

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Chase Elliott

THE MODERATOR: We have now been joined by this afternoon's NASCAR Cup series race winner here at Kansas Speedway, Chase Elliott, driver of the No. 9 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet. Chase, that was a wild last restart. Can you kind of talk us through what was going through your head? Did you feel optimistic that you were going to get up there?

CHASE ELLIOTT: I felt like anything can happen, but you're wining up tenth on a green and white checkered, I wouldn't say your odds are high at that point. I've seen crazier things, but my mindset was just to try to build up as much momentum as I could and hope lanes, hope things kind of went my way, and fortunately they did.

I felt like I got about as far as I was going to get off of two. I had momentum on the white, and then I saw the 11 and 23 racing hard in three, and I thought, man, if I just stick to the bottom here, I might at least be three wide with them off of four. That's kind of what I was shooting for.

I really don't know, I have to go back and watch it. I haven't seen it. Just I saw them running there really hard. My eyes went to just do the best I could do to paint the bottom as fast as I could paint it, and I really kind of quit watching them. Then I saw the 11 coming back down, and obviously ran into him. I think he was trying to cover my run, but he was too late at that point.

Yeah, just stayed with it and beat him back to the line. So we'll take it.

Q. You guys have had so many situations this year where like Alan will make a call and then the caution comes out at the wrong time and he gets thwarted. It seemed like that might have happened again when you have your four tires, caution comes out, but it all worked out this time. Were you thinking like, man, we got screwed on this again? Or did you still have hope at that point that the four tires could help you get back to the front on the next restart?

CHASE ELLIOTT: I felt like every time we ran a few corners our advantage was going away a little bit. They were really hard to get clean. The tires, I was working



them really hard those last couple, and especially the last one, and they were just difficult to get cleaned off to have grip like a set of stickers would have.

Yeah, I just feel like every time we scuffed them, I felt the advantage from two to four was getting smaller. But once they cleaned off in that last green and white checkered, I did feel like I had an advantage again the last lap or something.

It was just tough. Like a couple of those restarts that we lost spots on, guys would dive into the bottom, and then they would catch the timing line and the caution would come out, so you lose a couple spots that probably wouldn't have been lost spots if you would have just seen what happened at the end of the next straightaway.

But that's part of it. That's part of giving up a row to have the preferred lane. We see that a lot, and that's just the risk you take. Sometimes it works out in your favor, and sometimes it doesn't.

Q. Were you aware that Denny didn't have power steering there at the end? And if that would have mattered.

CHASE ELLIOTT: I'm not sure, and that's always a difficult thing, right? How much power steering? Was it completely zero? Was it a little bit? Was it three-quarter? Was it half? Only he knows that.

They were talking about it a little bit out there, but they had made mention that he'd had power steering issues on a couple restarts, maybe like a restart mid-race or three-quarters of the way through the race or something. I remember them talking about it, but it didn't look visually like he had an issue, so I didn't really think anything of it.

Certainly could have played a role into the last lap if he had a big issue like that.

Q. You've won races in a variety of ways. As far as the cool factor or awesome factor, is this one any more cool or any more awesome just because of the way it's done?

CHASE ELLIOTT: I think the most cool and awesome factor is to just dominate. That's the best way to put a



... when all is said, we're done.®

stamp on a win, in my opinion, just being a competitor. I do think there are days and moments like today that bring a definite level of excitement for everyone. Like I didn't know what was going to happen going into turn three any more than anybody else did.

I'm excited to go back and watch it, honestly. You live this stuff and you live these moments. Obviously I know what my vantage point was, and I remember the things that I was looking at when I was looking at them, but I don't have the full picture. So I'm excited to go back and just see what it all looked like. I was making split-second decisions based off the information I had in front of me at that time, right?

Yeah, so I definitely think there's a level of excitement to that one that I'm not sure I've experienced in the Cup series to this point. I've been on the opposing end of some excitement for sure.

But yeah, I don't know. At least in my Cup career. I could be wrong on that. I'd have to go back and think about it. It was definitely a cool one. Any win, though, is great. I'm not going to complain about it.

Q. You just kind of mentioned it, but would this be considered, at least for you, more exciting than any of your typical wins considering how it happened?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Yeah, it was from my perspective for sure. There was a lot going on those last couple laps. Yeah, like I mentioned, I was just trying to put myself in positions to have good momentum, and opportunities opened up, and we were able to capitalize, so I'll take it.

I talked about it on the front stretch, and I'll say it again in here. I felt like this weekend was a success, whether we won today or not. I was really proud of how we were prepared, how we handled yesterday, put ourselves in a good position, got our pit crew a great pit stall on pit road, got to showcase their talents, how good they are. We weren't the dominant car on the long run, but we had good short-run pace and kept ourselves in the fight.

Like I told you guys a thousand times, you put yourself in position, you're going to get your turn. And fortunately for us, today was our turn.

Q. You kind of mentioned to me yesterday about at least your approach going to the ROVAL if you're in the points situation. Your plan was to maybe flip stages. Does that change it now to go more playoff points?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Yeah, I think we run the race to try and

win it for sure. Flip stages and points doesn't matter at this juncture. For us -- I mean, if we're competitive. If we're not competitive and we can get a stage point, a stage win and get the bonus point that way, then of course. But assuming you have pace is kind of how I was answering those questions. If we're slow, then that don't matter anyway.

We've got to go be fast, and if we're fast, at least we can run our strategy how we would typically do it to have a shot to win.

Q. In the Next Gen era, this seems like this has been one of the consistently best tracks for racing. What is it about this track that allows you guys to make moves and kind of put on a good show for everybody that maybe other tracks don't do as consistently?

CHASE ELLIOTT: It's a really complicated answer that it would take me, I think, a very long time to explain how I would want to explain it. I think the best thing is just chalk it up is it's shaped really nicely. The entries are wide. You have a lot of options to run different lanes, and the surface is really smooth too, I think to put it simply.

This car likes places where you can enter in different lanes, and I think where the struggles come in are when you're stuck behind someone in a really small preferred lane on corner entry. Then your options dwindle, and that's when the challenges begin.

This place, just the way it's shaped, the way the surface is, everything just suits it about as perfectly as we could have a track do that.

Q. I just want to be clear about something. TV sort of made it sound like you door slammed Denny there at the end. Did you have any contact at all? We haven't seen a great replay.

CHASE ELLIOTT: Yeah, we did make contact off of four. Yeah, we were pretty much door to door, the best I can remember. I was coming on the bottom with a pretty good head of steam. I think he saw me coming, and he was just trying to cover my run. I think he was a little late to the party.

It was no harm, no foul. I'm very confident he would tell you the same thing.

Q. (No microphone)?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Well, of course not, no. Who would? No, no, I was full commit.



Q. You got a front row seat to the contact between Denny and Bubba. What was your take on that? Just hard racing, somebody leaning on somebody else?

CHASE ELLIOTT: Honestly, probably not fair for me to comment. I was coming down the back, and yes, I was right behind them. Once I saw that they were fixing to ship it in there, my eyes went to where I needed to go, so I quit watching them.

I knew I had to paint that white line really precise, and I had to hit it really -- it's a pretty small window. I don't know how wide that white line is, but it's not very big. I knew I had to get my lefts on it, so my eyes went there, and I have no idea what happened with them.

Q. Chase, this sport can be stressful. You guys put a lot into it. At the end of that race, are you just so focused that like maybe you don't get to just enjoy driving? Are you having fun in those moments, or are you just locked in, I'm going to try my best to make something happen?

CHASE ELLIOTT: You're locked in. I think there are moments where your car's driving really good, and it's doing all the things that you want it to do, and you're like, man, this is great. This is exactly how I want the car to feel.

I think in most cases just the competitor inside you is always just locked into like how can I be better? What can I do to, if you run in fifth, how do you get to fourth? If you run in second, how do you get to first? If you're leading, how do you extend your lead? How can I drive my car in a way that's going to be beneficial through the long run?

There's always a what's next when you're competing, and I'm as guilty of that as probably anybody.

Q. When you look at trying to win a championship, just what is the meaning of having won during a round and being able to now -- I mean, I don't know, you seem very week to week, but will you do anything for Vegas or beyond because you won today?

CHASE ELLIOTT: I'm sure you all didn't have that on your bingo card today. I figured not.

I think that for us I've been very transparent about the areas we need to be better in, we need to be better, no doubt. I thought this weekend was truthfully a really, really solid weekend, a really competitive weekend for us for how we unloaded Saturday to the opportunities that we continued to present ourselves today. That is why we ended up having a chance to win ultimately. We got our

turn, as I mentioned.

The way I've kind of progressed through the playoffs this year is just fight as hard as I can each week, try to earn myself and our team three more weeks, and you never know what can happen in three weeks. That's the -- we talked about this when you asked me at Media Day. What did I tell you? Playoffs is a long time. A lot can happen in ten weeks.

That can be the difference in somebody being mediocre to potentially getting on a hot streak or even a team collectively getting better throughout that course of time. So it's all about buying yourself more time. If you're not where you want to be, you're just trying to buy yourself more time. Fortunately, we bought ourselves three more weeks, and we'll fight like hell until they tell us to not.

THE MODERATOR: Chase, thanks for spending time with us. Congrats on that win.

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