

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

Sunday, November 10, 2024

An Interview with:

Ryan Blaney

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by another member of our Championship 4, Ryan Blaney.

Q. Ryan, getting out of the car, you kind of looked spent. Was that more physically or emotionally after a day like today?

RYAN BLANEY: Physically. I had to come from a long way back and tried really hard and I was a little worn out.

Q. The last run obviously you got right to the 22's bumper. What's going through your mind as you crossed the checkered flag or as you're coming off Turn 4 on that final lap, realizing how close you were?

RYAN BLANEY: Nothing really went through my head. Just didn't quite get there.

Yeah, obviously you want to win, and we had a shot. I just couldn't really do much. When I got there, coming from that far back, I burned everything I had off of it, things like that. Yeah, just thanked my guys, was proud of their effort all season. Said sorry it didn't work out for you this year, but proud of the effort.

Yeah, just obviously you want to win, but just didn't quite happen for us today.

Q. You said it just didn't happen for you today. How much of that was you and how much of that is Joey Logano just driving well there at the end?

RYAN BLANEY: What do you mean?

Q. I guess I'm asking if there were other drivers who were in Joey Logano's position, do you feel like you would have had a better chance?

RYAN BLANEY: I have no idea. I was trying to pass Joey. It took me a long time to pass a lot of guys today. Joey is one of the best ever I feel like, so he did an amazing job, didn't make any mistakes in the closing laps when I was kind of catching him.

Yeah, obviously he did a great job because he's a great



race car driver and did everything he needed to do to win. It's hard for me to say if it's anybody else, would it have been a different outcome. I don't know; there was only one guy, and it was that outcome.

Yeah, Joey is a fantastic race car driver, obviously, three-time champion, and he did an amazing job of doing what he needed to do to win the race.

Q. One of the reasons why you had to work so hard to get there was that restart. What did you feel happened there, and is there anything you wish you would have done differently?

RYAN BLANEY: Just got bottled up. I took sixth. I thought the top was probably the better row, personally, and just got put in kind of a weird aero spot. A lot of guys washed up in front of me there through 1 and 2, and Joey kind of got clear, and then I only got to fourth.

That was the outcome. Just Joey got to the lead pretty quick with how the restart went, and it worked out for him. By the time I settled in, I was fourth and had to work my ass off to try to get by the 5 and the 24 and run Joey down, and then I had nothing left. Everything was spent on that car.

I knew when I was running him down, I'm going to get there, but I didn't have anything once I got there. Once you get in dirty air and they can start kind of guessing where you're going, it just makes it that much harder.

Yeah, just the restart, if I would have just been closer, if I would have came out second or so, I wouldn't have had to work as hard and come from as far back and maybe would have had a little bit better shot.

Q. You see it up close, but what is it about Joey in these moments where he kind of rises up, whether it's Vegas or here? Just in these playoffs, he has the ability to seize the moment, if you will.

RYAN BLANEY: Yeah, that group does a good job of knowing what they need to do at what time. It's a testament to Joey and Paul Wolfe and that whole team for really rising to the occasion and putting together a great race, and Joey in particular knowing what he needs to do behind the wheel to get it done.



I enjoy racing Joey. He and I push each other really hard because we lean on each other a lot and try to learn from each other, and that's been a fun dynamic. It's been fun to learn from a guy that is so successful like himself, three-time champion now and going to be a Hall of Famer. I've really tried to be -- take things that he does well and try to apply it to myself and vice versa. So that's been fun to kind of be able to work together as teammates.

He's just really good at his craft and understands what he needs to do, and he did it today. I don't know if he had -- I definitely think we had the fastest car, but he did a great job of understanding what he needed to do on the restart and getting out front and then holding on to the lead. That just shows all those things that he does really well.

Q. Is the bigger factor the dirty air, like by the time you got there your stuff was already burned up to get to that point? Or he took away your lines over and over again; he put on a defensive clinic essentially. What was the bigger factor?

RYAN BLANEY: Everybody put on defensive clinics today, everybody I tried to pass. Everybody did. So props to them for that. They did a great job.

It's just what you have to do. I mean, the 5 did it to me, the 24 did it to me, the 22 did it to me. It's just what you've got to do if you're struggling, and it just buys you time. And it's just part of the sport because it's so powerful. The defensive line is so powerful of dirty air. You have to do it if you have a faster car behind you coming down in these moments.

I don't blame them for doing it. Is it the funnest thing in the world? No. Because I've lived that story many, many times. But yeah, I think it was multiple. Like I knew -- like I said, I had to work my ass off to get by the 5, and I had to work my ass off to get to the 24 and pass him, and I had to work my tail off to run Joey down from a long ways back.

As I'm doing it, I'm thinking to myself, I think I'm going to get there, get close; but I don't know if I'm going to have anything to pass him, but I can't save because I'm never going to get there if I save.

Martinsville was a little bit different because I had more laps left. Here I really had to take -- I really just had to use my s--- up really hard to get close, and then yeah, just didn't really have anything left there. So it was a little bit of both. My tires were spent and he did a good job of placing his car where he needed to be.

Q. You were out of gas, too, right?

RYAN BLANEY: I was tired, man. I was driving hard and huffing and puffing and felt like I was going to pass out after the race. I was working hard trying to close the gap down. There were a lot of similarities to last week and just didn't quite get there this week.

Q. From my point of view, it looked like you were just able to drive it into the corner way deeper than anyone else could in 3 and 4. What in the car gave you that confidence to be able to do that?

RYAN BLANEY: Yeah, yeah, I had a decent line going. I felt like I could get into Turn 1 really fast and on the apron and hook my right side tires on the paint and that would hold me. I kind of found that early in the race, and it was pretty big grip there. So I really kind of started doing that second half of the day.

Then Turn 3 was pretty similar. I'd enter low and shallow and try to hook the paint a little bit to try to enter low, exit low, or kind of blast it in there and run up the racetrack and try to carry some momentum.

Yeah, I think just entry security kind of helped me. I could enter faster than guys with the rear of the car being a little bit more under me. So yeah, that was working for me, and my car was handling really, really well.

I just -- I wish I ever got control of the race. Like I never got the lead. I got the lead once, and I think the green flag stops happened or I got the lead at the end of Stage 2, Stage 2 ended, and then I got the lead back -- well, I finally passed Joey for second in the third stage when the green flag cycle happened, Bell pitted, I came out second -- I just never got the lead.

I felt like if I got the lead, I'm gone. But it just didn't play out. Car was great, and Jonathan and those guys did a great job of getting us to where we needed to be.

Q. Team Penske has now won the last three championships, and today you were one-two. How is it that you guys are able to dominate right when you need to here at the end of the year at this track?

RYAN BLANEY: Yeah, I mean, it's really incredible. Three in a row for Team Penske and Roger and Ford. Jim Farley was here today. That's a massive deal for Ford. It was really great to have him here. Super excited for Roger and Walt Czarnecki and Tim Cindric, Bud Denker, Jonathan Gibson, all those guys who put it together.

Yeah, a Penske one-two, I think that's the first time they've ever won one-two in the championship, so that's a huge



compliment. I think Team Penske as a whole does such a great job of being prepared for these right moments in the playoffs, but we also have speed all year.

I feel like our speed in general, I can only speak on us, we had great speed all year. Just wasn't the most consistent year of getting tore up, a lot of DN Fs. But I feel like our pace has been really good, and we ended the year really strong on speed, so I'm proud of that effort.

It's just kind of -- gosh, we got through it every year, '22, '23, and this year we sit around at the beginning of the year and in the summer a little bit and come to the playoff time, all of our employees have to sit around and listen to people saying that we suck and we don't deserve to be here and why are they in the playoffs and all that s--- and we've won the last three championships.

This team does a great job of rising to doubters, and it's really cool to be a part of that team, and they just work their asses off to figure out what we need to do to get better every single week, and they know how to rise to the occasion come playoff time.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

