

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Chris Gayle

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by our race-winning crew chief, Chris Gayle.

Talk us through the race today.

CHRIS GAYLE: Yeah, I think we thought we were going to have a lot better car based on practice and qualifying than what we did. Didn't really have a good enough long run car, probably not the speed that the 12 car had by any stretch. Worked on it all day, got it a little better.

Caught the one caution there in stage two to get the track position from where we lost it earlier. Kind of unique, we pitted with three laps on tires early, which is probably the wrong call on my part. Even then we had a bad pit stop and lost five spots on pit road from all the guys that took tires. The 23 was able to get positions back and we were kind of stuck. Caution stage two really helped us there.

I knew then that the pit crew was disappointed about that. Okay, one thing to be disappointed about, but it's not going to be your last opportunity. I didn't necessarily know how this would play out, they would have the opportunity on the green-white-checkered to get the win.

For those guys, man, they are just villains. They just want that moment to where they can go in there and just rip everybody's hearts out and win the race, walk away, don't care what anybody else thinks, unapologetic. They are just awesome. Happy to be part of their team pretty much.

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

Q. What's the challenge on a day like today when you have somebody like Byron, who is so good for so long, you're trying to find something to get close but before it plays out the way it does at the end it's a tough battle there?

CHRIS GAYLE: Yeah, you were looking at certain cautions and how were the long stretches. Is there going to be some way we can get an advantage with what we had versus others. We knew we didn't have a strong car on the long run. Thought we were going to be disadvantaged.



It would have been great to short pit. Had we caught a caution, maybe we would have been okay. If you don't, that thing plays green, we were really bad after 50 laps. Knew we were going to give everything back towards the end.

You look for that unique opportunity to do something different. Where they pit, knew they were going to be short pit by the 45 once he came. Kind of played out to where we should be able to get past them as long as this plays out and goes green till the end.

I don't think we accounted for the 12 being quite that strong. We knew he was strong, but he was far enough back that we didn't see him coming. Had enough pace that it didn't matter.

Just looking for something unique, either caution-wise or could you go long or short in a different scenario, make it play out in your favor.

I talked about it last week. You can do something different as long as it makes sense, play to a caution or something that might help you get track position.

I don't think we would have held off the 12 car or 24 on a restart for more than 10 laps. You don't know. You need to give yourself that opportunity to find out.

Q. How big does the playbook open up now with two wins in the bank?

CHRIS GAYLE: It's the same. All the 50/50 calls you can try to flip, push towards Playoff points, however that suits you.

Q. How much of a track position race was this today? Looked like it was so hard to pass.

CHRIS GAYLE: Yeah, it was. If you listened to our radio, I think you heard Denny say a couple times, I just need clean air, I'm just where I am. We weren't good enough.

After he had run probably 50, we fell off on that one run. That was the last 10 laps. Even through 40, 42 laps, it was hard to pass. Once everybody flipped track position after that caution, the 45 came through there, not many others



came through that quickly. The 12 a little bit. But that was it.

Q. We've seen this car race well on intermediate tracks, other mile-and-a-half's. Why is track position so important here compared to Kansas where you have more movement?

CHRIS GAYLE: I think you have more movement at Kansas, more multiple grooves where you're in clean air and run fast laps. Once tires wear here...

You have a little bit in the bottom of three and four, but the car has to be really good to do that. Once a guy is up in the wall after three or four after 15 or 20 laps on tires. Even one or two, you're searching for gray, trying to find places to pass.

That would be a great question for Denny.

What I see is there's nowhere to go where you aren't affected by the air. Some places like Kansas, with multiple grooves, you can get out of the air and still keep runs.

Q. You alluded to the 45 strategy. From your side, were you surprised how big of a gap Reddick had with their strategy?

CHRIS GAYLE: No. I think we look at all those scenarios. You fit it to what do I have for a car today. We had talked about that strategy. We're like we don't have a good long run car. If we do this strategy, we're rolling the dice for a caution before they get to us. We don't fall off really heavily on the last 10 laps if we're at a 60-lap run towards the end of the race. If it goes green, we'll be way worse than second or third.

That was an option we discussed trying to pull the trigger on potentially. It's a play for a caution.

For them, they probably had a little better long run speed. Maybe they didn't quite know. They are like, this is the only one that works for us. We are behind the 11 already. If they go long, we can't do anything different. Might have been that for them.

Q. Last week Denny comes out as the fastest car all day. Is it more fulfilling this week to have a team effort come up in a big moment?

CHRIS GAYLE: Well, I'm super pumped for the pit crew. I think, yes, the unity in the team, this is awesome for them. Their confidence, right? They've been P1 for a while. They've been the best pit crew. To be able to show that with a win directly from what they did on the last pit stop is

super for them.

For me, from my standpoint, I'm going to nitpick the car and be upset we didn't have a better car, better long run car. The things we tried to do didn't necessarily work out as well as we had hoped.

But from a team standpoint, I love it. I love that at least the camaraderie with all those guys, getting to enjoy that moment with them, was there.

Q. Denny talks a lot about getting to 60 wins. Two weeks ago were you thinking how in the world am I going to get him to 60? Now are you trying to think 60 before the Playoffs?

CHRIS GAYLE: No pressure, Bob, right (smiling)? You're pushing the number higher.

I don't worry about it, to be honest with you. I was worried about that first one. I'm coming in filling big shoes for Gabe Hart. He's been with Denny that long. I'm the only change. I'm not naïve enough to know that. I needed to win and win early.

Last week was great. We were able to win with a different setup, with something we worked on, came up with and have car speed, to get that out of the way.

This one, I was surprised. We obviously just had the right scenario. You take those, right? You take all the ones that you can steal somehow, then get all the ones that you're the strongest car, you'll be in good shape.

If we get to 60, I'll have to think if I'm going to go that long if he gets to 60.

Q. On pit road, your pit crew was appreciative of the moment coming down on the money stop. When you're up on the box and it comes down to that, what kind of words of encouragement, motivation do you have?

CHRIS GAYLE: I just encouraged them on the radio, you don't hear it because we're talking on a private channel, I basically said, This is the stop that's going to matter. I have confidence in you guys, let's get the win right here. Nothing more than that.

We have these conversations in the shop. I can tell you the one thing that every one of those guys has come to me about is that situation, how much they want to be in that situation, right? Some people shy away from that moment, get nervous, I don't want to fail. These guys are completely the other way. They're like, Give me the

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opportunity and let me try it.

I think you just can't commend that enough. You need that kind of culture and that kind of outlook from everybody on your team.

Q. Can you give me a sense in terms of strategy play, the last green flag cycle, was there really anything that any other crew chief did that was surprising? Wasn't it pretty much you're in a certain position, you need to pit early, late, it was more of a formula than a crew chief doing something out of the ordinary?

CHRIS GAYLE: I don't know. You could argue. I didn't look completely at the 45's long run pace. I would say they knew that maybe since it was such a track position race, hard to pass, if I can get in front of the 24, capture this, then I can control the race.

Like I said, I knew that we probably couldn't do that based on we had done the 60-lap stint earlier and really bled time bad with time to go in that. We were stuck doing what we were doing.

It does become a little bit of a formula. I guess there is a wildcard every now and then when you have somebody in the Playoffs that does something that is further back in the field, maybe short pits more than you would expect, expect a caution. They got a 10-lap window to do it. It could be different.

Outside of that I wouldn't say anything surprised me. But it was unique seeing the difference.

Q. In other sports, we hear coaches study the tendencies of other coaches. You had some good runs with Ty, but maybe not as regularly up front. Are there tendencies or things that you're going to have to or having to learn because maybe you're going head-to-head against some of these guys more often or should be more often throughout the year into the Playoffs?

CHRIS GAYLE: Yeah, I think I've always paid attention to it, even though it didn't necessarily play out winning the race situation or not. But you're still doing that.

If you're running P10, sometimes you're still racing against Billy Scott and all this. You tend to know will he take two tires or four tires in this situation. Will he short pit versus long run. We all kind of know a little bit of that.

It's nice to break tendencies a little bit for that, but only when it makes sense, right? It has to line up and pay the dividends potentially from some expected outcome.

THE MODERATOR: Chris, thank you for your time. Congratulations on the win.

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