

# NASCAR Media Conference

## Press Conference

Sunday, October 12, 2025

*An Interview with:*

**Joe Gibbs**

**Chris Gayle**

**THE MODERATOR:** We'll roll into our post-race media availabilities. We are joined by Chris Gayle, crew chief. We'll take questions for Chris.

**Q. How did that all unfold from your vantage point? A lot of guys took two there. They were going to need to get out pretty fast, have clean air. How did that unfold from your perspective?**

**CHRIS GAYLE:** Yeah, I knew a few would take two. For sure the 22, right? He's going to do that play. He hasn't been good enough all day to win the race any other way. Throw it up there, hope we get multiple cautions, he doesn't have to do anything more than a short stint.

I considered it. I had the freshest lefts. I almost even split the stint before. Typically here, the falloff we had today, I only thought two were going to be good for at most 8 to 10 laps. Historically, when guys have taken two, they've led five, six laps. That's call it two, three guys do it. We had four do it there.

When we were getting ready to fire off with 22, 23 laps, I thought it would be fine. Did I think we were going to necessarily have the speed to get from where we were in P8? Not necessarily. But that kind of was a circumstance of the previous pit stop and how everything happened, we cycled back further. You were kind of there.

I thought if I had taken two, I was going to be like the 19 and would not have won the race. It would have taken multiple cautions to do that. I thought maybe I have the car good enough, top two, top three car that I could potentially do it another way.

**Q. Like you said before, earlier today to me, that you've never been to the Champ 4. Do you have any idea what you're going to do the next three weeks?**

**CHRIS GAYLE:** I'm not going to be at the shop tomorrow morning, I can promise you that. That's not going to happen. I don't know if I'll make the comp meeting at 3:00. I probably will (smiling).



I haven't been to the Championship 8 before this even. I haven't been involved in that. The 12 was the furthest I went with Jones one year, in '19, maybe. There's a plan in place. I know what I'll do. I wasn't sure this was an option.

Obviously you put your plan in place. You go, If I can win Vegas, I'm going to work on Vegas for the next couple weeks. That gives us the luxury of doing it. It's not the same as what it was when you were building the cars before. Now we can do some more loose sim work, do some things to get ahead for ourselves so that the Phoenix week is a little smoother really.

**Q. What do you tell a guy who's been heartbroken so many times in this championship front, going in the Next Gen car, how to handle the next three weeks and Phoenix?**

**CHRIS GAYLE:** Well, I'm hoping he's going to help me with that a little bit, right? He's a mature guy, he's been through all that. I haven't about there.

What will I tell him? We're going to do everything we can, leave it there in Phoenix. Whatever happens happens. Then we're going to do everything on the frontside to get ready. I don't know that I have the magic formula related to that, other than bring the fastest car I can, which is how I've approached all year.

I haven't gotten into mind games, what's happened before. When he sat down with me before in the off-season, he mentioned 60 wins, trying to get to the Championship 4. He never once said 'championship'. Obviously you elevate your mind and what you think you can accomplish as you go further along into the year. We've had such a good year, we feel like we should be a frontrunner for the championship.

I don't think it's going to change what we do. We're going to take it a week at a time and a few weeks ahead on Phoenix, and that's about it.

**Q. Can you talk about his dedication. This is a sport where people after 40, it passes them up. It hasn't passed them up. I know there was the story about being in the sim this week.**



**CHRIS GAYLE:** Seven and a half hours this week.

**Q. Can you give me a sense, what was his approach to that and how might that have helped? How is that a part of how he has the bigger success at this age?**

**CHRIS GAYLE:** Yeah, I mean, I think he's just aware, right? He knows that this was the round that mattered to get into the Championship 4. The other ones, we had never car speed, points advantage. Unless we get something derailed, we should do that.

He came in this week, specifically Vegas which is a track that has been hit or miss for him, came in with ideas what he thought the car would and wouldn't do for him in the past, things they've done.

It started out as a Monday sim session, which we typically don't do week-of stuff on Mondays. But the comp meeting ended, Vegas was an early load. We needed to load and leave first thing Wednesday morning. So we wouldn't get to our normal sim session on Wednesday before we ship the car.

So we decided to just jump ahead. And we got in there, and one thing led to another. We started talking about that. We were running sim stuff. It was four and a half hours in, 7:30, we're like, Oh, crap, we've got to stop.

I think that just shows the level of dedication he's got to this, how bad he wants it, right? I snickered at one point, we were talking about the balance of the car, and he was talking about, I just needed a different driver or whatever during the race.

You saw the end of that race, how much he really wanted it. He decided to go it the last 12 laps of that race around the outside of Larson.

I couldn't be more proud of him and his dedication to it. Just believing in himself. I think that's the first thing. You could see he was pretty emotional in Victory Lane. The one thing I know, he can do it. He's just got to believe in himself. He's capable of doing it. I think we'll take that approach to Phoenix.

**Q. What were the things that you saw, that you see when he does those things at the end of this race? What stood out to you that maybe only you or your team members can see?**

**CHRIS GAYLE:** I think just being aggressive, going to the top. He had committed to getting huge runs. He was using a lot more of the tire than if it was going to be a 40-lap race. He was definitely more aggressive than

normally, right? Denny is known for the guy saving tires and not doing that. He definitely flipped the switch when he needed to there. Went as hard as anybody. That's the big thing we saw that normally you don't see out of him, right?

Once he got into third, he realized he had a fast enough car to do it, he was able to close it out.

**Q. You've been asked many times what has all this meant. Can you now put into perspective all of this, getting at least the championship race which some in this sport have said that's maybe the bigger accomplishment with this format than winning the championship.**

**CHRIS GAYLE:** You mean my perspective alone?

**Q. What all this means to you.**

**CHRIS GAYLE:** It means a lot to me. I don't know that I could have scripted this part of it any better. I think I mentioned in the off-season we talked about 60 wins. What's he had, three wins or something the last couple years. I'm thinking to myself, Man, this is a great opportunity for me, but I got to step up and win right away. We talked about this earlier with the Martinsville win. I'm thinking two, three wins. Let's get that going.

I think it just gets steamrolling where you realize you reset your expectations each time. It's been an incredible year for me. We've talked about this. I've been with rookies, lots of young guys, kind of watching them mature, but not in the position to be able to go and have a season like this where you just capitalize on a lot of them, whether it's staying out on tires at Dover, get yourself early wins, you can be aggressive at certain spots where you go and stack those wins, where maybe they were coin flips before.

For me, it's just been amazing. I'm trying to enjoy it, right? I'm 23 years into this sport, 24 years into this sport. I kind of laughed. The pit crew guys, we have a pit crew meeting on Tuesday mornings. Each week they have a guy come in and tell them, one of the pit crew members, their life story, how they got to Joe Gibbs Racing, the race team. It was my turn last week. I gave them my whole transition from being a kid, 12 years old, all the way to Joe Gibbs Racing, where we are today.

I thought about that on the way in this morning. 17-year-old Chris Gayle would have killed for this moment, to just be a part of it. Then to kind of sit here in Victory Lane after this, the one thing I've said is I'm going to enjoy it. I'm going to soak it in and enjoy the next three weeks, lay everything I can out for Phoenix and move on.

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**Q. As we look to Phoenix, Joe Gibbs Racing in the spring versus Joe Gibbs Racing in the fall has been vastly different. Are you coming in with this fresh perspective, can you change that? What do you take from what you experienced in the spring with Denny that you can carry over to the fall?**

**CHRIS GAYLE:** I don't know that any one personnel is going to change it. It takes a lot of things going on.

I think the unique thing is the tire changing. We had the option tire in the spring. That's how we all ended the race, on the option tire. It's a softer tire. The left side is a little bit different this time. That is the Martinsville tire. A lot of the short track tires that we've run.

I feel like that's going to be different, allowing Denny to do a better job with managing that tire. So I think that's going to be what's different for us this time.

**THE MODERATOR:** We've now also been joined by Joe Gibbs, owner of Joe Gibbs Racing, as well. We'll continue with questions for both of them.

**Q. Denny has had this weird couple weeks where he's played a pivotal role in the ending of races, changed who is in the field in some ways. How does he maturely get through that and continue to perform than, not let all of that distraction and noise take away from it?**

**JOE GIBBS:** I would say that Denny, probably nobody has more going on in their life than Denny. But he has an amazing ability I think to kind of handle all of it, all the stuff that's going on in his life right now.

I know one of the things he shared there was his dad. That was emotional for everybody. I want to say thanks to Chris and his story. I had a chance to listen when I was going through his story this week. It's great to hear somebody's background and their dreams and the fact that this is part of his dream.

It's a great point in his life. I just really appreciate that. I appreciate him. I appreciate Denny, all that we've been through in the years that we've been together. I think we're probably close to setting some kind of record because we've been together this long.

Just really appreciate him. Like you said, he's got so much going on, most of us would say how does he handle that. I'm probably one of those.

But just really appreciate it. It's a thrill for us to get a

chance to go to Phoenix and be in the Final 4. Just appreciate everybody on our race team.

Last night was a big deal for us with Aric, Young Life. That was a huge deal for us, too. That's part of our ministry. It was awesome. Just a great weekend.

Appreciate Vegas. I have more hospitalities today, so many of our partners were here. We love coming here, love the fan base and everybody. Just had a great day.

**CHRIS GAYLE:** I think the biggest thing that I've seen is I don't care what's going on, whatever controversy last week, lawsuit related, he'll walk into sim and look at the screen, Okay, it's time to go to work, he'll put the work hat on. I won't hear any of the other stuff. Not once do we have conversations about all the other stuff going on in his life. Not once.

I think he does a good job of focusing on the task at hand in front of him: I've carved out this amount of time to do this. If he has some other times where we need to talk about other stuff, then that's private, that happens there. We don't overlap the two. I think that's just maturity, right?

**Q. Chris, Denny has accomplished a lot in the sport, but to hit 60 this year required a new level compared to past years in this car. Why has this year been the year that everything clicked for him?**

**CHRIS GAYLE:** I really wish I knew. Probably things changing for him allowed a little different perspective for him where he felt like he had to be more a part of it and help. That's my gut. He hasn't said that to me. I'm just watching, right? Watching what he does, how he tries to be a part of it.

But I'm also doing that without living through the previous experience. So I don't know for sure. But I know that whatever I've asked him to do, he's done it. Never questions it. If we want to cut something short, come back a different day and do it for a reason, he's like, Yep, I'm all in.

I don't know. I wish I knew that magic part of it other than it just seems to be working where we focus on the car, we listen to what he talks about, there's a little process in place, and we just kind of keep whittling on that, making it a little better each time.

**Q. Coach, the 60-win milestone sets him into the top 10 of all-time wins in this sport. What have you seen from two decades of him driving your car, entering the Xfinity Series to where he is now, what have you seen from him that has allowed this kind of growth and**

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**success?**

**JOE GIBBS:** Honestly, I would say that probably one of the biggest changes in a personality is when Denny first came to us. He was so quiet. You had to try to get him to talk.

Today, look at where he is today. It's been so interesting to watch that over the years. I think part of it is maturing. I do think one of the changes, too, is family and everything he's got going there with Jordan.

I think it's just one of those things where somebody matures, becomes a father, and takes on a huge responsibility, has his own race team, all of that. Probably causes somebody to actually change their personality. Certainly I think Denny has gone through one of the biggest changes of almost anyone I know.

**Q. Seven hours of sim going to become mandatory for Denny going forward?**

**CHRIS GAYLE:** I don't know. Probably more than seven hours for Phoenix, but we'll split it up over quite a few intervals and not do it in one session.

**Q. Seems towards the end of this race he was on fire. Did you get that sense over the radio?**

**CHRIS GAYLE:** Not necessarily over the radio, right? Denny is pretty quiet normally. I'll be surprised. Even talking to him outside of the car, you don't get a whole lot of excited reactions, at least I don't anyway.

Was it surprised? No. I just hadn't seen him be that aggressive. I think that's what I was proud of. That's all the talk about not being good at Vegas, needing a different driver at Vegas. When the chips were down, he definitely realized he had the opportunity right there and he needed to seize it and did a good job of that one.

He was definitive with his moves. Pretty much grabbed Larson's right rear quarter panel off the bat. Once he had that, he was in good shape.

**Q. Coach, what have you seen out of Denny this year compared to previous years?**

**JOE GIBBS:** Well, I actually think Chris could probably tell you, watching him, he's always had a great work ethic I feel like. I think he's just determined.

Probably what comes with that is so many years and so many great wins, but also the disappointments of not being able to win a championship. I think he's really been

determined and after it.

It takes so much. I always talk about our sponsors, ampm on the car. Certainly our key sponsor is Toyota. For them to be with us over this period of time... For us to have a chance to go to the Final 4 with them, just a huge deal.

To see the partners, our sport is so different because we can't race without partners. I call 'em partners, not sponsors. Certainly we've got some great ones. I just appreciate all that.

If you go through as many years as we've been through with Toyota, you go through some good times, you go through some tough times, but that is what really tests a partnership. They've always been so good. Whatever happens, if we go through a down time, it's just, Hey, let's go to work, let's fix it. They've been a great partner.

I appreciate all those. It's one thing to kind of love it and celebrate it ourselves and Chris, but it's to see all those people that go with you. That's what's really fun.

I was in the winner's circle calling sponsors and thanking 'em. It's just great. Those guys gamble, will come with you, and spend a lot of their resources to support the race team. To be able to call them from the winner's circle is a huge deal.

**Q. Chris, you long-pitted with 50 to go. Fresher tires. Did you think that was going to be enough to get through the field?**

**CHRIS GAYLE:** Yeah, we had cords on tires. This was going to be one of the longest stints anybody had run all day, within a couple laps. We were in position. I think we were fourth at the time. I think the 20 had just gotten around us. There were three cars that I couldn't short pit and grab 'em. I wasn't going to come that early knowing I couldn't make it on tires potentially on the back half of the run.

Once those guys had started pitting so early, I think the 19 started the cycle, they started pitting so early, at that point they're planning on a late caution, come back to pit road, probably not going to be able to run the full 55 laps, probably not without cords, they're going to really fall off.

At that point I didn't think I had a shot to win the race by playing the same strategy as everyone else. I was going to go closer to even split, make both runs really even and not fall off at the end where if it went green, some of those guys were going to go 55 and hopefully tank from cording one tire or another tire. That was going to be the play to try to get us the win.

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The caution came out early. We had the 12 1/2 second pit stop that moved us further back. Then we were further away from those guys when it happened. It kind of nulled out that potential advantage if it had gone green.

**Q. These were the newer intermediate tire?**

**CHRIS GAYLE:** Same as Kansas, for sure.

**Q. Putting Denny with Chris had to be not a tough decision. You have a veteran driver, and starting over with anybody at that point in their career, it's tough to build chemistry, or can be. He's gotten faster on Saturdays. Is this better than you could have dreamed it working out?**

**JOE GIBBS:** Well, you certainly would worry about that. For sure. That was kind of a tough time there. Denny worked through it with us. Chris did, too. Chris had opportunities there, and he chose to stay with us. We really appreciate that.

So that was something that we kind of felt like was best for our race team, but it was also in some ways hard to go through it. So I just appreciate the way that team has fought. Chris has led 'em. Denny has been all in on it. They make something special out of it. Certainly today was special.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned earlier you were in conversation with your sponsors during the winner's circle. Could they hear you above the chaos?**

**JOE GIBBS:** It's hard, but I think I just scream (laughter). It's great for me to get a chance to speak with 'em because the chief marketing officer for ampm, I said, You made one of the best deals anybody's made because that thing is going to be all over the media tomorrow and we're celebrating here. It's great to see that happen, something like that, where somebody comes with you. Just really appreciate that. It was great.

**Q. Joe, what do you tell Denny before Phoenix, considering he's a guy that's 0-4 in the championship and has done everything he wanted to accomplish in this sport except win a championship?**

**JOE GIBBS:** Yeah, what would I tell him?

**Q. Yes, Hall of Fame owner...**

**JOE GIBBS:** To be quite truthful, the coaches are right there, the crew chiefs. They'll do most of the talking and planning and all of that.

Obviously Denny knows there is a huge part of racing that is not the competitive part of it. You know what I mean? It's sponsorship, working through things with Denny. That's kind of where I am.

But I think when you go this long with somebody, we've gone through a lot together, negotiating contracts, disappointments, all the things that's happened.

I think when that kind of happens in a partnership and a relationship, you grow stronger and stronger if you can get through it.

I just think for him, there won't be a lot of talking about it because he knows everything's at stake in this. This has been his life. This is all he's wanted to do, is race cars.

When J.D. found him -- I really thought last night with Young Life, J.D. was huge in Young Life, and that's part of the reason we're working with that ministry. But when J.D. found him racing late models, J.D. gets a lot of the credit because he put Denny in a test, he put him in a truck, in an Xfinity car. Finally he said to me, I think we need to sign this guy.

That's part of it, too. I just really appreciate that, the fact of J.D.'s memory and everything kind of lives on. Denny put J.D. over the door with his name. Denny's kid, his little boy now, is J.D. All of that, it gets emotional really.

I think the race at Daytona after J.D. went to be with the Lord, it is for me the greatest sporting event I was ever in, for our family and everybody. I think God's hand was on that race. So Denny's a big part of that history with J.D. too.

**Q. Coach, you have two Hall of Famers in Bobby and Tony, Dale Jarrett drove for you. When J.D. brought you Denny, did you have any idea he's your winningest driver, any idea that this late model kid from Virginia was going to turn into what he has for you?**

**JOE GIBBS:** No, I did not. I got to be honest (smiling). You know what I mean?

Really, if you remember that year, we actually were struggling with the car, the FedEx car. He only ran half a year in Xfinity, which is amazing. So we put him in there kind of as an experiment. I think the third race he sat on a pole, he was gone.

He deserves a lot of credit in that. I appreciate you mentioning J.D. there. It's a huge part. J.D. and Coy, both my boys. They're a big part of our history, everything that



we're going to do going forward. I got grandkids now that just love it, are a part of it.

I got to tell you, we love what we get to do, NASCAR, getting a chance to go compete every weekend against great owners, great teams. I just love it. Hopefully we're always going to be in it, our family.

**THE MODERATOR:** Coach, Chris, thanks for your time. Congratulations.

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