

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

Sunday, November 2, 2025

An Interview with:

Ryan Blaney

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by our race-winning driver, Ryan Blaney.

If you have a question for Ryan...

Q. Now that you came here and did what everybody thought you were going to do, which is win the race, can you not help but think back to a week ago?

RYAN BLANEY: No, I try not to think about that. Living in the past if you're thinking that way. We were in the spot that we were in. Our goal this weekend was to try to win the race, have great momentum going into the wintertime. Understood that we weren't going for a championship, but we were going to make the best out of it.

I wouldn't say it's like bittersweet. I enjoy it just like any other win. Great we were able to go out and get it done today.

I do find it ironic that my first win here is not in the championship, but at the same time, no, I'm not beating ourselves up over what happened last week. We're going to enjoy this one as much as we can, because it was the goal for this weekend.

Q. When you won the championship that year, that was the first time a driver won the championship here in that format without winning the race.

RYAN BLANEY: Now there's two. Happy to be part of one of them, at least (smiling).

Q. With all the tire issues that both Chevrolet and Toyota were experiencing, was there any worry from a Ford perspective?

RYAN BLANEY: I think there's always worry. I think everybody worried going into the race because there was a lot of tire issues in practice.

We didn't experience any in our camp, but there's always that kind of thought lingering in the back of your mind. Like, I didn't want to shortcut the dogleg at the start of the race. I was talking to Hocevar before the race because he



and I were fifth and sixth. I was like, Hey, I'm going to stay on the racetrack if you're okay with staying on the racetrack. And we did. And I got put three wide because someone cut the dogleg. And I was like, I don't want to blow a tire.

But then when the initial start happened, everyone went down there, we didn't see many failures. I don't think there was a failure in the first round of the race. That made me a little bit more confident of I can go down here.

Yeah, just flirting with air pressure. These guys, that's kind of the game. How low can you get. Just helps the long-run speed and grip. There's kind of a basement. We have saw that a couple champ guys blew one. I think 19 and 24 blew one.

Q. 5, too.

RYAN BLANEY: The 5 blew one as well. Yeah, it was always in my mind, but fortunately didn't happen for us.

Q. I think David Ragan had the issue here in the WFT test. Do you have any idea that that knowledge helped you guys at all today?

RYAN BLANEY: Yeah, I think a little bit. Everybody's, like I said earlier, flirting with it. We've blown a couple this year. At Vegas, blew the front in the race. Blew one at Kansas in the Playoffs.

Where do you think you're comfortable with the basement? That wheel force test is kind of a test that you play with. Every manufacturer plays with that at the test. It's not just air pressure. It's cambers, stuff like that that play a factor in it.

I think here is such an unknown because you have that dogleg that puts a ton of shock load on the tire. There's not a lot of data for that.

Yeah, I think we learned a little bit from the wheel force test with David, the Ford camp. Here is our basement. Let's stay away from that. I don't think anyone in the Penske camp had tire issues. That's what those tests are for. You learn.

Q. Were you trying to be aware of where Larson and



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Hamlin were on that final restart, they're going for a title? Is there any feeling for feeling bad for Hamlin or seeing him have that type of race and not winning the title?

RYAN BLANEY: Yeah, I was aware where those guys were at. Timmy told me. I knew the 5 was restarting, I was third, he was restarting sixth. I knew the 11 had four. He was 10th or something. Maybe lined up ninth. So I was aware of where those couple guys were.

I was so close to the front that I wasn't around 'em too much. I didn't have to go up and pass 'em and put 'em in that spot. I just had to try to figure out how to get by the guys on old stuff.

Then yeah, as far as the 11 camp, there's part of me that does feel bad for that group, right? They had a great race car. I think there were some runs of the race where he was a little bit better than us. I thought we were the two best cars. Had the race locked up. The 24 blew a tire. Nothing you can do about that. It's just unfortunate racing luck of that happening at that time when he had it locked up.

Yeah, you do have to feel for that group and Denny. Doing a good job all day, it not playing out for him. But that is racing. It sucks sometimes. They can hang their head about it, but they should be very proud about the effort they put in today. They had the fastest race car here. Just one of those things where it doesn't work out.

Looked like it was going into his favor today. Unfortunately for him, it didn't.

Q. Obviously it's hard not to think what if. You end up getting the win here anyway. Had a great year. How do you use something like this, short off-season, use it as momentum into next year?

RYAN BLANEY: Yeah, yeah, I'm very, very proud of our year. I know we didn't make this weekend, fighting for a championship. I felt like our team in '24 was stronger than what we were in '23. I feel like this year we were even better than what we were last year.

Just camaraderie around the 12 car, all the guys working together, just building trust and belief in each other. That's all I've always tried to look for, is how is our 15 or so guys operating together. Are we communicating well, giving all the effort we can be giving through the week and on the weekend. That part is just getting better and better.

I'm really lucky to be part of such a great group with my 12 car, and also all of Team Penske. They've just done a

fantastic job.

Yes, I would have liked to have run for a championship. I understand, like, it just didn't work out for us. We were great. I thought this team was great. It just didn't really play out to where we had a shot at it. You have to live with that type of stuff.

I'm very proud of this whole group. It's great to go out with a win and carry some momentum into next year. We'll look at some things that we think we can improve. Try to keep building better and better every single year. Whether it was a great year or a terrible year, you just try to get better.

Q. On the last restart, you had the championship guys, old tires in front of you. How did you navigate all that?

RYAN BLANEY: Yeah, I came off first on two tires. There was a handful of guys on two before the guys on four. There was three guys who stayed out. Tires wore a lot today. I knew those guys were going to be struggling, the guys who stayed out, Brad and Preece and Bowman.

I didn't go as low as Heim did in the Truck race in one and two. Tried to shortcut on the apron, trying to get away as much as I could. It was just a matter of hitting bottom, make sure I left room for the couple guys I was racing. I knew the 5 was out there. I wanted to leave room when we were three-wide with Preece and him. I didn't want to be the guy who is a huge, like, costing a guy a championship, right? I try to be respectful of all those guys. I raced them with a lot of respect today, just because that's what I expect.

The last corner was crazy. I just kind of went down the backstretch, like, wrapped the line. You're going to have to drive off. Might be enough to get there. Fortunately it was. Good call by Jonathan, put two on it, keep us in the ballgame, had the car to do it.

Kind of ironic that we won it on a restart. My restarts were terrible all day. I couldn't go. Guys were better than me for 15 laps or so. Then I could get moving and work my way forward.

My pit crew gave me the lead twice today. I didn't have the grip some of those guys had. I had a long-run car. Pretty ironic we won it on a restart after having a shitty restart day.

Q. You've literally finished second in this race for the previous three years. Is there any extra sense of relief or accomplishment that you take from this or just another win?

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RYAN BLANEY: Yeah, I mean, it's nice to finally get in Victory Lane here after being so close for a number of years. Those things kind of stick in your brain a little bit. We've had a shot to win at these certain places a handful of times, we haven't really been able to get the job done. It's nice when you can finally do it and break through, win at a track where you've had one of the best cars for the last handful of years.

So yeah, I don't know if it's like a huge relief off our shoulders. I'm just proud that we were in it today and this whole weekend and brought our best stuff. Even though we weren't a part of the championship, we're determined to try to end the year for Ford and Team Penske with a win. Fortunately we were able to do that. We did a great job.

THE MODERATOR: Ryan, thank you.

RYAN BLANEY: Thank y'all. Enjoy y'all's off-season.

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