

# NASCAR Media Conference

## Press Conference

Saturday, November 1, 2025

*An Interview with:*

**Connor Zilisch**  
**Justin Allgaier**  
**Carson Kvapil**

**THE MODERATOR:** We're joined by our first Championship 4 contender, that is Connor Zilisch.

We'll open up straight to questions.

**Q. Your night tonight was very up and down. What happened at the end to not have what you had at the middle stages of the race?**

**CONNOR ZILISCH:** Yeah, I felt like we were never the best car. I feel like our pit crew did a really good job. We restart second. I got the lead from second both times. We lead for 10, 15 laps, every run we just tanked. I don't know if I was pushing it too hard at the beginning of runs or what it was.

After 20 laps, I just couldn't hang on. Just started to lose lateral grip. Yeah, I don't really know what we fought, but I feel like every run we were the second best car. Whether it was Justin or Jesse, we just never were the best car.

**Q. The emotion after the race, where did that come from?**

**CONNOR ZILISCH:** Man, I mean, I feel like emotion is part of the sport. You work so hard for 38 weeks, yeah, coming up short sucks.

**Q. You still have a historic season, all the victories. While it didn't happen tonight, how can you still look positively on this?**

**CONNOR ZILISCH:** Yeah, I'm still so proud of my team, what we've accomplished this year. We have nothing to hang our heads about. We were the best car for two-thirds of the year. We dominated until these last three races.

Yeah, it cost us a championship, so... We'll keep our heads high. We are walking home with more than three times as many trophies as anybody else. We won the most races, had the most top 10s, top 5s, poles. There's



no reason we should be upset because of this outcome.

**Q. Is it any consolation to you that the guy who said you're his best friend in the world is the one who beat you, or is that going to take a while?**

**CONNOR ZILISCH:** No, it doesn't make it feel any better (smiling). No. Good for Jesse, I'm really happy for him. Yeah, no.

**Q. What have you learned about yourself by battling your friends this year for race wins and the title?**

**CONNOR ZILISCH:** I feel like it's just been a lesson of not clashing my professional life and personal life. We travel with each other 38 weeks a year. If you don't have friends, you're going to become miserable.

I feel like I am a very personable person. I like to be friends with everybody. At times it can be hard to kind of put those two together. Yeah, you have to be able to separate them and understand what's professional life and what's just friendships.

It's tough to balance at times. I feel like Jesse and I have done a good job at that.

**Q. You also drove in other categories besides Xfinity. Do you think that gives you better understanding about engineering?**

**CONNOR ZILISCH:** Yeah, I feel like every different kind of race car series I drive is helpful for me. I learn in everything I get in. I think I enjoy being able to race in so many different kinds of series. It definitely has taught me a lot.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**CONNOR ZILISCH:** I told my guys. I said, When we walked in here Thursday, we're going to give our 100% best effort. No matter what the result is, as long as we know we did our best, we gave it our all, we'll walk out of this place proud and hold our heads lie. We did that this week.

Although it sucks, I'm proud of my team and what we accomplished.

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**Q. Even though you didn't win, you and Jesse, is that battle going to be a fun memory, something he'll have over you?**

**CONNOR ZILISCH:** Yeah, I mean, it will be core memories for both of us. Yeah, wish it was the other way around. Yeah, I'm very happy for him. He works really hard at it. He deserves it. Yeah, it's cool to see your best friend win.

I came here to win, so it still doesn't make it feel any better.

**Q. Does this motivate you to start looking ahead to a big season in 2026? Does that prep come later?**

**CONNOR ZILISCH:** Yeah, sorry, I need to lighten up. Yeah, I'm excited for next year. It's not going to light a fire under my ass to win a Cup championship next year.

Man, I don't have a NASCAR championship, so that's something I definitely got to get in the future. Hopefully that will be a Cup championship one day. I'll look back on this as a little tidbit and a little bump in the road. That's something that I can be excited about, is next year.

**Q. I saw you and Dale embracing off of pit road. What is it like to have raced for him this year?**

**CONNOR ZILISCH:** Yeah, I'm so glad I'm back next year for some races. This year's been a dream. My teammates, my team, every crew member, everybody back at the shop, people working upstairs in the offices, everybody has treated me like family.

Yeah, I'll remember this year forever. I just wish I could have gone out on top and left them with a championship. Yeah, I guess not.

**THE MODERATOR:** Connor, appreciate your time.

We're now joined by Justin Allgaier. We'll go right to questions for Justin.

**Q. First half of the race went every way you wanted it to go. The car had what you needed. What change to the track or adjustment didn't go your way?**

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** I wish I knew. Last set of tires definitely did not kind of sit well with the car, right? It just seemed to be a lot looser there after that last caution.

I think some of that, you look at track position, I don't know, I kind of look back at the restart there, I don't really know what I could have done any different. Maybe just having to

be a little more aggressive on the restart, got the tires hot. Really disappointing.

Jesse had come on there at the end of that run before the caution came out. It was really good. I knew that. I wanted to really have a good restart and be able to battle it out with him. Just didn't work out.

I'm bummed because I wanted to send Jim off with a championship. JR Motorsports as a whole, we didn't win an owner or a driver championship with three out of the four. That's super frustrating on my end, all of our ends.

Jesse just did a really good job tonight. I mean, that last hundred laps for Jesse was probably one of the best drives I've ever seen him put on. I've seen him race open-wheel, ARCA. That's one of the best drives he's put on. Congrats to the 2 team. They deserved it tonight.

**Q. You might be too close to the moment, but how do we reconcile his season not resulting into a championship with Connor?**

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** You don't without a different format. Now, that being said, we had this conversation with Joey. Look, at the end of the day the format is the format. We have to race to the format, right? It doesn't matter if it's a one-race format, 33 races, five, seven, 10. Our job as racers and as teams is to go out there and make the most of it.

I don't dislike the format. It's bit me way more than it's ever helped me. Last year when it benefited us, it was great, right?

I don't know what the right answer is. I know last night social media was abuzz because Corey actually won. Tonight it's probably going to be flip-flopped because Connor didn't win.

Look at the season that Jesse has had, and you look at what he did, not only did he win the championship, he won the race. He drove by all of us. He did all the right things. That to me is doing what your job is and excelling at it. They rose to the occasion and we didn't.

I'm not mad about it. I just got to go work harder next year. If the format is the same, make the most of it. If not, we'll do something different.

**Q. Justin, you had three young teammates this season, three very talented teammates. What was it like seeing these young guys develop over the season?**

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** I mean, there's a moment last week where I thought we were going to end up with all four of us in. I said at the beginning of the year, Media Day, all year long, I wouldn't be surprised if all four of us were in.

I'm really proud of our group. I'm proud of all five cars, right? We ran the fifth car quite a bit. This guy right here has done an amazing job this year, right? Connor excelled beyond belief. Sammy has worked as hard as I've ever seen anybody work, made his program significantly better. They had a really good race tonight. They've been really strong in these Playoffs.

I'm proud of our team, proud of the effort. We have great tools. We have great people. Chevrolet has helped us with resources that helped these guys get to the level they're at at a really quick progress level.

I couldn't have been happier with my teammates this year. We all got along really well. We rarely had any moments. Yeah, there's always going to be that off chance because we race each other, we're battling for wins on a regular basis. It's easy to get upset at your teammate when stuff doesn't go the way you wanted it to go.

When it's all said and done, I'm really proud of the group that we have. I know it's changing a little bit for next year, but at the same time I still feel like we have a great group. I'm really proud of what we've got.

**THE MODERATOR:** We're also joined Carson Kvapil.

We'll continue with questions.

**Q. Justin, you showed a ton of speed this year, even in the second half of the year. What can you take from the second half of the year in looking forward to 2026?**

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** Yeah, I mean, if I look at the stat line, I don't know exactly what it is, but over a thousand laps led, three wins, 14 top fives, something like that. Does that sound right?

**Q. 15.**

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** 15, all right (smiling). I'm really proud with the year we've had. I don't know how many stages we won, but it's a lot. Those are things that I'm going to take out of the season that are fantastic, right?

With that being said, though, I look back at some of the races and just stuff that got away from us, things that didn't go our way.

If you just take the last 10 laps of probably 10 races, the

timetable flips and we have probably eight or 10 wins and life's great, right?

We go into the off-season, I got a lot of change coming in the off-season. I'm getting a new crew chief, whatever changes come along with that, any rules changes, all that stuff. We still got our work cut out for us. Just a lot of solace in being the old guy out there and still being able to go after it, run as fast as we have been.

**Q. Carson, how would you describe the overall experience, and what can you take from tonight for next year?**

**CARSON KVAPIL:** Yeah, I mean, I feel like the experience of having this whole Xfinity season and the Playoffs and stuff, it was different for me. It was something that I hadn't ever been accustomed to, the type of racing was different, the way you race people was defensively a lot different.

I grew to enjoy it as we got further into the Playoffs. I didn't like it at first. The Round of 8, we started getting benefits off of it, I started to like it.

This team put us in a great spot to be in the Final 4. We did it the hard way. We never won a race. We pointed our way in on every round that we had. Just worked our tails off on that. Never had a break. We never gave up. It was getting tough towards the middle of the season. We kept trucking and got ourselves all the way to a Final 4 spot.

It wasn't the way I wanted it to go, but I know these guys worked their tails off to try to bring me the best piece. We had a really good car to start. We started 14th, and by the end of stage one we were up to six, passing for fifth. It wasn't bad. We were really good. We were probably running close to leader's pace. It seemed like every pit stop we would lose some spots on each one. That didn't help.

It just seemed like the other guys could gain on us. We couldn't gain anything all race. Kind of what we had from lap one was kind of the same thing I had at lap 200, whereas the other guys -- we passed the 2 car on the first run. I thought we were going to have a really good shot at it. Just didn't seem like we could keep up with the track and keep up with changes.

It's just super. Super grateful to be in this position. Obviously not winning a race, sometimes you're in, sometimes you're out. Depends how the Playoffs go. I had a really enjoyable Playoff run with some great teammates.



**Q. Justin, this was your last race with crew chief Jim Pohlman. Dale said Jim was the X factor that brought you guys and this group the championship last season. To say good-bye to him, what was the conversation like? What has he meant to you personally?**

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** I mean, I don't even know if I can put into words what he's meant to me personally. He's family. I've known him since I was a little kid.

He's somebody that I truly respect, not just because of what he's accomplished but how he goes about his day. He is the X factor, right? He's a difference maker. He's somebody that I feel like has put a ton of effort into making our program better and stronger and faster. Not just the 17, right? He's excelled our entire program at JR Motorsports. It's going to be a tough loss to replace that person. On the other side of it, look, you get moments in life that are differentiators of kind of where we end up.

He laid out the opportunity he had in front of him. Plain and simple, I said, You got to go take it.

He looked at me kind of confused. You know that means I'm not going to do this, right?

I'm like, Yeah. But you worked your whole career to have an opportunity like that, work with a guy like Kyle Busch, a great organization like RCR. You got to go do it.

I'm really proud of him. We had a moment in the truck before the race. Jim is not the most emotional type person. He definitely was today. I feel like it's definitely difficult for him to move on.

At the end of the day I'm super proud of him. I'm happy for him. I think it's going to be the best opportunity. He's going to go kill it. We're going to make the most of it at JR Motorsports. We're going to put somebody in that position that can do the same job and move us forward. That's how the sport works.

**Q. Justin, watching the race, maybe my impression is wrong, but I think your car was super quick until lap 151 at the last caution. After that I had the impression your car was different. Did you feel there was something different?**

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** Yeah, I mean, the only thing that changed was the tires, right? We put a different set of tires on there.

It's so hard. I mean, when you're talking about the smallest amounts can make all the difference in the world, right?

Then just how I prepped the tires on the restart, how the restart went. Kind of being behind a little bit, not having clean air. You stress the tires a little bit more.

I look back on it, I'm like, Man, I tried some things to get by those guys to get clean air that I don't feel like was beneficial. I didn't get the clean air and I probably hurt my tires a little bit. All that builds. At the end of the race we started bleeding.

I think as a driver, you hit that moment where you're seeing the cars in front of you drive away, you know the laps are going down. You don't give up, but you're like, Man, I don't even know what I could do to be better at this moment. There's nothing I'm going to do to will this thing forward.

I knew that when Jesse got out clear and was quite a ways away, kind of any hard racing that gave an opportunity to maybe come back to us wasn't going to happen.

I don't know. I wish something was different at the end there. I definitely felt like we had the car to beat until the last set of tires. From there, we just weren't on it.

**THE MODERATOR:** Justin, Carson, thank you so much for your time. Congratulations on a great season.

**JUSTIN ALLGAIER:** I just want to say real quick, I know y'all know this, but Xfinity has done a lot for this sport. It's sad to see them go. At the same time really special to be a part of this for as long as I have been. I know that some of you guys have done stories on being in this sport. They're not going away. Really, really special to see them, what they've done for this sport.

Huge thanks to those guys.

**CARSON KVAPIL:** Well said.

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