically eliminated. But never say never.

As far as this championship is concerned, this is a great way to start. We'll worry about Watkins Glen and go from there.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Congratulations.

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