

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Chase Elliott

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by the race-winning driver, Chase Elliott. We are going to open right up to questions.

Q. Chase, the reaction from the crowd after 44 races not hearing them do that, the chanting, what does it mean to you personally that even after 44 races without winning, you're still the face of the sport, the only one that can get the crowd like this?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Yeah, thanks.

It was, yeah, truthfully a pretty surreal moment. There's really only been one other time in my career that I felt like -- I don't know. I'm not sure anything has ever matched that. It was crazy. I've never, like, been onstage and been a singer or anything like that. I would have to imagine it would feel something like that. It was such an incredible experience.

To your point, I think it just kind of goes to show how great our fans have been to me and to us. It just kind of really makes you appreciate them even more for really sticking with us and not giving up hope, ultimately being able to give both me and my team an experience like that, because their determination and unwillingness to quit on us is really cool.

Yeah, grateful to have experienced that. Something I'll remember for the rest of my life. Winning at home was incredible the first time. They feel different. But this one, Saturday night under the lights, been a while since we won, just getting ourselves a win and advancing up on the Playoff thing. Just all the things that have come with this, that one was up there, for sure.

Yeah, just grateful to have experienced it.

Q. Do you think that was the loudest you've ever heard the crowd after any of your wins?

CHASE ELLIOTT: It was for me, for sure. I can't think of one that was any louder than that. That one was different. There was one time throughout the night, they were like taking out their cell phones and have the lights on. We



were coming to a restart. Visibly from my seat it caught my attention. Typically it's hard to get a good angle at that. That just caught my attention. Man, this place looks good tonight.

Yeah, to see them that excited after the race for me, it was crazy. It was crazy. It was surreal. I don't really know how else to describe it. It's just one of those moments you wish you could bottle up, get it out every now and again, relive it.

Yeah, I try to box it up the best I can and make sure I never forget it.

Q. You said after the race it was a wild race. Any more satisfaction from just a driver standpoint to win a wild race?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Just to win a race is nice in general. I'm not going to go picky whether it's wild or boring. It was nice to come out on the good end of that. It could have been one of five of us, five or six of us, there at the end. I think for me, fortunately, the runs just really timed up at the perfect time. We were able to do something with them.

I'm proud of race wins, whether they're wild or boring or lucky or whatever, anywhere in between.

Q. How would you rate your burnout? Did you have a plan for it? It seemed to be pretty sweet.

CHASE ELLIOTT: Was it? That's cool. I'm glad to hear that.

I did not have a plan. There was no plan. It was, yeah, very much in the moment. Tried to do what I could to make it cool, hoped that everybody enjoyed it. That was all. I definitely didn't have time to think what kind of a burnout I would do if we won that race. It was just chaos.

Yeah, hope it was good for everybody.

Q. Is this a night that you fly home, or do you stay in the motorhome? If you're responsible for your own transportation when you win a race, how does that change?

CHASE ELLIOTT: I'm just going to drive home tonight.



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Q. Tonight?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Yeah, whenever we get done.

Q. Man, that's wild.

CHASE ELLIOTT: It's not that far. Sleep in my bed (smiling).

Q. I know the moment at the start/finish line was special. I wanted to ask you about the design and drive program. Almost 10 years now since you started it. What was the inspiration with you and NAPA then? How special is it to bring one of those schemes to Victory Lane tonight?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Yeah, the whole thing has been incredible. We had an event this week. It was the ninth year of the "DESIGN TO DRIVE." Yeah, there have been a lot of influential people that have made that foundation effort what it has become today.

I think it far outgrew our expectations of what we thought it would ever be. That's largely, in part, to NAPA. They literally pay for a race and say, Here, you take this, do whatever you want with it.

How often do you see that? Not very much. I think that's very special.

We just thought it was time to get everyone together and just say thanks the other night. We did. That included partners. That included relationships that have been built through the program. My mom deserves a lot of credit for my foundation in general and kind of getting that going. Some of her relationships with Chilla, really just kind of to get the ball rolling.

Since then, it has become very much a team effort. To grow to be what it is... It started off as a shoe program that we auctioned off. All four Hendrick drivers wore 'em. Then NAPA got involved. When they got involved, that really allowed us to take the whole designing process to another level and get more engagement in it and through it.

Just incredible. Rhealynn and her family were just amazing people. I'm always inspired by those stories and the things that you hear her say. The things that motivate her I think are things that should be contagious to all of us and lessons that can be taken in anyone's life.

So grateful to have her here. I told her this is not normal, so make sure you enjoy this as much as she could. Those types of moments and all the stars aligning, that stuff

doesn't happen every day. I recognize that. I try to cherish that stuff, because it's just hard to come by.

Q. What kind of impact do moments like that have on you as a person getting to work with kids? Are those the kind of moments that just let you step back and give you that perspective of how many other things are bigger than the sport?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Yeah, I think there's a lot of things bigger than the sport. That's certainly a great reminder, being one of 'em.

Like I said, so many of those kids have had just extremely tough roads. It's no fault of their own, right? It's important to recognize, too, it's not just the individual, it's the entire family, right?

Rhealynn brought her brother out. She was just excited to have him out here, because she said that, He's missed so many things because of me that I want him to go and have fun, right?

I think that those types of moments are just important to recognize the type of attitude that it takes to endure those journeys as a family unit and not break apart. Just a lot of good lessons in all that stuff. Grateful to have witnessed it and to have lived tonight with them and hopefully give them a day that they'll never forget.

Q. I know there was debate towards the end of the first stage whether to pit or not. When you looked up and saw the chaos in the back of your mirror, did that assure you you made the right decision?

CHASE ELLIOTT: I mean, hindsight is always 20/20, right? Of course, you could have been caught up in that crash. The crash doesn't happen, maybe the calls that ended up pitting those guys work out, so...

Q. Your mom had a special four-legged friend in Victory Lane. How cool was that?

CHASE ELLIOTT: That's awesome. That is his first win. He got to experience a dub here in Atlanta. It's cool. He's a great dog. I don't take him a ton. Obviously, it's kind of hard to travel with a big Doberman. Yeah, he's been a good pup. Really cool to have him in Victory Lane, have some pictures with him there.

Q. Amid this winless streak, do you find yourself appreciating the wins more often because they don't always come in bunches?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Yeah, I think there's definitely been

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

lessons throughout that that certainly have made me enjoy them. But truthfully, I was already to a point even before Texas or the road to that, even the road to tonight, that I think I knew that to a pretty large degree.

Truthfully, I think the road to one was long enough, and there had been enough close calls and enough just gut-wrenching losses, all those second places that led to Watkins Glen.

Fortunately, I think I got a pretty good taste of that. Or unfortunately, however you want to look at it. But I got a pretty good taste of it early on.

I don't think that has necessarily bothered me. I just want to be competitive. It's like I told you guys before, for me satisfaction and showing up on a weekend is relevant. Were we in contention? Did we actually have a shot? Were we up there with pace, doing the right things?

I believe that in this sport, if you're doing all those right things, A, that's something to be proud of, and B, if you're doing them regularly, you're going to get return. I thought tonight was a great example of that. Truthfully, the past three or four weeks have been a good example of that.

We've had some good runs. We've put together some great races, had some good finishes. Just had ourselves in the hunt tonight, and the cards fell our way. That's the goal every week, is to just keep yourself in the hunt, be right there in the mix.

Certainly if things work out, I'll always cherish and enjoy them as much as possible, because they are hard to win. Nobody has anything promised to them. I recognize that. I'll never take that for granted in those moments, especially to do that here at home.

Q. When you have this stretch where it can be frustrating, how do not start pointing fingers, whether at yourself or the team, questioning things going on? How do you maintain the focus forward that you seem to have?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Well, I think that's in large part due to Alan, our relationship together. A large part of our group has been the same since I got here. Obviously Alan and I have been working together for 10 years now. There have been some personnel changes here and there. Totally understand that.

When you're fortunate enough to climb the mountain and be able to stand at the top of the mountain with someone, that's an incredible achievement, right? That's something that he and I will always cherish and remember that we did

that together, right?

Since then, we have failed to climb that mountain again like we want. We have fallen off of it a few times. For me it's really, really important to climb that mountain with the same people that we did the first time and know that we never quit on each other. That's just a really important piece of the puzzle for me.

I'm not sure it would even really feel the same if we all jumped ship. I alluded to it on TV earlier, but I'm just really proud of all of our guys for not doing just that, just showing up every week and having great attitudes, just doing everything in their power to put the car, the product on the racetrack that they do, the effort they put in going over the wall, the way Alan brings intensity to the racetrack, calling races, meetings, making sure he's getting everything out of me. It's all right there.

We have such a good, talented group of people that are motivated, good people away from the racetrack, too. You can't quit on that.

Q. At stage two, you were just inches behind Reddick. You think you have maybe a chance to have overtaken him earlier?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Maybe. I mean, I tried. Yeah, I mean, I tried my best. I came up short. So I don't know. What am I going to do? Try again.

Q. Shortly after the restart after the last caution, you were for one or two laps in the sandwich of two RFK cars. Were you thinking at that time that could be a little bit risky for you?

CHASE ELLIOTT: I mean, certainly the numbers were not in my favor at that point. I knew that. Alex did, too. It was kind of me and him against the 17 and the 6. Both Brad and Chris are great speedway racers. They're really fast. They were doing a really good job controlling the race.

It was really difficult for me to get and have any sort of control. I just felt like they always had a big run on me anytime I got the lead. I didn't really know how to defend that. I was just hoping that Alex and I could somewhere, somehow get in the middle of that, give one of us a shot.

Fortunately, all the cards kind of fell right there in the closing laps to get a couple big runs. Got two for one there getting into one. Got to second. Somehow Alex got to third. At that point I think whether roles were the way they were or roles were reversed, if he and I did anything but push one another in that situation, we were handing the race to Brad, right?



He did me a huge solid, lining up, giving me a big shove. It was enough for me to get by Brad and get back around there to finish it off.

Q. If you didn't have Alex behind you on the last lap, we saw big moves, how might that have changed or what would that have allowed you or limited you in what you could have done with not having Alex in this case?

CHASE ELLIOTT: I mean, yeah, who knows in that situation, right? I think off of four coming to the white, I alluded to it a second ago, but if he takes me too wide right there, the race is over more than likely. We're going to drag each other back. There was a pretty big gap back to fourth, if I'm not mistaken. I haven't watched it back closely. The way I remember it, there was.

We're kind of letting Brad get away. At that point we would have been side by side down the front and probably side by side through one and two. We're never going to have enough time.

He and I both knew that the only shot we as a company had at that juncture was to line up and push and hope that something worked out good in our favor because at that point it was two, one, and one. Whether it was he or I, obviously we both want to win. I recognize that he gave me a great shove. I recognize that he took his run on Brad, too, to try to get himself to second, which ultimately helped me as well.

Yeah, those are all things that I remember. We'll do everything we can do to try and bring fast cars over the course of the next number of weeks. Hope those guys can get a win. I think they deserve it. They've been fast. He's had a terrible run of lucky feel like over the last month. It would be nice to see him grab a win and get in.

Q. We saw a lot of emotion after your win. You went into the crowd and celebrated with them, which we rarely see. Where does this win stack up in the wins you've had in your career in the Cup Series?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Yeah, it's up there for sure. Just the whole thing. I talked about it a little bit. It's always such a whirlwind from the time the race ends to the time I get in here. I just haven't had a minute, you know what I mean? Sometimes it takes a minute.

To Doug's point, I'm going to get to drive home, have a minute to myself. I'm looking forward to that. I'll probably have a better answer for you later on.

But tonight was really special, I can tell you that. Just the way the stars aligned, everything that went into the deal. Having the Mills family here, a lot of people from NAPA, Genuine Parts, Kelley Blue Book, Coca-Cola. It's not just home for me, it's kind of home for the entire car. That's a rare thing to share with your sponsors. It's just a special deal.

Have my mom here tonight. That was really cool. Just a lot of stuff. I haven't even thought about all of it. As I reflect, I'll probably give you a better answer, but it was pretty special.

Q. Inspection is clear and you're good.

CHASE ELLIOTT: That's good. I've been on the other end of that, so...

Q. According to the broadcast, you were one of only four drivers who was not involved in some sort of incident. With the ability that you had to make aggressive moves, slice and dice with the field, how did you pull that off?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Yeah, I mean, honestly I think just good fortune, luck at certain points. I mean, there's certain times when accidents happen. There's just very little you can do, truthfully.

We were in good positions at good points in time for us. There will be some point down the road that we won't be. That's just racing.

Fortunately it worked out for us tonight, was able to stay out of the mess. Alan made some good calls early to make good track position. That's bettering your odds. You can do some stuff, but you're never totally safe.

I don't have a good answer for you other than it kind of worked out. Fortunately I had a fast car. All our cards fell our way there at the end.

Q. I want to talk about towards the end of the race working with Alex Bowman at the end. Before the caution, seemed like Brad and Chris Buescher were up there with you guys fighting to take the lead. Once Buescher faded off, how big was it having Alex there in your back pocket to get around Brad?

CHASE ELLIOTT: I mean, talked about it a little bit a minute ago.

He was a great teammate in that moment, for sure. Like I said, we're coming off four to the white. If he takes me two-wide, we are all but saying, Here, Brad, you can win. If



the roles were reversed, I can guarantee you that wouldn't have been the case other way around, right?

At that point in time it's our job as a company to try to get Hendrick Motorsports a win at that point in time, whether it was he or I or however that transpired, right? Naturally it did just that.

He had a run. He gave me a huge shove, like all night. I was able to do something with it. Fortunately it was enough to hold on.

Q. Next two races road courses. What kind of momentum are you rolling off of Mexico City going into the next two road course races?

CHASE ELLIOTT: I'm excited. I mean, I'm really just kind of proud of the last four weeks. Honestly, we had a really fast car at Michigan, thought we were really respectable up there. Good in Mexico. I thought we were also really respectable up at Pocono.

We weren't as good as the 11 or 12. I certainly understand that. I thought we were right there in the hunt. Maybe a little adjustment away from getting right up there with them. Tonight we were right there in the mix. I understand this is a little different ballgame.

Those are a lot of different styles of racetracks that I feel our team has done a solid job. We're really close of having all the pieces of the puzzle there. There's really nowhere I'm not looking forward to going to, embracing whatever challenge comes next.

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