

# NASCAR Media Conference

## Press Conference

Sunday, May 11, 2025

*An Interview with:*

## Chad Knaus

**THE MODERATOR:** We're going to roll into our post-race press conference. We've been joined by Hendrick Motorsports VP of competition Chad Knaus. Chad is here following Kyle Larson's win at Kansas Speedway today.

Chad, congratulations on another victory, another dominating performance by Kyle and Cliff and the team. Tell us a little bit about your perspective from today and really just all of Hendrick Motorsports who had strong runs.

**CHAD KNAUS:** Yeah, it really was a great day for us. Obviously the victory and the pole was something that you could be extremely proud of, but I think if you take a step back and look at the performance of the 48 car, drop of the green flag, they go from 21st all the way up to ninth, showing that the speed in the car was there.

Execution was good all day long, and to be able to get a top 5 -- it's unfortunate we had that issue with the 24 car with the tire. Obviously that wasn't an isolated thing to them. It was across the field; no make, no manufacturer was isolated and wasn't impacted by that to some degree.

So it's unfortunate, but we'll go home and we'll dig into that, but I'm proud of those guys continuing to fight through the day, and the 9 obviously was really strong and had a great day going, was able to go up there, pass for the lead on the lead lap, something that we've been encouraging and pushing that 9 team, and they're getting better and better, so that's really nice to see.

To be here on Mother's Day, obviously, and to be able to get the victory with the 5 car was something very special.

**Q. It's obviously really hard to get four cars running really well at the same time, but regardless of the results, it feels like right now you guys, as you just laid out, have speed. If nothing goes wrong you guys potentially have four top 5s. What is going right in the organization right now to have that speed across the board with all four teams?**

**CHAD KNAUS:** Yeah, I think if you take a look at it, we're maturing as a group. Obviously the crew chiefs are now in their third complete year of working together. Our drivers



are maturing, working together. They dive in deep with one another. They lean on each other.

The communication at Hendrick Motorsports has always been high, but I don't know that it's ever been as high as what it is right now. It's something great to be a part of. Obviously we've got Tom Gray, who is our technical director, who moved up at the end of last year, and he's doing a really good job in his role, and obviously our leadership is just awesome with Mr. H and Gordon and Jeff Andrews.

I think if you take all those things and everybody pushes inward, and obviously one thing we're not afraid to do is run towards a problem, and we do that, and we try to get them resolved so these guys can come to the racetrack and execute.

That's the thing I'm probably the most proud of with our race teams is the execution throughout the course of the day. They execute at a very high level. Pit stop cycles, the way they perform on pit stops, the strategies they use, really pretty awesome right now.

**Q. First and foremost, for Kyle, winning this race a year ago really propelled a really strong month of May for him. With everything that he's got on his calendar again this year, how do you feel like he's prepared differently for this year, and how do you feel like a win like today's, as dominating as it was, can kind of lead to springboarding more of that success?**

**CHAD KNAUS:** Yeah, obviously confidence is something that's important in everybody's life, and right now he's got a lot of it. Being able to win races here recently in the Cup Series, what he's doing outside of the Cup Series is strong, I think last year at the Indy 500 and then what we did at the All-Star Race and how prepared we were for the 600.

Unfortunately once Mother Nature stepped in, we didn't have a whole lot that we could do, but we're really excited about this year. His preparation is high. Cliff and the team, obviously they're ready to execute. They've got everything in place to the best of our ability, and then we just have to let things shake.

I'm super proud of those guys. It's really an honor to be able to try to execute the double, especially two years in a



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row, and we're pumped for the next couple weeks.

**Q. Going back to the 9 car, you talked about how strong they were today. One slow pit stop kind of derailed some of that. What did you see from that group particularly today and how encouraging is that to see them up front leading laps and being as competitive as they were?**

**CHAD KNAUS:** Yeah, it was great for the 9 this weekend. They unloaded, they were good. Chase had very favorable comments about the race car straight out of the gate, which was really nice. I know that Alan and Chase are digging in deep and working extremely hard with their team to try to make sure they do that on a weekly basis because when they do, they execute very well.

It's unfortunate that issue happened today because I think we'd be sitting here with them easily in the top 5 with the pace that they had. But it only takes one hiccup, and it can kind of derail your day. We've got to keep working on those things, but as long as they continue to bring good race cars and fast race cars and execute at a high level, they're going to be where we need them.

**Q. What is it about Kyle that allows him to wreck an INDYCAR one day, win a sprint car race the next day, nearly have a spring car come in his lap on Friday, he was supposed to run the truck race yesterday but Byron wants to do it, and he's like, all right, whatever. What allows him to just do all that and be as successful as he is?**

**CHAD KNAUS:** A very short memory is all I can think. He just goes and goes and goes. The thing that I've always been impressed with Kyle since he showed up at Hendrick Motorsports is that he is unfazed. Like nothing really gets under his skin. He doesn't get wound up. He doesn't get emotional about maybe something that happens on the racetrack.

He doesn't get emotional and carry weight on his shoulders -- maybe they have a bad race or whatever it may be. He's like water off a duck's back. He just rolls with it and he goes and he continues to drive, and he loves racing.

When we were talking about the truck race that you mentioned, he's just like, well, I didn't have anything else to do so I figured I would drive it. That's the way he is. He loves driving race cars and he loves competing, and that's something that's pretty special, and when you have a young man that talented that wants to drive all the time, you need to let him do that.

He was like, I'll just relax for a day, which he doesn't really

seem to care about doing too often. He loves to race, and I think that's something all of us can appreciate, and if you're doing something that you love that much, man, just go do it.

**Q. You were enthusiastically pumping the air before you gave Alex Bowman a high five on pit road. Could you talk about how impressive was it what he was able to do today despite the damage he got? He said he didn't want to be standing around on pit road complaining about finishing fifth, but he knew they had a better car than what they ended up with.**

**CHAD KNAUS:** Yeah, they were great. They had a very good race car. It's unfortunate they had that damage early. But to be able to bounce back the way they did, again, I think is showing the character of that team.

They've been fast the last handful of weeks. Four of the last five weeks they've had cars that I feel like were capable of running in the top 5, but they've had unfortunate circumstances take them out, whether it be an engine or an unfortunate crash after a pit stop mishap or something along those lines.

I'm a big fan of Alex's. I think that he's a great young man. I think he's a great driver. He's got a great team. Blake has really built that team up around him, and they're taking things on one big chomp at a time, and they're not taking little bites, they're trying to improve, and it's pretty awesome.

Yeah, Alex and I have got a great relationship. He was saying something about me on the radio; that's why I pumped him up a little bit. He's a good dude, and he's a great race car driver. I'm really proud of what those guys are doing right now.

**Q. When we usually come to Kansas, we think Toyota dominant, but you guys have won or Chevrolet has won the past three races, Kyle has won the past two spring races. What does that say about this organization considering that they've kind of taken a Toyota-based track, I guess?**

**CHAD KNAUS:** Well, it wasn't like they weren't there, just so you know. They were right on our heels, and we were racing with them all race long. If you look at Bell, he was right there. The 11 was right there. I think the competition is really close right now.

But I feel like our Hendrick engine program and HCD, they're pushing really hard and trying to get that performance for our cars, and our teams are digging in extremely deep. Everything is in the details right now with



these cars. They're so close. They're so competitive, and you've got 38 of the best race car drivers in the United States if not the world out there competing in a car that's very close to one another.

I think it's all about the details. It's all about the execution. That's one of the things that I feel like the 5 excels at is preparation and details. When you have those opportunities, you need to be able to jump on them and capitalize. That's what we've been able to do the last couple races.

**Q. Chad, I just want to circle back because you mentioned Alex had mentioned you on the radio. Do you like it when he gets fired up?**

**CHAD KNAUS:** Do I like it when Alex gets fired up?

**Q. Yes.**

**CHAD KNAUS:** Yeah, as long as it's in a positive manner. No, honestly, Alex does a great job, and if he's getting wound up, that means he cares about what's going on, and he usually doesn't get too excited unless he knows he's in a position that he's going to get a good finish, and that's where he was today. He knew that he had a car that was capable of winning the race early on, and it's unfortunate they had that damage and had a little pit stop issue.

**Q. Looking at Larson, this is the fastest streak in his career, three wins in the first 12 races. What makes this year in particular different as compared to maybe past years in terms of that early success?**

**CHAD KNAUS:** This guy. This guy is making all the difference in the world. Obviously I've mentioned it I don't know how many times in here about the preparation of the team and the way they approach a weekend, and when you're able to show up and show up with good race cars that are competitive straight out of the gate and you have the communication level and the detail that these guys put into it to be prepared, those opportunities show up more often than not.

**Q. I was a little bit confused because I knew it was a new left side tire or at least new for here, but then people had problems with the right sides and a lot of drivers were talking about vibrations they had. Was it because -- is that just people messing with air pressures and trying to get as close as they can? Is it the temperatures were up? Do you have any sense or can you explain why that might have been happening today?**

**CHAD KNAUS:** Yeah, it's all of it. There's no one isolated

reason why you have a tire failure, and the vibrations are high -- if you walked up and down pit road at all, you saw the rubber and the debris that was laying on pit road from when they took the tires off, and the rubber is caking on the insides of the wheels. People were busting cords in their tires. That creates a vibration, as well.

The failures are from heat, which is a result of low tire pressure, load. There's so many things that go into it. It's not ever one singular thing -- rarely it's one singular thing that creates those failures.

But I want to throw out there real quick, Goodyear does a really good job. They do a really good job. They typically bring a very good product, and what happened today I don't think was necessarily a Goodyear issue; I think that was a competitor thing where we were really pushing the limits of the cars and the tires, just for what that's worth.

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