

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

Saturday, November 9, 2024

An Interview with:

Cole Custer

AJ Allmendinger

Q. Cole, it seemed like everything was in place for you until it wasn't. I guess the emotions of being so close to a second one.

COLE CUSTER: Yeah, it definitely stings. There were a lot of points in that race where I felt like we were in a really good spot here.

But it just came down to that restart with the 21 and him staying out on older tires, which is their right. We were all going for a championship, and I would have done the same thing.

He made his car really wide going into Turn 1; so I tried to go high, I tried to go middle, and he ended up blocking us on the top and got us all bottlenecked. And then the 7 was able to slip by.

You just get the short end of the stick sometimes, and that was us today.

I can't say enough about our guys. They brought a really fast car that was, I think, very capable of winning a championship. The 7 car, they were definitely deserving champions. They brought a really fast car. Justin has been doing this for so long. I'm happy for him. He's definitely a deserving champion, and they ran a great race there, especially at the end.

It just stings for our team. Obviously you're always going to be a little bit salty when you finish second, but at the end of the day, that's just how it goes sometimes.

Q. AJ, I know earlier this week you talked about how at one point you didn't think you were going to make the playoffs, and you got that win, you made it here. Even with dealing with the frustrating, ill-handling car all night, how do you look back at the season as a whole?

AJ ALLMENDINGER: That's a good question, I guess. You know, I told my guys before the weekend started that I wouldn't pick any other guys to go to war with like we did.



We've had a lot of ups and downs. At times maybe not enough speed. At times maybe me trying to push too hard.

I was happy I could at least get them a win at Vegas. I feel like I've let them down a lot of times this year.

Yeah, today was disappointing. I'm not sure what else we can do from a preparation and effort standpoint, honestly. We spent three weeks working on the car and countless hours in sim.

Just was never there all weekend, honestly. Just fought hard. Thought maybe we would steal the team championship on the way the strategy was playing out, but figured a yellow was going to come out at some point and we were just kind of hanging on at that point.

How do I characterize the season? They deserve a lot more, the men and women at Kaulig Racing. I'm happy we fought hard. It showed our determination to get here and at least keep fighting until the checkered. I was doing everything we could, but I just feel like I let them down.

Q. Cole, did you consider not lining up behind Hill on the restart because he was on older tires, or was the top that important?

COLE CUSTER: Yeah, I could have, but I would have given up a row to do that and I would have put the 7 a row ahead of me. That definitely wasn't the smart decision to do if I did that, so I took the risk of starting behind him, and that was kind of -- looking back, maybe I shouldn't have, but you just never know. That's kind of Monday morning quarterbacking it, I guess.

If I could have gotten to his outside or to the middle of him or something, it would have worked out, but he did a great job defending there. It just ended up checking us up too bad and the 7 was able to slip by. It's just how it goes sometimes.

Q. Cole, I was just curious, is the 00 mad --

COLE CUSTER: I'm not happy. If I saw him, I'd let him know. It was hard racing. I hate that he hit us and that's what let the 7 get to us with whatever it was, eight to go. But the 7 also had -- I think it was like 10 laps fresher tires, so he eventually just ran us down.



It sucks it just came down to tire strategies at the end kind of, who had tires and who didn't, and just situational restarts and stuff like that. That's just because we finished second I'm saying we got the short end of the stick. But it's just how it goes sometimes.

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