

# NASCAR Media Conference

## Press Conference

Sunday, April 13, 2025

*An Interview with:*

**Kyle Larson**

**Cliff Daniels**

**Jeff Gordon**

**THE MODERATOR:** We're going to get started with our post-race press conferences. We've been joined by Jeff Gordon who has been gracious enough to come and spend some time with us after Kyle Larson's dominating performance at Bristol.

I don't know if you had a dominating performance like that back in the day.

**JEFF GORDON:** I don't think so.

**THE MODERATOR:** We'll go ahead and open for questions.

**Q. Everybody has had so many superlatives about Kyle over the years. Led 400-laps plus in two straight races here. Is there anything he can do at this point that can surprise you anymore?**

**JEFF GORDON:** Not really. I've seen him race so many different types of cars and do extraordinary things and dominate races. To me it's just all about what are the records that he can break or what are the things that he can do next.

I'm just glad that he's a part of our organization and that we get to go race with him and he's teamed up with Cliff Daniels, which I think they make just a great pairing for crew chief/driver.

There's been a pit crew change recently, so that was big for them. Yeah, I mean, obviously with everything, the loss of John this week, this was really meaningful. This organization just has a way of stepping up and answering and just persevering in the toughest of times. They did that again, and I'm really proud of that.

**Q. Larson, when he was in here yesterday, talked about a trip that John took with them after the 2021 championship in Dubai that he found particularly meaningful. You worked with Jon longer than**



**anybody. What stood out to you about him in his time with you and then later his time with Kyle and Hendrick Motorsports?**

**JEFF GORDON:** I was in here earlier and talking about this. But, I mean, worked with Jon for a long, long time. You know, and I think, honestly, I feel like -- and Jon would probably want this to be a broader discussion about just what PR folks do, the dedication that they have, commitment, and this balance they have of connecting a team or a driver with the media, with the fans, with the sponsors, and also allowing them to stay focused on their job, and he was the best. I get to work with the best, and so did Kyle. Now I think others that he's mentored will get to carry that on, and today we get to carry it on with a win.

But, yeah, I mean, he loved to travel, and he loved to consume and consume life. Yeah, I've really enjoyed this week talking to some folks that I haven't talked to in many years. Jon just had friends from all different walks of life and loved all forms of motorsports.

You know, just hearing some of those stories and things, maybe some things I didn't know or things I hadn't heard. Same with them with some stories I was telling.

Yeah, just lost a great one.

**Q. You've had enough dominant cars over your years that you've had moments behind the wheel that you are waiting for the caution, you are waiting for the thing that goes wrong. I'm curious, in a race like this where it means so much, are you kind of feeling those same feelings you might have as a driver where it's you're waiting for Kyle to cue up vibration or something like that?**

**JEFF GORDON:** Oh, yeah. As a driver and a team, you're just waiting for... You're telling yourself, man, please, no, please, no, please, no. But usually it does happen, right? It's almost inevitable when you have a dominating car like that that something happens. It's almost like more often than not that the win doesn't come in a dominating performance like that.

So, yeah, you're feeling every vibration. You know, every lap car that you come up to, you just think that something is going to happen. He got in the wall with, like, I don't



... when all is said, we're done.®

know, five or six to go.

So I think you're really trying to tell yourself, Hey, don't make any mistakes here, but at the same time you're really hoping that the rest of the field doesn't make any mistakes either.

So, yeah, for me I think it was just, like, when is it coming, when is it coming because I want to be prepared because I don't want to be too upset when it comes, and it never came. You're happy when you have that kind of a performance. You know, you kind of feel like it's deserving to finish it off.

**Q. Then I think most of us outside of the sport when we go through adversity or a tragedy, we get to call in and say, Hey, we're not coming to work or we need time or whatever. This sport doesn't move that way. You guys have dealt with a lot of that over the years and decades. I'm curious, how can you articulate how challenging that is? Is it cathartic in some ways to go to the racetrack, or is it a challenge?**

**JEFF GORDON:** I can't speak for everybody on the team, but for me walking in today it was different. Yeah, it was tough. You know, I think that we've gone through a lot as an organization over 40 years.

When you have experience in most things, you realize that what would that person want and try to fulfill that. Jon would want us to be here racing and would want us to -- I don't even think he would want us to honor him. He would want us to not say his name at all. He wants to go under the radar and be this kind of unsung hero, I guess. There's no other way to do it, any other way for a great like him.

But, yeah, I think we've just -- sometimes it's therapeutic, but it's also not really an option either, like you mentioned. You just try to learn from it and grow from it and bond together as an organization, as a team together, and I think that's what Jon is going to do in this case for us.

**Q. I know you would have loved to pull off the triple this weekend, but just how special is this entire weekend when you look at Kyle's performance yesterday and today just for this team?**

**JEFF GORDON:** Yeah, I mean, I do know how bad he wanted it. I think of Homestead and how close that was, and then this one was so close. But either way, I asked Kyle about it earlier, and he's, like, Eh, I didn't have the best truck on Friday, so second was probably the best we could do. So he was looking at it slightly different than the way I was.

Yeah, this is a track that he's just so good at, and this organization has traditionally put great race cars out on the track here. I'm really excited to see our Xfinity team stepping up. We're bringing a lot more things in-house and doing a lot more of that ourselves.

We've got a young driver in Corey Day. To see that team and the cars perform at that level... When you put Kyle Larson in the car, you know, you better win with it at Bristol. It's just kind of Bristol and Homestead seems like if you don't, then you've really kind of let everybody down.

**Q. And you and Kyle both obviously worked with Jon for a long time. How important is it to have a PR rep who is as good as Jon was?**

**JEFF GORDON:** Yeah. I mean, what I loved about working with Jon is that he would call me out or he would put an emphasis on things that were priorities. Sometimes you get caught up in going week-to-week or things that you not always are wanting to put some of the opportunities that come your way first because you've got something else happening.

Jon was always great of just presenting it in a way of, Hey, you know, I think this is a great opportunity, and if we don't do it today, maybe you can do it tomorrow or another time, but you need to do it.

When he said that, then you're, like, Absolutely. If he believed in it, then I believed in it. And I think Kyle felt the same way when he was working with him. It was always just a good balancing act.

Plus, he loves motorsports, loved his job, and was easy to work with. So, yeah, that's the kind of person that you want on your side in that role.

**Q. I understand you're going to be coming at this from a biased perspective. What is a better race at Bristol Motor Speedway, last year when you had tire wear and it was in the driver's hands, or is it better this year where the best driver and team can assert themselves and kind of run away?**

**JEFF GORDON:** I mean, I am a little disappointed in today with the tire, I'll be honest. There was no fall-off and no wear. We all thought there was going to be tremendous wear, and there wasn't.

But at the same time, I don't like what happened last year either. I want to say this: Goodyear has a tough job. I think this car, we have a heavy car. Just stock cars in general. We have these high-bank tracks, heavy loads, abrasive surfaces. There's just a lot of things that are very



difficult for them to do the things that they do to make a tire that's durable and perform well.

To ask for them on top of that to have a tire that falls off and wears but doesn't wear too much, that's a tall task. I don't envy them on that.

I went through the Indy debacle. You were ten laps pitting, cautions, and that's not good. Last year I thought it was, while probably entertaining for you in here, you know, it just completely -- it took things out of the driver's hands too much I felt like.

You could say if you wanted the drivers managing it, I don't think he was. Running two seconds off the pace is not what I think we want in NASCAR to manage a tire.

So, yeah, I would take this one over. I am biased, but I would take this over that. But I still was disappointed to see how many -- how few cautions and how little fall-off there was today.

**Q. For as great as the win is, obviously Hendrick Motorsports was built on championships. I remember talking to you after Phoenix, and last year there was work still to do. As you guys come off a couple of dominating races and have had some strong runs in the first nine races, how much of a push is championship even more so after not winning at the last few years and how does what you guys have done this first quarter maybe lead to some better results later in the season?**

**JEFF GORDON:** Well, I mean, to see all four of our teams performing at a high level and consistently there each week and getting solid points, to be able to relax a little bit on that. Really bummed about the 48 today with that because, man, what a great race car and weekend they were having.

But, you know, being in the meetings, we have high standards. So it's been nice. And I think we've been happy. But no, we're definitely not satisfied. I mean, I'll let Cliff speak for himself. I think we're still behind when it comes to looking at the ten races and the championship.

There's some real good tracks in there for us, but there are some tracks that are concerning, and we want to get to Phoenix. I think Phoenix right now, we're not the team to beat, and we've got a long way to go, luckily, and I hope we can find it.

We have the best people in the business to be able to do that. Race wins like today are rewarding in many ways and will motivate us, but this is not Phoenix, and I think we

know that.

**THE MODERATOR:** I'll go ahead with Cliff and Kyle. Jeff, thank you for your time today. We will move into our post race press conference with our race winner Kyle Larson, our race winning crew chief Cliff Daniels. Congratulations on a very dominating performance. We will open it up for questions.

**Q. This one is for you, Cliff. I talked with Jonathan Hassler and Billy Scott, and they both said they kind of thought it would lean more into a tire wear race. Obviously that didn't happen. I'm curious for you, going back to yesterday, what were your thoughts after practice and then coming to the track today seeing the weather and everything before the green? What did you think the tires were going to be like?**

**CLIFF DANIELS:** I think all of us in the garage probably had a lot of speculation still. Certainly the track conditions, the temps, and even really the pace of practice yesterday was just really high, really abusive on the tires for what those conditions were.

Today we had a lot of direct sunlight on the track, so with that, comes a bit more track temp. We had a fresh application of PJ1. It's crazy to think that the margin is that small between the tires holding up and having enough temp in them to activate whatever the juices are that makes it work out and not shred them like it did yesterday.

I don't know that we had a very strong opinion one way or the other. More skeptical. But Kyle and I both looked at the track a little while before the race and thought, if anything, it had more potential to take rubber today.

**Q. Cliff, I'm curious, going off the tire thing, when you have a situation where you see the tires cording as much as they were, you're coming into this race weekend expecting one thing, does that give you any sort of doubt? How much does that change what your preparation for the race is and how quickly then do you have to adapt when you go 50 laps into the race today and see that that's not the case?**

**CLIFF DANIELS:** Yeah, I mean, we certainly had kind of a two-part conversation around what it would look like for a rubber race. It wasn't a fully rubbered-in race, but certainly the tires made it. Then the conversation around what it would be like if it was kind of a chaos type race with a lot of tire wear.

To be honest, our learning experience from last year when it was the kind of the chaos race was a well-balanced car was still going to give you the best potential to manage it

on either side.

So our focus just in practice, even though we went really fast for what our run was and wore out our tires really quickly, it gave us a great read on the balance of the car and a couple of little things we could take into today, knowing that, again, either way the race could potentially go.

We're just trying to set ourselves up for the best opportunity for longevity, for pace, you know, for Kyle being able to manage the runs with the tire degradation in mind.

Certainly no right answer, but we were hopeful that a balanced car would present a decent potential for either scenario.

**Q. Cliff, we've heard from Kyle. We've heard from Jeff about this week. From your perspective, what has this been like for you with Jon?**

**CLIFF DANIELS:** I genuinely appreciate you asking that question. You know, it's been a tough week for our team for many reasons. Obviously the most monumental of all was losing our beloved Jon Edwards. To me just stepping back and trying to reflect on what the week has been because we've been very zoomed into it.

I was very close to a lot of conversations with Jon this week, even right before his passing, and just involved in a lot of the things right after.

The outreach from the community from all of the people that he's touched, you know, his network, has been so big over so many years within our sport and our industry. That's been so heart-warming to see the people that loved him for so many years, the people that he impacted.

It's that way for a reason. Jon carried himself with a lot of joy, a lot of care for others. I can just think of so many situations in our time together where it didn't matter who it was or what publication or what media outlet or what driver, team, anybody. Jon had the same high level of care and concern and love for others irregardless of who it was. That's what made him such a joy to be around.

To lose him as a friend and a teammate is sad and tough for all of us, but it's almost brought about a little bit of peace and joy for his life to see how many people that he touched.

Genuinely I think that's his legacy, to challenge everyone to think about others that way, to carry themselves that way. We were talking about it this morning with our resident Chaplin Donnie Floyd. Jon carried out so many Godly

characteristics just in kindness and the grace that he showed to others, that's the impact he has on us, and I believe that's the impact he has on our community at large.

**Q. I asked Kyle and Jeff this question too, so I'll ask you. Favorite memory?**

**CLIFF DANIELS:** Absolutely. He would always come up to me before every race. Hey, Cliff, when we win later and when we dominate later, you know, we're going to do this, this, and this after the race. I'm a big don't jinx it, guy. I'm always, like, Jon, no, you can't say 'when we win'. Every Sunday, yeah, when we kick their ass today, Cliff, we're going to do this later.

I miss that, and I enjoyed that interaction before every race because he knew that it was fun to say, but he also knew that it would kind of twist me a little. So I appreciated that.

**Q. You did kick their ass today.**

**KYLE LARSON:** I'm sure he didn't jinx today.

**CLIFF DANIELS:** He didn't jinx today. That's right.

**Q. I'll ask you both. We had this race a year ago. It was high tire wear. Drivers say that puts it in their hands, et cetera, et cetera. When you look at today's race versus last year's race, do you have a preference of what you want, last year, this year, somewhere in the middle?**

**KYLE LARSON:** I've led 860-something laps.

**CLIFF DANIELS:** 873.

**KYLE LARSON:** Obviously I'm going to be biased to this. I just think it's more fun. We're still out there managing our runs.

So I don't know. I don't really -- I don't know. Last year was very excessive. I mean, we were running maybe 50% throughout a run. That was too much. But then today we're much closer to 100% every lap, but somewhere between 85% to 90% still trying to manage everything.

Like me in the lead, like I don't want to get my stuff too hot to when I catch traffic, I can't pass lappers. I think that's why Denny and I were still able to lap a lot of cars because we still did a good job managing our tires. Although it might be a little less wear, it's still a lot more temp-related that you are managing.

I would obviously love it if the tire could lay more rubber and the pace, the track would get slicker. Like with Xfinity,



it gets really black. When it gets black, it's just greasy feeling, and the pace slows down where when it's kind of a lighter gray, like it is for the Cup cars we run here, it does keep it faster pace.

I would more ask for a tire that sticks the rubber to the track because it will have us sliding around more and slowing down more.

**CLIFF DANIELS:** I think my answer would be very similar. I just don't know that for the race that we want to see out of a race that the conditions and the formula of what was this spring race a year ago is something that would be healthy from a racing standpoint.

You know, to me today, man, you had lanes across the entire racing surface. You had guys slipping around. Go look at the right side of our car. It's destroyed from getting through traffic and touching guys and fenders. We have doughnuts on the side of the car.

Doing my homework this week, I watched the 2004 Bristol night race. One lane on the bottom. Rusty led almost the whole race until Rusty had a bad pit stop and Dale Jr. won the race. There was not a lot of passage for the lead. Not a lot of things that happened. There was no upper lane.

To me today's race, when the top two cars are within a second apart, navigating through traffic and every single lane that was available and bouncing off of lap cars, I know we want cautions and yellows for excitement, but from a racing purist standpoint, today's race was a heck of a race because Denny was coming, he put pressure on us. We knew it. We had to take chances. Man, that just presents such a good race from our seat.

To Kyle's point, when rubber starts to stack a little bit and you are sliding around, you probably heard him call out one run, Right rear tire is starting to wear out some. Great, that's what you want to see for the way it was all playing out today.

**KYLE LARSON:** If I could add, too, I think last spring we were all caught off guard by it, and we were all learning on the fly. That's why we were two, three wide and we weren't really sure what was wearing the tires out, what lane it was.

Well, by the end of it, we all learned, you know, what was wearing the tires out. So that's why I think you saw in the first 25 laps today the whole field was single file.

I'm curious if fans would have thought that was exciting if we just rode in a train for 500 laps around the bottom while running 50% and all still wearing our tires out about the

same time anyway.

I just believe it's more exciting when you can let the drivers push and run closer to the edge of making mistakes.

**CLIFF DANIELS:** I think that's a good point. I don't think that had we had this same amount of tire wear today as we had from the spring race a year ago it would have been anywhere close to that level of a race because all we've talked about all week long coming here is, Okay, now that we know it, you have to protect.

On to his point, it would have likely been a very slow single-file lane around the bottom until somebody wears them out. You pit and join back into the single-file lane around the bottom. I think that's how it would have gone.

**Q. Kind of following up on those points you made, you mentioned 873 laps led in the last two races combined. What is it about, I guess, the more standard Bristol that you guys excel at so well?**

**KYLE LARSON:** I think for us the last two races we've qualified well, which really helps. Then our car balance is just really good. I could tell right away in practice this time around my car was extremely good.

Then I think, you know, too, when I spend 800 and something laps out front, you just become a better leader and a better driver at managing the pace and, you know, learning what it takes to set guys up and what to look for in passing and keeping that buffer to seconds.

I think just experience to go along with a good car and a track that I've really always ran well here. Just knew now I kind of have the team and car to go along with it.

**Q. Then just following up on what you said about the experience. Watching from the press box, other drivers tried the diamond pattern that you ran. If you see two cars spaced unevenly, they wouldn't try to put their car there, but then you would and you would make it work.**

**KYLE LARSON:** Through the middle?

**Q. Yes.**

**KYLE LARSON:** That was kind of a new thing today. So when Denny got close to me sometime after the green flag stop, like, pretty early on, they told me he was, like, ripping the very, very top. So I went to the very top, and he almost poked my inside through the middle.

So I kind of kept that in the notebook and caught some



slower cars that had split. I think the 60 was somebody I felt like I really needed to get by, and he went to the bottom, and I was able to kind of plug the middle around him.

It just was really lighter colored through there. Like, there was less rubber. Where everybody was running was the very bottom and the very top, so the middle was kind of clean and had a lot of grip. I used that to my advantage for just a couple of laps, but I think if you keep running there, you just wear out your tires.

Again, we were looking after our tires today. So, yeah, when I would make the pass, I just got back to the lanes that I thought would save me throughout the length of the run.

**Q. Cliff, you guys have gone through quite the range the last couple of weeks, the last couple of races. I'm curious, what, in a sense, better prepares, makes this a stronger, better organization group for the playoffs... what you went through last week and having to go through that or going out and kicking everybody's butt on a week like today?**

**CLIFF DANIELS:** I think it's a great question. You have to see all of the different facets of failure and defeat and using the DVP policy and all the things that we had to do there that, in my opinion, was an incredible education and learning experience for our team.

There are so many valuable things that we took away just from a process standpoint and even working with NASCAR. Something I will highlight is how keen they were on us rebuilding the car with all the proper safety aspects still in the car. Daggone it, if we didn't hit the wall again in the same spot, and the car was safe, and all those things were done.

It was two-fold, and a team exercise of getting a car that was put together well, back on track that we could go work on performance. Also safety with that.

And then at the same time to make a deep run in the playoffs, you have to know how to push that edge of your team to go do the execution items to qualify well, to pit from the front, to keep it up front, Kyle managing the lanes as the leader, restarts, communication, timing. A lot of those things are just vital components.

It's crazy how this week played out for us just strictly looking at the competition side. Of course, the loss of Jon was a whole other blow, but our team maintained a lot of positivity this week of knowing how much we learned and knowing how important that could be.

I came in on the back side of Jeff talking about the playoffs for our company. We still do believe that there's more performance to go get at the Gateways and Loudons and Martinsvilles, and especially Phoenix. That we've been a little bit behind some of those other guys.

There's work out there ahead of us that we need to go get and find the little bits of performance, but certainly having the dichotomy of such a dismal Sunday a week ago and the great Sunday that we had today is important for our team. We're going to keep growing and building on it, and still a long season ahead.

**Q. Also, you mentioned going back this week and watching a 2004 Bristol race. So with everything that you have to do, with all your time limited, preparation each week, why are you watching a race from over 20 years ago? Are you that big of a Dale Jr. fan?**

**CLIFF DANIELS:** Well, I hate to admit this because just with my family background, I like to think of myself as a little bit of a NASCAR history buff, but I totally forgot I think the fact that 'It's Bristol, baby,' came from him from that race. That's fun to see.

Why am I watching it? I had exhausted myself on watching all of the 2023 and 2024 races. As we're working through the week, you know, there's a lot of things going on with our week, especially this week, but it was kind of on in the background. For me it's a helpful reminder just to see the way the track has evolved, the way the sport has evolved, and just have a healthy appreciation for what it is that we do.

There's so many veterans and people of the past of our sport that have paved the way for us to get here. The Next Gen era is certainly unique to what it is, as have many of the eras of NASCAR been, but our whole team is a team full of racers, and we have a very healthy appreciation and respect for the ones who paved the way for us to be here.

**Q. Kyle, Jeff was in here earlier, and he was saying it was -- he talked to you about the triple potentially, and you were, like, Well, I didn't have the best truck on Friday. Regardless, how do you put this week, this weekend, the past two days specifically, just in order?**

**KYLE LARSON:** I don't know. I race a lot, so it's cool, you know, to win two times in a row on the same weekend, but I don't overthink it or celebrate it too much, I guess. I just love to race, and I love Bristol and was really excited about this weekend.

Obviously wish I could have been one spot better on Friday



to join Kyle, but regardless, I had a great time this weekend and got to lead a bunch of laps and challenge for wins and win a couple of them.

Yeah, proud of it, and hopefully get the chance to do it again in the future. You know, next year would be -- I'm done racing trucks and Xfinity for this year, so hopefully the schedule lays out right next year where I can try again.

**THE MODERATOR:** Kyle, Cliff, congratulations again on your win today. We appreciate the time you spent with us.

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