

# NASCAR Media Conference

## Press Conference

Monday, October 27, 2025

*An Interview with:*

**Joe Gibbs**

**THE MODERATOR:** Thank you so much for joining us, Coach.

**JOE GIBBS:** You bet. My pleasure.

**THE MODERATOR:** Obviously on good terms to be able to chat on Championship 4 week for you with Denny Hamlin and Chase Briscoe going this weekend to Phoenix in hopes of capturing the NASCAR Cup Series Championship.

Obviously last night you guys had Christopher Bell not advancing, so I know you have mixed emotions, most likely. Can you just tell us what the last few weeks have felt like for your organization?

**JOE GIBBS:** Well, I felt like kind of going into yesterday that it's been an outstanding year for us, but in pro sports, you can have some tough Mondays. We're having one today, because yesterday we hate it with the 20 kind of missing being in the Playoffs there.

It was just one of those days where, hey, you have to give credit to the Hendrick cars. Did a fantastic job. You have to give them credit on a day like that.

But the way everything worked out for us, our Playoff schedule is so tough, the 20 has had a heck of a year, but we just wound up yesterday we weren't quite good enough to get in.

So that part of it is a downer, but we have two cars that obviously to be in the Final 4 is a thrill for us. You got the 11 with Denny and Chris Gayle and all the emotion and stories that goes with that car. Then you've got our first-year car with Chase and James just having a heck of a year with the 19. We got two stories there. We're really excited about that.

It's just today it's been tough to get back excited.

**THE MODERATOR:** We're going to go ahead and open for questions now.

**Q. Coach, Denny has had a few mechanical issues**



**over the last five, six weeks. Do you have any concerns or doing anything additional for quality control?**

**JOE GIBBS:** No, we've been on that all morning. We've all got the parts out, looked at everything. I think issues with the motors are always concerning. You never want that to happen.

I think we kind of have understood where we are and what those parts were and have made adjustments, for sure. Really, those parts will not be in the cars for this weekend. So we feel good about that.

**Q. What do you think Denny has learned from the championships that have slipped away that will help him this time?**

**JOE GIBBS:** Well, I think the experience. As you know, in pro sports, that's something you just can't teach someone. They've got to experience it.

I think Denny over these years, 60 wins and being here for this amount of time, I think you listen to him in meetings, and he really, with the experience and everything, is really good I think for the young drivers that are in that room, because he sees things just as a veteran would. He's been through almost everything.

He kind of understands it. He works extremely hard in the sim. His preparation and everything, I think a veteran guy like him, it's hard to -- you know, that kind of experience really means a lot. So hopefully, our sport is so hard, it shows them how hard our sport is.

You've got to be able to get to the Final 4, which we've done with Denny. Now you have one race, and you got to make it happen.

**Q. Coach, two drivers from Joe Gibbs Racing, two drivers from Hendrick Motorsports in the Championship 4. It's the second time in four years. Nothing new. What is it like for you going up against Rick Hendrick in the Championship 4? Jeff Gordon talked last night about how you and Rick exchange messages a lot as friends rather than competitors.**

**JOE GIBBS:** Yeah. What it's like? I don't like it, okay

... when all is said, we're done.®



(laughter)? Yesterday's a good example. Got to give Rick and his crew over there, the 24 and the 5 and the 9, just everybody over there, 48, and everybody was fast. It shows you what a quality organization and how good they really are.

So no, I would prefer to go against somebody that's not very good (smiling). The problem is that doesn't happen in NASCAR. So to get to the Final 4 is just so hard. So now we got one race. We know what we're up against, somebody that's really, really good. Two cars in there for them. Two for us.

Hopefully this will be good for the fans and everybody and the excitement. Probably won't be good for me. I'll be so nervous and uptight about it (smiling).

To get to the Final 4 is a thrill, and we're thrilled to be in it. It's great for our sponsors and our entire organization. You got to give Rick and them just all the credit in the world.

**Q. If you can think back 30-some years, how instrumental was he in helping you get into NASCAR?**

**JOE GIBBS:** It was really, really important for us. When I started thinking about trying, you got to remember, I was a football coach. I didn't have anything. So when both boys, J.D. and Coy, we talked about getting in racing. Could we do that? Could you do something in NASCAR? Everybody referred me to Rick.

Thank goodness he was a Big Red Skins fan. Got him to a football game. Get him to tell you that story where his shoes came apart on the sideline. He almost lost his toes, it was so cold. That was a story.

Rick helped us a lot. He let Jimmie Johnson, his general manager at that time, kind of go with me to a lot of meetings. He just helped and gave advice. Then we started off originally leasing motors and everything from Rick.

It was a huge deal for us, for us to be able to get off the ground. Rick played a huge role in that. I just really appreciate that.

**Q. A year ago at this time, you didn't win the last half of the season, didn't have a team in the Championship 4 in Cup. What was that period like? What was it that made you feel like you had to make the big change with Gabehart to change the direction of this organization?**

**JOE GIBBS:** Yeah, I think for us, it's never just me making big decisions. So our team, we kind of all got together.

We got people that really care about JGR and have spent most of their working lives here, for sure. So it's a team effort.

When we talked about it, we laid out some things where we felt like we could really make an improvement. So that was one of 'em, for sure, getting Chris, move him to being the competition director. That meant Chris Gayle moving over and some other changes that we made here with our four cars.

So this year to kind of wind up where we are with all of that has been very rewarding I think for all of us. But you're constantly in pro sports, what I've learned -- I said the same thing in the NFL -- I think pro sports, they change at a rate of about 30% a year. If you're sitting still, you're falling behind.

You got to be on the forefront of what's taking place. So we kind of felt like some changes were needed for us. Just appreciate all of our guys and the way they fought this year to get where we are and have the success that we've had.

**Q. Obviously spending a lifetime in sports, you understand how so many people look at these athletes, what they can do, as superhuman. It's easy to forget that they are human. Denny Hamlin is going through things. He's talked about his father, the things with his race team. What is it that you see in terms of the human side of Denny Hamlin that maybe most people don't see or realize?**

**JOE GIBBS:** You're right in that we look at these guys. Very few people can do this, get in a car, go 200 miles an hour, competing against somebody.

When you get one, it's a huge deal for a race team. So for them, though, to be able to achieve that, then there is the whole personal side. It's your relationships, everything. I know I've experienced a lot with J.D. and Coy not being here. So you go through those emotions.

Sometimes we have a tendency to forget about that and only think about somebody being an athlete, but there's so much to this. If you think about Denny, where he is right now with Dennis, his dad, and all that the family went through to sacrifice for him, he brings that up all the time, then everything he's got going at 23XI and then what he's got going with us, you just realize that's a lot.

I think he's a very unusual person to be able to handle all that. He's also a gifted athlete. So I would say from the time that Denny first came on board 20 years ago, I think probably where he is today is probably one of the biggest changes that I've seen in a person.



I think a lot of it's because of his family now and Jordan and the kids. There's just a lot there. So I think our fans appreciate that because they know a lot about the drivers. Certainly our four guys are totally different. They got different things that are taking place in their worlds.

So you make a good point. Sometimes we have a tendency for forget that, but it plays a major role I think with great athletes.

**Q. On the topic of Denny, when you have two drivers in the championship, I'm assuming it would be like asking to pick your favorite child, but how much of your heart, sentimentally, to try to do this and see Denny get an opportunity to win a championship, how much is your heart with him this weekend?**

**JOE GIBBS:** Well, you kind of take a look at both of our drivers in the Final 4. If I take Chase first, here's somebody -- I noticed I think yesterday on Sirius radio they were talking to him about the couch that he slept on for like two years while he's trying to get an opportunity in the sport. To see him, a first-year guy, be able to get everything done that he's got done, be on seven poles, won three races, to wind up in the Final 4. That's a great story when you think about that.

Then you move over to Denny. Here's somebody that's won 60 times in our sport. All the things that he does now: He's an owner of a race team. He races for us, and all he's done over those years. His family, where he is today when he first came with us, all that is a huge story. His dad and everything that's taken place there.

It's two definite different stories. I think for everybody, the only thing that Denny has not claimed is a championship. I know everybody asks him about that in every interview. If you do that for 20 years, I can tell you there's a burning desire for him to win a championship.

**Q. This weekend getting an opportunity to win a championship, it's been since 2019 since you have done that. Has it felt that long? Has it felt like it's been a drought or a slump? What have these last few years been like trying to get back atop the mountain?**

**JOE GIBBS:** It seems like it's been forever (smiling). I think that's the thing about pro sports. You work so hard. You get down, and with our championship it goes to the last race. It's really, really hard.

The other thing, you go 38 weekends. Everybody's put everything, all the work effort and everything they put into preparing our cars, all the people here. When you stop

and think about it, so many people kind of depend on this. Our big deal is you want to try and win.

I don't think we have any of our sponsors that I've ever got that said, It's okay just to ride around in the back. They don't want to do that. They want to win. That's obviously the goal up here for everybody.

In this case, you're going to have Rick and his two drivers. You're going to have me and everybody here, Heather and everybody in our ownership and everybody in management, everybody here at our race shop, our entire team, pulling for our two cars this weekend.

It's going to be a huge deal. I think our fans love that. It's the best in the world competing in one race. It should be really exciting.

**Q. Coach, can you discuss the parallels between coaching a championship team in the NFL and coaching championship teams in NASCAR? Have the parallels grown closer over the course of the evolution, where when you first got here, you had the crew chief and the driver, and now it's kind of blossomed into you have got to have the entire team and special teams, aka the pit crew, has become more important than ever in this sport.**

**JOE GIBBS:** I've kind of said this before, but as far as the two sports, it is kind of amazing how much they are alike. In football, you're not going anywhere in football unless you got a great quarterback. Over here, it's what? The driver, okay?

In football you have to have a coach who knows what's going on. Hopefully you have a great coach. Over here, that becomes crew chiefs, okay? So the two sports, the fact that our pit crew guys, it's almost exactly like football. They have mandatory weight training twice a week. They have mandatory practice. It's all videoed and filmed. They're paid bonuses on pit stops.

The two sports in that way are a lot alike. Over here, we got a car. Many times that thing about not obey. You can't chew it out or threaten it, okay? But I do think the two sports are a lot alike.

My role is totally different. In football I can make it happen. I was over there. I grew up in it. Technically called plays, make it happen. Over here I can't, okay? My role over here is totally different. Pick the people, work with the people, try and keep our sponsors happy. I said my biggest thrill is trying to pay the bills the first of every month. So my role here is different (smiling).



I would say this: there are a lot of similarities between this sport and the NFL. Those are the only two I've been in, but it's kind of amazing really. You're trying to win a championship.

The one thing that we talk about that's different, over here you have four teams. It's a real challenge, really difficult. How do you get four teams to work together? I think that NASCAR is really tough from that standpoint.

**Q. You in your spare time do a lot of motivational speaking. In Martinsville in Victory Lane with the Hendrick group, it seemed like they all had a pep rally talking about loss with the members of Hendrick that they lost on the plane crash. You know something about severe loss, as well. How can you use certain life lessons as catalysts to motivate your squads down to the finish line?**

**JOE GIBBS:** Yeah, I think Rick and I have talked a lot about that, our boys and the fact that they're not here. So we've had discussions about that, and it's really hard. We both have experienced that.

Yeah, I'm not as far as motivating factors. I do know that with my two boys, and I'm sure with Ricky, their dream was to be a part of racing in the future. Certainly I think that's what Rick kind of had planned. That's what I had planned. Sometimes in life God has a different idea.

We're in a totally different place, both of us. But I think also we share a lot of similar heartbreaks. Anyway, that's part of our life and that's where we are now.

I got my grandkids involved, Heather involved. Everything is taking place here. I think my grandkids, a number of them, will want to be with the race team and be involved with it. That's exciting for me. It's not the way I thought it would go. Then again, God's plans many times are not ours.

**Q. You've obviously participated in football playoffs and the Super Bowl. You've experienced every iteration of a NASCAR championship format. Have you provided NASCAR any feedback from your standpoint about what direction they should go? What are your feelings overall about this time period, thinking about what our future looks like?**

**JOE GIBBS:** No, I haven't, but I think they've gone about this the right way. They have a committee. Heather has been on there. A lot of real bright people are thinking about our Playoffs, and is this the right format for us going forward?

The one thing I would say, one race, man, it is tough because things can happen to you that are out of your control in that one race. So I think they've done a good job. I'll leave that to NASCAR.

I hear some rumors about it. I think we're probably going to make a change in there, if I'm guessing. But I think that will be something for the future.

What we're focused on right now is the way we do have our Championship 4. This is the way NASCAR is, and we're in it. We got two cars in it. This is a thrill when we get here, because it is exciting. You got one race to make it happen.

That's the way I look at it, so we got to find a way. I'm sure Rick is thinking the same thing.

**Q. With Taylor winning on Saturday in Ty's car, talking about the future of the company and the way the family structure is moving forward, is there something in that dynamic that you've tasked Ty with trying to learn? Do you have him doing homework at all in terms of what it's like to run a team?**

**JOE GIBBS:** I think he's so consumed with racing right now. That's been his world. Ever since he's been two, he's been on something with wheels and after it. I think when you're trying to climb a ladder, and it is so hard to be successful in racing. I think he's totally focused on that really.

No, I think that's been his whole focus, is to try and win and climb the ladder and be a part of NASCAR going forward as a driver. Yeah, other than that, he's totally consumed with that. I can tell you that.

**Q. You were talking about the parallels to the NFL and NASCAR. As a Hall of Fame head coach, you had to mentally prepare your players for that one game to win a championship. How involved are you with crew chiefs, drivers, and the pit crew members getting them mentally prepared for the task at hand?**

**JOE GIBBS:** I think over here, it's mostly the crew chiefs. They have that close working relationship. They're constantly in the sim. They're going over things with their drivers. They're trying to climb the mountain, get it done. The crew chiefs over here deserve the credit.

I'm obviously in the background. I'm in the competition meetings and stuff. I share things at different times, but it is over here, I look at the crew chiefs, and it's just the same role that I did play in the NFL.



They're kind of the motivators there, the guys that make it happen. They're the guys that make the calls. That's a very close, tight-knit relationship between drivers and crew chiefs. They really depend on each other.

This world, those are the guys that make it happen over here. I'm there, certainly around it, care about it, but they're the ones that make it happen.

**Q. With the crew chiefs being essentially the head coaches in NASCAR, do you think they get enough credit for what happens on Sundays?**

**JOE GIBBS:** I think our fan base is very knowledgeable. I love Sirius radio. You hear the fans come on there. Everything on TV on the weekends. We're 38 weekends, which is a huge window on TV and everything that takes place.

I think our fan base is very knowledgeable. They understand. I think they really appreciate crew chiefs. They know what it takes. Our fan bases, they're after it. I appreciate that. There's an excitement there.

When you hear 'em call in on the radio or have discussions with them, I think they definitely understand how important the crew chief's role is. I appreciate that about our fans. I think in pro sports -- they get a lot of attention, pro sports do. Certainly NASCAR does.

People know, I think the crew chiefs, they deserve a lot of credit. I think they're keys to what happens here with your race teams.

**Q. I find it interesting, because you're such a motivational and competitive guy, but up close, you're down to earth. Could you take us through the issues that you had with Chase's car and then Denny's car? Where are you? How involved do you get? Then you come back, and they digest it. But are you banging on tables? I'd love to hear what it is that you add to all of that.**

**JOE GIBBS:** Yeah, I'm not sure what I add. What we do, we got a great group of technical people here. Our Toyota people, particularly with the motors, which was a huge issue for us. It makes you really nervous. It makes them nervous, because they're perfectionists.

So this morning what we did, we got all the parts. We laid them out. We had a full discussion on where we are, what happened. That's the first thing.

Certainly in racing, you want to make sure you understand what did happen. That's really important. What did cause?

Don't miss that. I think we've got that detailed.

So the decisions then were made by Toyota, this is what we're going to do for this coming weekend. We feel like that we've made the right decisions. We kind of have discussed what did happen, and we're convinced we made the right decisions about what's going to take place on Sunday.

So I think it's made by Toyota and a lot of our technical people. I'm kind of a bystander, but I know what they're doing (smiling).

**Q. A follow-up on crew chief James Small and Chase Briscoe. James Small, to see him rise to where he's refreshed with Chase Briscoe after what he went through, what do you see in him to field an effort for the championship in Phoenix?**

**JOE GIBBS:** I think what he did this year with taking Chase, and for them, every part of Chase's time here, you know, James has been in it. They've been just like this.

To see them kind of work together... At first they got the first pole. I went, That's exciting, we got one pole. Then they just kept up front, fast. I think that's the thing that you look for in our sport. You want a driver that's fast. In order to get there, the crew chief has to help him, for sure.

As the year went, I think they set some records almost. Seven poles and all that they did this year. I think James is -- everybody that knows James, he cares. He is after it. It's a big deal. You can see him worry about stuff. I appreciate that, the way he cares about it.

Certainly you're seeing somebody like Chase, who came up, sacrificed all that he sacrificed with his family and him, Marissa, everything that they've gone through to get to this level. It's so exciting to see them have a year like they've had.

None of us expected it. I don't think anybody did. I didn't hear anybody in the press say that was going to happen. I think it took us all by surprise.

**THE MODERATOR:** Coach, thank you so much for your time. We really appreciate it. We do wish you the best of luck this weekend in Phoenix.

**JOE GIBBS:** Thank you. Appreciate everybody.

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