

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Paul Wolfe

Michael Nelson



Looked like we were pretty good, could run top five. The third stage we just kind of lost speed again. It was kind of like a replay of Kansas to me. That's something we have to figure out why that's happening 'cause we weren't where we wanted to be in the final stage.

As a team, we continued to do the things we know and continued to fight. The opportunity came there with that caution at the end. That exact scenario was discussed in our pre-race meeting this morning. It made the call pretty easy for us to know that we were going to stay out.

I was actually surprised how many guys pitted. I thought there would be a lot more that would just run like we did. That was a little surprising.

Just a lot of confidence in my group, the guys around me. When they tell me something, I believe in them. That just comes from experience in other situations we've been in in the past.

Then knowing when you have a guy like Joey behind the wheel, you let him know what you need. He's very good at delivering. He makes those calls that to some people look tough or a big gamble. Makes it pretty easy for me to make.

It's all about preparation. Like I said, a great group of guys around me. We're super excited. We've been in this position before. Looking forward to Phoenix.

The short track program this year has been our strength. There's no reason we can't go to Phoenix and win again.

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

Q. Paul, obviously the caution comes right at the edge of the fuel window. Was it the number of laps specifically in mind? If you're going to go through with that, how much does he immediately have to start saving? Is that banking on him saving from the start of the run all the way through or can he run hard?

PAUL WOLFE: Yeah, well, I don't want to go into a whole lot of detail and tell the little details of how we plan and prepare.

Ultimately, yes, it was talked about. We had a number

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by representatives from the No. 22 team today, both Paul Wolfe and Michael Nelson.

For both of you, obviously it was a much different outlook at the end of last weekend versus where we're here now. If you could just speak on the range of emotions for both of you, how you feel about having a shot at a championship going into Phoenix.

MICHAEL NELSON: Yeah, I mean, it means everything. You think about the turn of events there in the last 40 laps or so. This team did a really good job last week in Charlotte. I was so disappointed to leave the track thinking that that was it. They were capable of being in there. Obviously have had some terrible luck in the last few weeks.

So happy for them to make it through. Man, this is just such a range of emotions from the end of the race last week to the high of winning today and being in the Championship 4.

These guys did an awesome job of never giving up, putting themselves in a position to win. If they couldn't win one way, they won the other way. Kudos to them and their effort today.

THE MODERATOR: Paul, same question.

PAUL WOLFE: Yeah, I mean, obviously, I think Joey said it best, a little bit hard to believe at the moment, you know? A lot of ups and downs. I think just kind of rolling with the flow and not getting too excited, not getting too down is kind of how I operate. Most of the guys on the team...

I was asked coming into the race, do we feel like we're playing with house money. Sure, I mean, we could categorize it however we want. Ultimately we came here today and we were going to perform the best we could, score as many points and we could and see what happens.

Obviously we had a good start to the race, I thought.



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based off of fuel mileage from practice. Everyone looks at what their fuel mileage was in practice and has a number of what they think they can go on a full tank.

Then it comes down to calculations of how many laps you can save, 'cause you know when you start saving fuel you're going to run slower, right? How many laps can you save and it still be faster than rolling down pit road and putting fuel in? Those are the kind of calculations that go into whether or not you can do it.

Our engine shop does a good job with fuel mileage. I feel like we're one of the best, if not... Other guys could have been two or three laps short where we felt we were within one, say.

It may have been a no-brainer for them that they had to pit because it was too close. If they have to save more than we did, ultimately it would be faster just to stop.

Those are all the things that go into it, to make those decisions. For us, you're kind of looking at caution history. What's the likelihood of getting a caution towards the end of the race? When you factor all that in, I just didn't feel like it was worth pitting.

If we got a caution down the road, you were going to trap some guys a lap down or they lost their track position because they pitted.

We were getting good fuel mileage. I knew Joey could save us a little at the end. Ultimately he was good to run hard. Initially we thought 15 to go maybe we would need to start saving. I don't know the exact lap, but maybe around lap 25 or 30 to go we kind of let him know the situation. Keep running hard, but if you can save anything without losing lap time, do that for us.

He started doing that. Our mileage got a little bit better. That made it almost at that point where we didn't need to save at all just by changing his techniques a little bit without losing lap time.

Q. Paul, take us through the week as you were getting word of the disqualification, then getting word that you're back in again. How did the mental preparation affect you? What was the goal you had in mind?

PAUL WOLFE: If you're referring to whether or not we were making it into the Round of 8, we knew that Sunday night really. When we got to the shop on Monday, it was pretty normal prep like we would for any Playoff race, doing all we can.

Everyone in the shop at this time of the season is putting in

the hours to make sure we're bringing the best piece we know how. That's what we did with our car and the 12.

You just got to come here and try to perform without any mistakes.

Q. Was there any surprise in the reactions as you get started in the week?

PAUL WOLFE: You're saying because we were in the Round of 8?

Q. Because you got there after the disqualification.

PAUL WOLFE: Wasn't a big surprise. I kind of saw what was going on in post-race inspection. They inspect every car that's in the Playoffs. I knew right away as they were having issues on the scales that there was a problem there.

Really before I left the track, I felt like something wasn't right, and there was a good chance we would be in. But ultimately at that point we had still beat the 45 in the owners championship. In my eyes, we were still racing for a championship at that point.

It didn't change a whole lot. It's a lot cleaner and nicer when we can just say the 22's in on owner, driver. That gets a little messy, I understand.

Ultimately I can't say it changed how we prepared. We try to prepare the best we can every week we go.

Q. Paul, what makes Joey Logano Joey Logano? Seems like this time of year he's different. What is it that you've seen from him that he can do things, rise to the occasion?

PAUL WOLFE: Yeah, I mean, when it comes to pressure situations, he loves that. He's obviously really good at it. There's certain drivers that under pressure can't perform. We're all humans, right? We're not robots. The mental aspect, the emotion side of it, it's real. I've seen it play out. You can watch it throughout the garage with different drivers.

I think, if anything, these situations make him perform at another level. I know that's hard to understand how that could even be possible. You feel like drivers are getting all they can no matter what the situation.

I don't know, like I said, we're all humans. He's just able to get to another level. The greatest drivers can do that under pressure.

Today was no different, right? When we tell him the situation we're in, he's still out there making lap time. He likes those situations. I think you got to play to your strengths, right?

Like I said, we're not always the fastest car, but I feel like as a team, we're one of the best teams if not the best in the garage at putting everything together. That's what this sport is about.

The fastest car very seldom wins these races. We try to make sure we've covered off on everything. Ultimately we want the fastest car we can put on the racetrack. We try to do that every week. But if you don't, you can't not do the rest of it. Doing the rest of it at the highest level is what allows us to be able to do things like we did today.

Q. Paul, Joey said before the Playoffs if he got to the Round of 8, he'd have to win. If the mindset coming into today is you have to win, is that a pretty easy call to stay out? Going to have to win Homestead or Martinsville anyway?

PAUL WOLFE: You always believe you have to win in this round to advance or finish top five in stages and win.

Still when I say this, I didn't feel like this was a gamble for me. Ultimately a lot of guys had trouble, right? A lot of guys we're racing. We had gotten ourselves above the cut line. Flirting with six to eight points above the cut. Just getting a good finish was going to have us in a great place going to Homestead next week.

I was still trying to be smart looking at the whole situation. Like I said, I was just trying to use all the resources I had and information I had to ultimately just get us the best finish.

I didn't really know that it was going to be the winning call, but I thought it was going to be a call that was going to maximize points for us, and that's ultimately why I did it.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, congratulations on the win.

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