

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Joe Gibbs

Chris Gayle

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by the team owner of the No. 11 Toyota with Joe Gibbs Racing, Joe Gibbs, and the crew chief, Chris Gayle.

Quick question. You just won win number 200 for Toyota. What does that mean for each of you?

JOE GIBBS: I can't thank Toyota enough. When we got together in a partnership, for us to be at 200, I really appreciate them and what they've helped us do.

So big thanks to Toyota. Tyler is back there in the back. I called Mark and a bunch of team thank 'em.

CHRIS GAYLE: Yeah, it's really cool. We've actually been talking about it in the sim session the last two weeks. That 200 is sitting out there for whoever can get it.

I think I had the first Cup as engineer with Kyle Busch at Atlanta. This is just 200 Cup wins? Yeah, 200th Cup win as a crew chief is really cool. Makes me feel old, but it's good problems, I guess.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, you did back to back, got 199 and 200 for them here.

JOE GIBBS: Yeah, really for the last two weeks, been proud of our team. I was proud of all of our cars today. They were fast, up front. That says a lot for everybody back home that does all that work. Tomorrow we'll hang a banner, thank all them. It's just become a real tradition for us. Just really appreciate it.

Love coming to St. Louis. Love coming to this part of the country. I spent five years here with the cardiac cars chasing a football around. Had a ball. Everybody treated us great. I just really appreciate getting a chance to come here and win a race.

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

Q. Joe, can this really be Denny Hamlin's year?



JOE GIBBS: Yeah, I think great question there. We certainly hope so. That's probably the best guy to ask, but... I'll be in the background cheering (laughter).

No, I'll tell you what's impressive about Denny, is his work ethic. He'll be in the sim as long as Chris wants him in there. Really works hard at everything.

I would certainly hope he's got his chance, for sure.

Q. Chris, what would have happened there if the race runs green? How does the result look different?

CHRIS GAYLE: I think the result would have been the same, right? I was concerned with the 22 was so close to us. He could have short pitted me, gotten the lead from me. Maybe we wouldn't have gotten it back. That's where I was debating. A lot of cars that were going to be close or not make it on fuel. If it would have run green, they would have to pit, albeit late. Haven't thought about some of them that could have taken right sides. I think it still would have been okay.

I was mostly worried about the 22. I know I had a couple laps on the 9 to cover him for a short pit. Now so many guys use codes, you don't know when they're going to come in or not. I probably pitted two or three laps sooner than I wanted to necessarily if I knew it was going to run out green. You couldn't risk the 22 getting in front of you and controlling the air at that point.

I think we would have won it in either case.

Q. Even though the 12 had 11-lap pressure tires, you still felt it's...

CHRIS GAYLE: I think so, with enough stretch gap, clean air, they would have had to pass a few cars to get there. I think so.

Q. Joe, your whole lifetime has been around athletes. In this sport, Denny's doing things that not many people have done at this particular age.

JOE GIBBS: Correct, yeah.

Q. What is it about him? Why is he able to do it at this age with everything that he's got going on? Seems



... when all is said, we're done.®

like those would be things that could hold somebody back.

JOE GIBBS: Well, you're right. The discussion is always at what point does somebody start going downhill? I think in Denny's case, he's got a real drive. To be quite truthful, he has a lot that he gets excited about. His podcast, 23XI. He's in one meeting after another. I think he's ADD in a way. He does more stuff, the better off he is.

I think Chris knows, but what I've noticed is his work ethic. I said a couple years ago, I went to him at Watkins Glen, road racing has not been Denny's thing. I think he sat or two or three poles that year. I said, I just really appreciate. He went after that so hard. I think, I'm not saying anything here, but he told his crew chief, Put Reddick's setup in there, I'm going to drive it no matter what.

He's got a real drive I think to succeed. Yeah, it's unusual for athletes because we've all witnessed it in this sport. At about that age, you know, they start to trail off. That's not the case with him.

Q. Chris, how does Denny push you, and how do you push somebody at this level?

CHRIS GAYLE: Yeah, I think to be quite honest, it's more Denny allowing me to come in and to have a little different input than maybe what happened before. There's a base there of things that happened. I feel like he's given me a lot of flexibility to do that. There have been some places where he wasn't as good, places where he's really good.

I didn't need to change things at places he was good. I could have a little more liberty to come in and do some stuff at some other places that have shown some improvement. Sometimes it hasn't. Iowa sticks out. We weren't very good at Iowa. He's given me enough leeway and doesn't feel like he needs to take the rope on that and control what I do.

I think that's the good part for me. I've noticed that we may not agree on everything, but we can sit down afterwards and have a conversation about it. He's very levelheaded. I'll explain my point of view, his point of view. Maybe we'll come to an agreement that we should do something different next time, maybe we wouldn't. It's a situational problem.

It's good to have those kind of conversations and know that I'm not necessarily going to hear about it on a podcast or anything else. That's just between he and I, we're going to move on. He's still going to be behind me the next week. It's not going to change his effort level or his perception of what's happening behind the scenes.

Q. Chris, coming into the weekend Denny spoke about how he would love to go to Bristol and not have to worry about anything, which mission accomplished. Does that mean you start looking ahead to New Hampshire?

CHRIS GAYLE: I haven't put enough thought into that yet. Will we probably split some engineering staff to get a little bit ahead on Loudon? For sure. But I can take five points next week that will help me the next round as much as anything else, right?

We want to go try to win and give the best effort next week. You get into a process where the week is the same each week, your preparation kind of becomes consistent. I think that's what allows you to be successful. I don't need to change up a lot of stuff, ignore one place.

Stick to the schedule that got you there and do the same things.

Q. Coach Gibbs, talk about what two wins in a row means in the Playoffs, heading into the Playoffs.

JOE GIBBS: Yeah, I really feel like the 11 and 19 are obviously really after it. But I was kind of really pleased today with the effort by everybody. We had the 20, I think he finished seventh or something. Really felt like he had a chance. Then Ty finishing 10th, 54.

I think that's what I get excited about. When you show all four cars have speed, I think that's a good thing. Of course, the 11 and the 19 have really been after it.

So for all those reasons right now, we're excited.

Q. Coach, this is the first time since 2019 where as an organization in the Cup Series you guys have cracked the double-digit mark with 10 wins. What is it about this group that separates it going back to then that maybe makes this group different? Could you have anticipated to get to this win total at this point in the season?

JOE GIBBS: Yeah, I got to tell you, '19, that was an awesome deal. All of us enjoyed that so much.

Yeah, it would be close. We love trying to get back to that. I just think we got a great group of people. I think we've got things kind of in place. I think we got three veteran cars in the Playoffs. We got the 54 that we're building. I think it's an exciting time for us.

I remember '19, we had four really studly deals and it was



great. Just excited to be able to get this many wins. It's a big deal for us and Toyota.

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Q. Chris, you don't have to worry about it, being super nervous anymore, but the tire next week for Bristol seems like an unknown. What do you think is going to happen with that?

CHRIS GAYLE: I probably don't know any more than you do. I know that there's been some SoVa testing that they wore more than expected. It's all a matter of how realistic do we think that is versus what we're really going to see. I think you see speculation on both sides of it.

Really not much different than the spring race, right? We thought going into that we were going to have to save tires, all of a sudden Larson takes off before everybody else. Pretty soon we're like, We should all go now because we're going to be okay.

A little cooler being a night race. But I don't know. You could coin flip it, to be quite honest with you.

Q. Chris, what were you expecting when you started working with Denny and what have you learned about him that maybe you didn't know about him?

CHRIS GAYLE: Some of it was probably his work ethic. Not being involved in it, I didn't know how much he took pride in that. He will tell you, he wasn't that way five, six years ago. The amount of time he puts into it.

But even on whether it's simulator, whatever, even if it's texting at 10 p.m. at night, we have a Slack channel with me and the engineers and spotter, we're getting random texts with things he's thinking about. We're like, I assumed he might be off duty right now, and not really, he's still sitting there in the bus looking at stuff. I think those are the things that I did not realize from the outside, how competitive he is, at really everything. But I see it on this side of it.

Q. Is that because he's older?

CHRIS GAYLE: Maybe. I don't know. You'd have to ask that one for him, for sure. Obviously he feels like he wants to take advantage of any resource that's there, right? Maybe you don't feel that way when you're young. You can grab the reins and do it on talent alone.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, Chris, congratulations on the big win today.

JOE GIBBS: Thank y'all. Appreciate it.

