

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

Sunday, June 1, 2025

An Interview with:

Jonathan Hassler

Michael Nelson

THE MODERATOR: We're going to roll into our post-race press conference here for tonight's Cracker Barrel 400 here at Nashville Superspeedway. We've been joined by our race-winning crew chief, Jonathan Hassler, and Michael Nelson, who's the president of team operations at Penske. Congratulations on that win.

We'll go ahead and open for questions. If you have a question for Jonathan or Michael, raise your hand and we'll get a microphone to you.

Q. Jonathan, give us your thoughts on the race from your standpoint on the pit box.

JONATHAN HASSLER: Yeah, I think for us it was really nice just to finish off a race. I feel like we've had really good speed all throughout the year, especially at the intermediates and mile-and-a-half kind of tracks, which this kind of fits into. But we haven't been able to get the race finished.

So it was good for us to go ahead and do that. We had a little bit of adversity with our starting position and pit stall but we were able to get our track position and maintain it once we got it.

Q. Jonathan, can you take me through the thinking of how you did your pit strategy and how you guys decided to pit? Waited a little bit longer for the last stop and how you set up for that, because for instance, the 77 went a lot sooner and he ended up going, I think, from sixth to second after that cycle. What worked for you and why did you do what you did?

JONATHAN HASSLER: I think from my seat we saw probably a little bit less falloff than we've seen here at Nashville before, and in those instances we definitely just try to make sure the car is in the cleanest air that we can get it in. Sometimes when that's your focus, you might get what you want by pitting early, sometimes you might get it by pitting late, so we just watched where we were going to come out on track and try and get the best track position we could.



Q. Obviously you guys are used to winning, you know what it takes, but this season the highs and lows, everybody is human, so how did you work with that? How do you go from that? How do you work with that with Ryan because I think everybody figured you'd have a win by now and probably could have had a couple wins by now and had different things. How did you work through the ups and downs?

JONATHAN HASSLER: I think just trying to maintain the energy of the group is probably the biggest challenge. My message to them and even to myself has been that we're perfectly capable. We've been in position. A lot of things have happened that are outside of our control. We just need to keep doing what we can, controlling what we can control, and things will finally turn around, and it's nice that they did today.

Q. Michael, obviously the 12 team has had some rough finishes this year and Jonathan hit on that. What does it mean to be at this point in the season and know that they're in Victory Lane?

MICHAEL NELSON: I think for all of us it's really a relief. We've been close so many times and it really lets us kick the door open and take a few chances, hopefully swing a little harder and go win a lot more races.

Q. Mike, to have all four cars locked in with Josh, at this point how important is that?

MICHAEL NELSON: Well, it's obviously pretty awesome to have a little bit of that pressure off for the guys, and again, like I just said, gives you a chance to go out and take some chances here and there and try to rack up a bunch of wins. We're grateful to be at this point with our cars this time of year.

Q. Jonathan, six of the last 12 races in the regular season, four on road courses, two on drafting tracks. Things start changing once you get past Michigan next week. What's the challenge for you guys? You've been strong at -- we've certainly seen speed at the big tracks. What's the challenge coming up in this next stretch to get more points, playoff points, to get yourself in a better position for the playoffs because these are some unique tracks coming up?



JONATHAN HASSLER: I think for us and probably the same across our company, road courses have probably been our biggest weakness, and as we've started to get each of the teams locked in, we've definitely been able to focus a little bit more effort on that. Now the opportunity to go and experiment a little bit more and certainly try to make that program better. I think that's certainly a big part of our focus going forward.

Q. What does that mean by focus because obviously every race is important?

JONATHAN HASSLER: Yeah, I think once you get the win, obviously points are important, but you're locked in. So you can definitely go and experiment and run some setups that maybe you're not 100 percent confident in but you want to try, you want to get that datapoint, and I think we'll be able to go and do things like that.

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