

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

Sunday, September 14, 2025

An Interview with:

Christopher Bell

THE MODERATOR: We're going to start with our post-race press conference with our race winner, Christopher Bell.

Q. Christopher, tell us about your mindset going into that restart at 4 to go.

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Yeah, I thought it was going to be a 50/50 call for Brad, and we knew it was going to be a race between who had fresh tires and who could get to the lead first, and Brad had a tough decision to take the bottom or take the top.

He ended up taking the top, I got the bottom, and then those two guys just on old tires, it was super hard to get the car to stick around the bottom, and they just kind of slid up, and it was a perfect storm for me.

Once I got the lead, it wasn't the prettiest thing those last couple laps. I started really struggling to hit the line and I was sliding around a lot, and Brad was able to run right up to me.

Yeah, I hope it was a good race for the fans. It was too close for comfort inside the car. But that's what makes it a really good race.

Q. Were you an angry Christopher Bell coming in here, and is that a good thing?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: I don't know. I don't know if I was angry or not. I don't think I was. But maybe.

It just goes to show that any week it could happen. I'm just so proud of this entire 20 group, Adam, my engineers, my mechanics, my pit crew. This was a total team win. I mean, with all the pit stops that we did, if you had one mishap you were going to be in trouble.

This race, a lot of fortune went into winning this race, making the right pit strategies, putting tires on at the right time, and making sure that you had a set of tires laying, and Adam and the engineers did an amazing job of calling the right calls at the right time, and it worked out for us this week.



Q. With Gibbs sweeping the first three races of the playoffs, is there any sort of swagger or feel that the championship is going to go through your organization?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: I mean, it sure appears to be that way. It's just all the Toyotas are super fast right now. I think I said it last week in my post-race interview that this is the best race cars I've had to drive in the Cup Series compared to the competition in my career.

I think it goes from Joe Gibbs Racing to 23XI; they've been really good; even the legacy cars have had an amazing performance the last couple weeks.

That's the good news.

The bad news is we're not running Phoenix next week and there's still a long way to go to get there.

I can promise you, whenever we get to Phoenix it's not going to be a runaway. No matter who's in that Final Four it's always a dogfight. It's always a good race.

We are in a really good spot right now, we as in the Toyota group, and specifically Joe Gibbs Racing. But we've got a long way to go to get to Phoenix and it's going to be a hard road, and everybody knows that.

Q. When did you know as a driver that this race was going to be what it was in terms of tire wear?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: That's a really good question. I don't know. I keyed up on the radio, I think it was probably lap 20, 25. I had a couple weird moments inside the car that caught me off guard. So whenever the track is behaving normally and it's taking rubber, you can slide the car around, and it just feels different.

I had a really big slip lap 1 or 2, and then a couple laps -- lap 20, 30 into the run, I'm like, man, I'm losing grip in a hurry here, and I keyed up and I said, I think we might have tire issues, and then I just saw the land mine of marbles up the racetrack, and that's all she wrote.

I thought NASCAR did a phenomenal job officiating the race this week compared to the last time or the first time



that it happened and the last time it happened. I thought it was really fair, and yeah, I applaud them for allowing us to run through the green flag cycles, and I think that's what puts on a really good show whenever you get into those circumstances.

Q. You pride yourself on being a driver who wins cleanly. If Brad had succeeded in knocking you out of the way, how would you have felt about that move, especially here at Bristol?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: I mean, I don't know. I'm glad I don't have to think about it.

To be honest, I expected it. He ran me down from however long it was, three car lengths, four car lengths. Those last three laps, they were not my prettiest three laps I've run in my career, but it was good enough to get to the checkered flag first.

I knew he was going to be really aggressive, really hungry. I knew his team had a bummer start to the year, but they've been performing well and been on the brink of Victory Lane and they were again tonight, so I knew he was going to throw everything at it.

Q. You said you anticipated it. Did you prepare for the bump? How did you keep the car straight?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: I don't really remember. I think I backed my corner up a little bit just trying to stay under the tires a little bit more. Those last three laps I got the lead and then we were on right sides, and I guess I just had less grip than I was anticipating and I could not get my car to stick around the bottom.

I tried to stay under the tires and give me a little bit more room so whenever he hit me I could not spin out and crash, so yeah, it worked out.

Q. What does winning mean or how important was winning at this point?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Winning, that's what makes your career. That's what makes your status in the industry. That's literally everything.

In order to make it in this sport, you have to win. Yeah, frankly, I haven't won enough. That's, what, win 12 or 13 in my career? That's not enough, and I need to win more. But it starts with -- every win gets it up a tick so I'm glad we got this one tonight.

But winning is literally everything. That's what it's all about.

Q. How much does it solve things, and how much is there still to do because this was just one race and this was a unique race?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Well, winning fixes everything, that's for sure. It's a huge morale boost for the team and myself as a driver. But certainly what we experienced tonight will mean nothing on what we have for the rest of the year.

This race is completely unique to itself the way that the tires behaved and the race played out, the strategy calls. You cannot take anything from this and apply it to anywhere else.

Winning is very important in this sport, and it feels good to get another one.

Q. I was going to ask you something very similar, but to win when you have, at the beginning of the year to establish, hey, we're going after this, and now to start the playoffs like this, three races in, could you concede at least that you guys are back where you want to be and that you are showing you can bring it when you need to?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Well, I will say, even though we didn't win throughout the summer, I went to the racetrack thinking every week that we could win. So while the results don't match what I was feeling, I think that this week shows that that is true. Like every single week we go to the racetrack we have the opportunity to win if we put everything together and we do the right stuff.

It happened tonight. It might happen at Loudon; it might happen at Loudon. Even through the bits of the schedule that we didn't run well, we didn't finish well, every time we went to the racetrack, I thought that we had potential to win if we did everything right.

Q. Going to Loudon at a place you've won so much (indiscernible).

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Yeah, I'm obviously excited about Loudon. It's a great track for us. Super important race kicking off the Round of 12. So we need to go there and most importantly get a lot of points, score a lot of points, got to qualify well, got to qualify better than we've been qualifying, and have a great race.

I think we're every bit as capable as any of the other 12 out there. It's a good racetrack for us as a group and we know what it takes to be good there, and it seems like our cars are really good. I'm looking forward to the challenge ahead.



Q. Christopher, just want to clarify something. You said you guys were on fresh rights at the end of the race?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: That's correct.

Q. Were you and Adam, as this was going through the second half, were you guys kind of playing this as really feeling like, okay, this is going to come down to hopefully having fresh tires as late as possible?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: So while this race is very unique, it is also similar to the races that we've had the option tire at, meaning Richmond and Phoenix -- maybe those are the only two places we've done the option tire.

Whenever that happens, you have to have a set of tires laying for what happened tonight. If you don't have a set of tires laying in the pits, you're not going to win if a yellow flag comes out.

We paid the price a little bit -- not a little bit, we paid the price huge in the third stage there whenever we put nine-lap scuffs on. We went all the way back to the back, and we did that in order to save a set of stickers for the end, and you had to have them on the 4 to go or whatever to win the race.

Q. You won here on the dirt a couple years ago, but you're a short track guy and you've made no bones for years that if there was one race on the schedule you wanted, it was arguably this one. How big is tonight, and how good does it feel to finally have the sword from the night race?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Yeah, the Bristol Night Race has been my favorite for a long time. Just the pre-race ceremonies, all the -- Bristol Motor Speedway just does such a good job of making this event feel unique, feel special, and it's a big one. This one is definitely high on the list to win.

Q. Coming in here after last week's discussions with Adam and whatnot, we talked about that yesterday, but how does a night like tonight reinforce the professionalism, the resiliency of yourself, Adam, and this whole 20 team?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: I just think it -- yeah, I think it goes to show that any week it can happen. I got really frustrated last week because we had an opportunity to win and we didn't win. We've had several opportunities to win throughout the summer and we didn't win.

Every week, every week we can do it, and Adam, while I was frustrated with the calls last week, he nailed every call this week, and we ended up in Victory Lane. You're going to have that. Tonight was just a perfect example of everybody doing the right things and not making mistakes and keeping us in it. We got the fruit of that.

Q. In that regard, you said yesterday this is probably the biggest question mark you've felt coming into a Cup race. Once you started experiencing those early slides, how much are you relying on information from your crew chief, your spotter, to understand what you need to do, or is it just an instinctual thing that you have behind the wheel to know how to make those tires live?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Yeah, I mean, it'll definitely a lot of conversation between you and your crew chief and just asking him, like hey, what is the plan here. There are so many people on different strategies and different plans. We had 125-lap stage, and all of sudden people are having tire issues like lap 30. Okay, we're like, are we going to two-stop this, are we going to one-stop this, do you need me to go hard, how long do I have to make these tires last.

Then you're trying -- I think we ended up trying to be on a one-stop strategy, which meant you needed to get to around lap 60 and then I got to 45 and I was out of tires. At that point we had to pit and we were trying to go 70 laps or whatever it is on the next set, and it's a lot of communication, and you've got guys that are saving super hard, you've got guys that are dying on really old tires, you have guys on stickers. It's chaos.

Hopefully I think it shows well. It has to look good. But it's total chaos. That's whenever it's fun. It's not as fun whenever everybody is on the same tires and you're just riding around half throttle.

But the moment that the green cycle starts and everybody is on different pit cycles and strategies, that makes it enjoyable.

Q. When the tires start to come apart, you're seeing what's happening, you're experiencing what's happening, what's the thought in your head? Are you like, oh, bleep, we're going to deal with this for the rest of the night? Are you excited about it?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: I was okay with it. I got really frustrated with the first tire race that we had last year because of the way that it was officiated. That yellow flag, when they throw the yellow flag in the middle of cycles, it dictates the race.



We had yellow flags tonight, but they were actually true yellow flags. Like in that last race they were throwing yellows for people that were blowing tires and riding around and all of a sudden they quit throwing the yellow. If they just let it play out like they did tonight then it's fair for everybody. You just have to manage it on your own.

I thought that NASCAR did a great job of just letting the race play out, and they got a great product from it, and I think that's key.

Q. They ended up giving you guys an extra set during the race at some point, too. Obviously Adam is focused on that, you're just focused on doing whatever they tell you to do. How much discipline do you need and did you show in terms of going slower when you needed to and going hard when you were able to as well?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: It's just about knowing the lap count. You get information -- so the first one we weren't saving at all, or at least I wasn't. I'm sure most of the field were not saving. And I think I got to lap 45, so I'm like, okay, I got -- he tells me that we've got to make it to lap whatever it is, 50, 60, 30, and if it's lap 30, you're like, okay, I can push the car a little bit harder. If it's lap 60, you're like, I can't push very hard.

It's just about communication and understanding how long the runs are going to be in order to put yourself in position.

Q. After Kyle Larson led nearly 900 of 1,000 laps, he led 12 laps tonight. Would you rather snag a win or be dominant or are you just glad to have a win, period?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Well, certainly I have been harping on my team about leading laps. I think leading laps is a super important stat. We didn't really increase that box very much tonight, but we increased the important box, or the more important box of getting a race win.

I thought that our car was capable of leading laps tonight. Just the way that the race played out, it didn't work in our favor to do that. But it did work out in our favor to win the race, and obviously that's the most important goal.

Leading laps is a super important thing. It shows your speed, what you have as a race team, and we haven't been able to do that this year very well.

It's definitely a focus point.

Q. There's two ways to win a race. You blow everybody's doors off, you lead 450 laps like Larson. How satisfying is it to win a race that was so chaotic,

so crazy, that it was a spin of the roulette ball and you had to be right place, right time, make all the right moves, but it still took a lot of other things for it to come out on top? How satisfying is it to win such a chaotic race?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: I'll take it. A win is a win no matter what. But certainly you enjoy those dominant days because that meant that you were the best car that day. Whenever the race plays out like it does today, it's basically impossible to have what Larson did the last two times, and we got really fortunate for sure.

The race played into our hands and the yellow flags and the timing of us pitting and putting tires on and the green flag runs, following that, it definitely played into our favor and we were able to capitalize on it.

There's been plenty of times and plenty of people will say the same thing, where it plays into their hands and they aren't able to capitalize on it, and that's a bummer.

Q. Is this a race you feel like you stole? Just exactly how do you feel when you sneak up and you don't lead a lot of laps and you wind up in Victory Lane?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: I just think that the race played out for us. It was a bunch of -- I don't know about a bunch, but a couple fortunate timings with the yellow flags and green flag runs and when you pit and when you put tires on and smart strategy calls from Adam Stevens of not putting a set of stickers on in the middle of the third stage to make sure that we had some for late in the race.

I don't know if "stole" is the right word, but certainly there were a couple other guys that were in the same position as me, and I was the one who walked away with it.

Q. Last year in 2024 we had a similar incident of the tire wear kind of like last spring. How did the tire wear tonight compare to when you first really felt the falloff of the tires, and what was it like comparing it to the spring race? Obviously it got cooler later as the race went on. I just wanted to gauge your opinion on how that compared to last spring.

CHRISTOPHER BELL: Honestly, I thought it was identical. It was the exact same. I know that the tire that we ran today I think was softer or was supposed to induce more wear than what the tire was that day in 2024. But it felt the exact same, and I thought it raced the exact same.

From that standpoint, I guess it was good, I don't know. I don't know that I would want this every time we come here, but it's different, and it's -- I don't know, it's definitely



different.

Q. Do you like racing on the tire?

CHRISTOPHER BELL: It's so confusing because yesterday in practice the tire -- you wouldn't have even known that there was a tire change. So this tire is completely different than the one that we raced in the spring, but yet the race ended up the same but the practice was different.

It just is -- it's impossible to figure out, like literally impossible. Who knows. Who knows.

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