

# NASCAR Media Conference

## Press Conference

Saturday, February 15, 2025

*An Interview with:*

**Jesse Love**

**Richard Childress**

**THE MODERATOR:** We're now joined by the winner of tonight's NASCAR Xfinity Series race here at Daytona International Speedway and that's Jesse Love, driver of the No. 2 Richard Childress Racing Chevrolet.

**Q. Got two for you. I think the decisive moment of the race was that last restart where I don't know if it was a late clear, if you cleared yourself, but I'm curious what was that whole process like? If you didn't get in front of them, clearly the Haas cars were probably going to run away with it. What was that like?**

**JESSE LOVE:** Yeah, I don't know how I got in that position anyway. Like it was weird. I kind of was trying to block both lanes and maybe they just got down quickly. But yeah, I kind of knew that if I didn't get down that we were probably going to lose the race.

Whether or not I was clear, I knew that that was the only move I could make. Had to kind of get down there, and if I wasn't clear, hope that I kind of knock him down, then I kind of stalled and let him out and then I could still be the leader.

But regardless of the situation, we were just clear enough, and I kind of thought I was clear, but then by the time I got kind of to his bumper, he was, like, connected immediately.

It was probably when I made the decision to move down. He was probably a quarter car length back, but he was coming with momentum, so that kind of closed up and made it look really tight.

**Q. Obviously you've won in the Xfinity Series before so you've experienced that emotional thing. How is winning Daytona different than winning Talladega?**

**JESSE LOVE:** I think that it was hard for me to win here for a while because I kind of thought the two were similar, and I just studied Daytona for weeks and tried to figure out what it is that doesn't work for me here.

Obviously kind of figured it out, and the moment for me



was I went and watched Talladega, and I was like, none of these moves are going to work at Daytona, and that's when I realized, Talladega is kind of more checkers, and Daytona is a little bit more chess.

That kind of goes with the exquisite nature of Daytona, kind of the tough, rooty, redneck nature of Talladega right? You're kind of more balls to the wall there than you are here.

Yeah, but once I figured out the differences between the two, at least I thought I did, I kind of got halfway through the race and was at the end of Stage 2 in a predicament where I kind of sucked for lack of a better term the first two stages.

My teammate was dominating the race and kind of had a decision to where I could go back to what I was doing or stay the course and see if it panned out in the end like I thought it should.

Thought I had nothing to lose, so stayed the course. So what I thought was going to work out in the end, which it comes down to just being really patient and staying with the line and making your line go forward and not pulling out and going three wide and things like that.

Once we got the lead, the key moment for me was actually getting shucked out from pitting with the Chevrolet teammates because we were able to make some good speed there with that pack.

I think it was like five cars between the 00 and then the 25 behind me. I guess they must have had some issues on pit road, the Chevrolets did, and we were able to restart third. And that was another moment there where I can take sixth or the lead, and I just never want to give up the front row.

Ended up taking the lead there, the front row inside, and obviously somehow our engines, we got them better in the off-season, and our ratio or whatever it was, but we were destroying people off the line through the gears on the restarts. Was able to clear them every time.

It goes back to, again, how you load the brake and hitting your shift points and things like that, but we were really strong getting through the gears on the restarts.

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**Q. You didn't really have many friends up there on that last restart, either. Austin had his issue, you had two Fords on the inside and a Toyota behind you. How much more difficult did that make your task at hand at the end of this race, and did that add any more importance to clearing Sam on the restart?**

**JESSE LOVE:** Yeah, it was kind of worse case scenario there, having a line of Toyotas and then a line of Fords.

Honestly, I don't know if it hurt me because it kind of cleared up my mindset. My mindset was I have to make sure that they don't have a choice but to push me, and when I made that decision, it kind of almost -- I'm so cold with all the water on me. It kind of made my life easier because then my mindset was just don't let them get out of line and get to my quarterpanel.

Then my thought process went to whatever I have to do to keep them in my wake where they can push me out with the air bubble. Honestly it almost felt easier than if there were a bunch of Chevrolets behind me because I feel like the Chevrolets break the bubble a little bit better.

**Q. I want to say Daniel Dye wasn't thrilled with you after his wreck. He said you're friends and everything, but I'm curious, did you feel bad at all after that wreck? And if so, how do you put something like that out of your mind for the rest of the race?**

**JESSE LOVE:** I hate to be this -- which one --

**Q. The first one with --**

**JESSE LOVE:** With the 20?

**Q. Yeah.**

**JESSE LOVE:** Yeah, I think I -- I haven't watched replay yet. My first gut instinct -- it was a big stack-up. I don't know how that happened. I don't know if the 20 got the guy in front of him squirrely and backed up, and then it's kind of like, okay, do you want me to get, for lack of a better term, ass packed by the guy behind me, because the 48 did get to me and push me.

But regardless, I don't want to be the guy that doesn't give you a comment, but I don't know. It very easily could have been my fault, and if it was, then I apologize to the 20 because obviously I don't want to be that guy that starts wrecks.

It could have very easily been my fault, and if it is I'll talk to Brandon and apologize to him, and Daniel will probably yell

at me when we get home anyway.

**Q. So it wasn't like there was anything in your mind during the race?**

**JESSE LOVE:** Well, I think it's --

**Q. There have been other times -- just talk about the mentality of things like this and how you put them out of your mind --**

**JESSE LOVE:** Yeah, I think you've got to understand one thing, too. At that point, if I asked -- it could 100 percent be my fault, but if I asked my guys and say was that my fault, they're never going to tell me it was my fault in the moment.

When we get back to the shop they will, but in that moment it's never going to be my fault. So that cleared my conscious when they said it wasn't. But it could have also been my fault. If the 20 just backed up and I hit him, then it is my fault.

If there was something before that or if the 48 did get to my bumper before I got to his, then it maybe isn't. But at the same time you have to put that -- I know when I've wrecked somebody on purpose and that does bother me. But in that moment because it wasn't -- if it was my fault, it wasn't intentional. Again, I kind of stopped -- I didn't think about it.

I will say subconsciously, I maybe gave a little bit more room to the guys in front of me for the rest of the night, not thinking about it, but subconsciously I was doing that because there's no point in tearing up cars and I was behind a lot of Chevrolets the whole night so I didn't want to give them a bad push if I got a bad push.

**Q. Jesse, this morning after qualifying got rained out, you and Connor Zilisch were having a back and forth with each other online and Connor was like, oh, superspeedway ^ merchant, and you had some pretty good bashes in there yourself. You've got the trophy now. Do you have anything else to say to Connor?**

**JESSE LOVE:** No. He's my best friend in this whole world. I know him better than anybody and he knows me better than anybody for the most part, other than my dad.

No, I think that me and Connor definitely get competitive, no matter what we're doing. We're competitive and we kind of try to hide it because we don't want to ruin our friendship over it, but we do get competitive at times.

Because we both have so much experience with each other, we both know how to, I guess, jab the right parts.

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We can kind of take jabs and make him hurt a little bit.

He hits me where it hurts, and I kind of give it back to him. But no, he's a class act, man. He came over to me after the race, and honestly the highlight of my night was when we were leading both lanes. That was pretty cool, pretty special.

I've got a phenomenal small friend group that is basically me, Connor, Daniel Dye and Brent Crews, and we're all doing a lot of hard work for the season and working hard and we're all like minded.

I keep my friend group pretty small and a tight circle, because the friends I've got are worth a million. I feel like me and Connor definitely, though, we sometimes get a little bit out of hand.

**Q. On a serious note, you're still fairly young. You're still early in your career. There's a lot of drivers who show up to Daytona, show up to Talladega, show up to tracks where you have to race in the draft and never really get it or master it. What is it about Daytona and Talladega and Atlanta to a certain extent that -- how have you been able to get so good at drafting and superspeedway racing so early in your career?**

**JESSE LOVE:** Yeah, obviously our cars are really fast and we have a lot of power under the hood and get good fuel mileage. But I credit a lot of it is to Austin Hill. He has helped me a ton. At this time last year I really knew nothing, as we all saw at the ARCA racing deal. The speedway stuff is a lot different, a lot more single file, harder to make runs.

We had it down to a science with Venturini where we would kind of get out front and just control the whole race. I had to learn a lot, and I came into it not knowing much, but Austin was an open book for me for the first months of leading up to Daytona last year, and obviously that shortened my learning curve a lot.

I was a rookie last year at the speedways, but I had a wealth of knowledge because of him, and I have three pages of notes that he wrote for me to look over before I come to these racetracks.

He's the best at it. There's nobody better than him at this package. He would have been really tough to beat tonight, and obviously it helps when our cars are as good as they are.

**Q. Jesse, take me back to nine or ten years old, you're running a pavement midget out in California, nobody knows your name at that point. Does Jesse Love**

**tonight sitting here at Daytona, what do you tell 10-year-old you? Because this seems like a rise that you can't write this script.**

**JESSE LOVE:** Yeah, Jacob has known me for a while so he knows how to get me emotional.

**Q. I'm trying.**

**JESSE LOVE:** It comes down to trusting the people around me. I've always had, again, a really small group of people that I trust. At times my dad was -- put me in all these different cars, right, and made the learning curve really, really hard. And there were times where I'm running a midget for Keith against all these phenomenal guys and I'm getting my rear end whooped.

Then I get in a tour car out west and struggle there a little bit. But it was all for a reason, and haven't met somebody smarter than him yet.

Just trust your old man, and honestly me and dad's relationship changed when he told me to pick people in your life, and there's going to be probably four or five of them, but whatever they day you do. Whatever he's told me ever since, I've stuck to it 100 percent.

**Q. You dreamed of this race. Does the reality of winning here exceed the dream?**

**JESSE LOVE:** I mean, this is the only place I cry during the National Anthem, or kind of get emotional. I'm an emotional guy, as everybody knows, and I try not to hide it.

But this place is special. You come up racing here when I was at New Smyrna and just wanting to be a part of it, wanting to have the prestige of winning here and say the Lord's name on a big stage.

Obviously when you get to race for Richard, too, that is an added layer of kind of emotion when you come to these places. And what makes it more special is it's a place that I've showed at in the past and worked really hard to overcome my struggles here. That makes it even more special because I stuck with the path, and there were days where it was hard, but still powered through it and gave it 100 percent of what I have.

**Q. If you could kind of discuss what Danny Stockman has meant to you during your transition to the Xfinity Series.**

**JESSE LOVE:** Yeah, he's one of my best friends. I love Danny. We're probably sometimes too similar to always get along and we kind of get at each other's throats



sometimes.

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But we trust each other and we always have each other's backs. Honestly that's the most important thing. I always know he has my back. After that second stage tonight where I don't get stage points again for the most part and we're in the back -- like I was so far back, like literally just bailed on the pack to not wreck, keep my car clean.

He didn't give up on me and he still had the same confidence in his voice. I really hope that the day will come when we can go Cup racing together and keep achieving our dreams and goals together. He's the best crew chief I've ever worked with and somebody that I think very highly of and somebody that I really love.

**Q. Did you realize that was his first Daytona win?**

**JESSE LOVE:** I guess I'm surprised. I did not know that, no. I thought he had won everywhere. I'm sure he has plenty of poles here.

No, again, we've had a few firsts together, first times, that is, and obviously we both want to get a championship at the end of the year. I'm sure he has plenty of those, but at the same time, we've been pushing each other really hard this off-season and getting along really well.

**Q. Shortly before you took control of the race, it looked like your teammate, Austin Hill, was on track to win four straight spring Daytona races here. Since you've joined RCR, how much have you gotten to know him and has he coached you when it comes to these types of races and what have you learned from him?**

**JESSE LOVE:** Yeah, like I said at the beginning, Austin has helped me a ton. I came here last year as a rookie and because of him I had a wealth of knowledge. I'm in this spot today because he was selfless enough in the moment to help me out when I needed it and didn't hide anything from me.

**Q. For the last four years or so, RCR just seems to have been the top dog when it comes to superspeedway races. What is it that makes you guys so good?**

**JESSE LOVE:** Jay Born is really good at his job, and we have big engines that make a lot of horsepower and good fuel mileage and we've had a few people like Danny Stockman go through the company in the last few years that have a lot of secrets on these cars, and Dale has probably given us a little wave as we go by, too, so it all works out.

