

# NASCAR Media Conference

## Press Conference

Wednesday, February 12, 2025

*An Interview with:*

## Austin Cindric

## Chase Briscoe

**THE MODERATOR:** We are now joined by our outside front row qualifier, Austin Cindric, driver of the No. 2 Team Penske Ford.

We'll start right with questions.

**Q. This is the only race of the year where you actually get a cool trophy for qualifying second. You said on the broadcast this is still probably going to sting. Chase will remind you about it for the next year. What does this say about Team Penske and the fact that you guys were able to put a car on the front row for a second year in a row?**

**AUSTIN CINDRIC:** It certainly sends a message, obviously having a fast race car. The consistency in our cars and our team is certainly second to none. Super proud of my guys on the 2 car, but everybody back at Team Penske. Everyone takes a lot of pride coming to this race with very fast cars. The front row gives us a lot of flexibility as far as what we do tomorrow night, pit selection, starting spot, so on.

It's a good box to check early on in the weekend with the list of things, maybe the shorter list of things, that you can't control. Yeah, like I said, proud of the team.

**Q. Are you going to find somewhere to put that trophy or hide it?**

**AUSTIN CINDRIC:** Good question. I haven't decided yet (smiling).

**Q. How much confidence can you take from doing this? You haven't been out on the track much. Do you like the car, feel really good about your chances? Is it still too early to know how it's going to pan out in a race situation?**

**AUSTIN CINDRIC:** Well, I think if I'm being 100% honest, Brian and I were back and forth. Brian after practice, Yeah, I think we got a shot at the front row.



How can you honestly say something like that? I think we'll be 8th to 11th, which is a conservative outlook. Clearly I was wrong. Clearly the guy that's paid to make decisions and think about things was right.

With that being said, certainly gives me some confidence that Brian knows what he's doing. Not that I didn't already think that. Otherwise, I think it's great for the guys. You work hard. You have extra time to spend on this car throughout the off-season to really get things right.

I feel like we made some steps to continue to improve our cars, maybe not as difficult as that sounds, but we've had really fast race cars, but to continue that evolution, there's things I want to be able to still do with my cars.

I think the only complication this provides now is how much racing do we do tomorrow night. If it was up to me, I'm going to race. I'll let Brian tell me what to do. Otherwise, it's certainly a good start, certainly a good one for the guys.

**THE MODERATOR:** We are now also joined by our Daytona 500 pole winner, Chase Briscoe, driver of the No. 19 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota.

We'll continue with questions.

**Q. Austin, Mr. Penske emphasized three team cars in the top five. How big of an accomplishment is that?**

**AUSTIN CINDRIC:** It's huge. Like I said before, the consistency in the shop is something we're super proud of. It would be different if there was one car in the front row and the rest of them didn't make the top 10 into the second round. I think it says a ton about our race team. I think the transparency between teams, it's something I feel like our company does really better than anybody else. We continue to show it at these types of racetracks.

Certainly a level of pride that I feel like everybody that works hard together is able to look at.

**Q. Does a front row start qualify as a trip to Steak 'n Shake?**

**AUSTIN CINDRIC:** It's a little late for that. Right now, it's one small box. It's not like I won. Ask Chase.



**CHASE BRISCOE:** I do like Steak 'n Shake (laughter).

**THE MODERATOR:** Chase, this is Toyota's first Daytona 500 pole. How special is that for you to accomplish not only for you and your team but to get that special milestone for Toyota?

**CHASE BRISCOE:** Yeah, I mean, truthfully, they've done so much, it's hard to do anything for the first time with Toyota.

Yeah, to be able to do it in my first race is super cool, super special. It means a lot to Toyota. Tyler Gibbs and everybody that came up to me after, you could see in their eyes how much it meant to them. Even for Coach, second-ever Daytona 500 pole. To be able to do that is really cool and really special.

Yeah, I mean, it is the pole. We'd much rather win the race, but it's neat regardless. Even this whole off-season, a lot of the emphasis at JGR has been to qualify better at superspeedways. They felt like that was the biggest area where they lacked.

For them to be able to come here after qualifying 25th average last year, to come here and have three cars in the top 10, to have one on the pole, is just a testament to everybody there, just the amount of effort and prep work they put in.

Yeah, I'm truthfully the lucky one that got to drive it tonight. Yeah, it's super special for sure for the first race to be on the pole.

**Q. Chase, Denny said earlier the way that superspeedways work now, it's harder to move from the rear toward the front, and that put more emphasis on Daytona 500 qualifying. To accomplish the goal tonight then, how much does that matter for Sunday?**

**CHASE BRISCOE:** I mean, you still have to execute. You can still start 40th, still start on the pole, you still have to execute and put yourself in position all race long.

I think there's pros and cons to the front row. I think the pro is definitely from a track position standpoint, it's hard to get now. Starting up front, definitely makes it easier. The con is you're going to burn more fuel starting on the front row, too. There's both.

It definitely helps starting up front. You still have to execute and put yourself there after 500 miles. It's easy to get jumbled up in track position here. So, yeah, just have to execute from on the green flag, pit stops, things like that. But certainly starting up front is not a huge disadvantage

by any means.

**Q. Austin, podium in the 24 Hours, second now. Do you feel like your momentum is building at this place, building to a win, or bittersweet?**

**AUSTIN CINDRIC:** Yes to all of the above.

Look, I've been pretty fortunate to be in two really great positions and programs since I've been here to start the year, right? To be able to come to the Rolex, pretty much every moment of the weekend that mattered, qualifying, Rocky puts it on pole, we're in Victory Lane taking photos. At the end of the race, we're on the podium, taking photos in Victory Lane. Qualifying for Daytona 500, we're taking photos in Victory Lane.

All of those things are awesome. They also aren't race wins. So there's definitely a part of that that kind of nags at you a little bit, especially when you have the opportunity and you feel like you're close.

But look, it's been a good start to the year in that respect. But certainly a long road, long week ahead to find ourselves back in that place on Sunday night.

**Q. The last year that Penske has had, is there an extra pressure for you guys in the Penske stable to get the Daytona 500 win?**

**AUSTIN CINDRIC:** I think the expectation is the same as it's always been. The expectation is to win.

**THE MODERATOR:** Austin, congratulations.

**AUSTIN CINDRIC:** Thank you.

**THE MODERATOR:** We'll continue on with questions for Chase.

**Q. This is big obviously to win the pole position for the Daytona 500. How much of an extra boost is it for you starting out with a new team, driving this new car, this is what I'm bringing?**

**AUSTIN CINDRIC:** Yeah, I mean, truthfully I didn't really do a whole lot today. Like I said, I was just kind of the lucky one that got to drive the car.

I mean, still from a confidence standpoint, the team, I did still have to execute a little bit, so I guess it's good I didn't screw anything up today. There's a lot of little things you have to do inside the car to qualify, just hit all your shifts right, leave pit road right. There was stuff from that standpoint.



I think the confidence that it carries over for the team. Not that there was uncertainty, but it is all new for all of us, right? They're trying to figure me out, I'm trying to figure them out. For us to be able to start the year, even at Bowman Gray we had a really good speed, we broke in the race, but I feel like we've gotten off to a really good start.

Honestly it's been smoother I would say than all of us kind of expected. We thought there was going to be a little more of -- not a hurdle, but harder to learn each other. It's all been super, super smooth.

Yeah, it's a great way for us to start the season. Obviously the pole doesn't mean a whole lot outside of as far as what that means for your race. You still have to go out there and win. Still, from the standpoint of the confidence, from a team standpoint inside the garage, there's a ton of pride who can bring the fastest car to Daytona. For the 19 car to be able to do that, not a little amount, I think a 10th of a second, that says a lot when every single car is almost the same now.

For us to be able to do that is something that I'm really proud of. Like I said, the whole off-season the entire emphasis was how can we qualify better at superspeedways. For us to be able to come here and execute that I think is pretty special.

**Q. Austin referenced that you two have often compared and jabbed at each other for qualifying times. Are you going to let him forget this one anytime soon?**

**CHASE BRISCOE:** We definitely have had a running tally for the last five or six years now. If I'm not undefeated, I've only lost very few seasons. Last year I only beat him by like four weeks.

As we were getting down to the wire last year, I texted him, Do you want to count superspeedways? I said, I don't think we should count them, personally. But now I told him when I got asked, I think we got to count superspeedways again.

I'm off to a 1-0 start on him. It's been a fun kind of thing that we've done every single season, whether we see each other than on pit road or text each other after. So, yeah, it's been fun to always kind of have that competition.

**Q. For a small-town short track kid from Indiana who grew up dreaming of moments like this, could you have pictured a 500 pole?**

**CHASE BRISCOE:** No, definitely not. Everybody in here

for the most part knows my story, right? I didn't think I would run a national series race ever. To now be leading the field to green in the Great American Race, do it with the great American brand with Bass Pro on it is crazy, truthfully, for me.

I did the lap the first round, I was like, Man, I could maybe be on the pole of this thing. I was trying to not think about it. Then we crossed the line the second time. James came on the radio and said I was P1. It didn't really hit me till turn three. I was rolling around on the apron. I said out loud to myself, I'm on the pole of the Daytona 500. That's crazy.

Yeah, I don't know if it's fully, fully hit me. Definitely you don't realize the magnitude of it, I don't think, until you've done it.

I've qualified third, fourth, fifth here, whatever, for the 500. Man, it would be great to be on the front row. You don't really realize how big of a deal it is until you've done it. I grabbed my phone. I think I have 300 text messages.

To be on the pole of the Daytona 500 is a really, really big deal. Yeah, just special, special thing for me to do to even start off with a new team, new company, Bass Pro, all the things that go along with it. It's pretty special, for sure.

**Q. When you run a lap like you did in the first round, how tough is it to duplicate that and do that again?**

**CHASE BRISCOE:** It's a little bit easier at a place like this. Mile-and-a-half racing it's harder to replicate it, short track.

I've been in the position here with Stewart-Haas where we've been top of the board first round. Second round I end up fourth or fifth. I was worried that was going to happen again.

Yeah, truthfully we slowed down the second round. We were one of the few cars that actually slowed down. We had a big enough buffer to the rest of the field that it still worked out.

Yeah, you're nervous. James came up to me after the first round, You nailed everything you needed to do, leaving pit road, hitting all your gears right.

I was a little nervous. If I'm perfect the first time, I'm capable of doing it. I didn't feel as good about its second time.

Even the first round, I felt like I had a pretty good wind gust. I could hear it in the tone of my motor. The motor was ripping pretty good. The second round I didn't feel as

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good about it. It was obviously a little bit slower, but it was good enough.

Yeah, it was one of those things it's hard to ever say you're going to be able to back it up after the first round. Like I said, I've been on the bad side of it. It's nice to be quick round one and round two for once.

**Q. How does this change the game plan for tomorrow?**

**CHASE BRISCOE:** That's a great question. Personally, I want to go race. I don't want to race, then crash, be like, Man, what was I thinking? That was dumb. I really want to go race just because everything about this car's going to be totally different for me, the bumpers, how they line up, how you push people, take pushes. All that is going to be drastically different with a new manufacturer. Even how the car acts in the air.

I really want to race. I was even talking to Cindric about that. What are you going to do? He's on the same page. He wants to go race, too. Obviously it's up to James, up to Coach, everybody at JGR. I know I'm going to support their decision 100%.

I'm torn. I'm 50/50. I want to go race, but I also don't want to do anything dumb and jeopardize the pole.

Wouldn't hurt my feelings to go out there, run the first five, ten laps. If it starts getting out of hand a little bit, back off. The problem is you can be behind the pack and still wreck.

I don't really want to go around 60 laps by myself tomorrow half a track behind the field. But I don't want to get in a crash either.

It will be up to them. I'll do whatever they tell me.

**THE MODERATOR:** Chase, thank you.

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