

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

Sunday, November 2, 2025

An Interview with:

Rick Hendrick

Jeff Gordon

Cliff Daniels

Dr. Eric Warren

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by the 2025 NASCAR Cup Series championship team, sans the driver, but we've got Dr. Eric Warren from Chevrolet, Rick Hendrick from Hendrick Motorsports, Jeff Gordon from Hendrick Motorsports, and Cliff Daniels, the crew chief of the No. 5.

I'd like to start with Mr. H and Jeff. If you would, each answer what is it like winning this on the 30th anniversary of the first championship with you, Jeff, in 1995?

RICK HENDRICK: Well, it's hard to believe it's been 30 years. We've been talking about this a lot. It's a great day to have the 24 win the first championship, then the 5 win today.

15 is unbelievable, and we're just excited for the company and all the people that work so hard. Never thought we'd win one. I thought I'd go to New York and watch Richard Childress and Dale Earnhardt get a trophy every year. It feels good to get 15 of those things.

JEFF GORDAN: When I arrived, Ray Evernham arrived, what Rick was building, what he had put in place, the resources and what he wanted to accomplish, was already there. A lot of great people, as well. There were a lot of amazing things that were happening.

For whatever reason, we were just that spark, the stars aligned with the resources and his leadership. We did something really special in 1995.

To me it seems like the organization's never looked back. It's like once you know you can win one, then it's you feel like you can win it every year. We did that for a few of 'em, between Terry and myself, then later with Jimmie. Just unbelievable to me that over the 30 years, it's been 15 of 'em. That's a pretty good percentages, boss. I know you like the math. I think you like those odds.



THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. Cliff, you've been very up front how trying a year this has been. Was it almost apropos that this is how you won the championship?

CLIFF DANIELS: It was. I want to start by saying thank you to Mr. Hendrick and Jeff for their leadership along the way.

This has been a very tough season for the 5 team on a lot of fronts. We had some really strong wins early in the year, a lot of strength. The summer was tough. We were down and sideways. Never quite down and out.

A lot of our team guys have just been through a lot this year. We've had things going on away from the racetrack where we've had to overcome obstacles, sometimes even tragedy, and work through a lot of things together, which to me there's just a lot of beauty in that, of a team banding together the way that we have this season.

That was really showcased today. I have to acknowledge that it was a pretty ugly day for us. At times we were up front, kind of in the top three, a little bit in the mix. Certainly the 11 was better than us. I think we were beat on raw pace today. After we had the flat tire, there wasn't a lot of good things coming our way at the time.

We knew we would have more shots for pit stops and for restarts and maybe mix it up a bit. The way that the team stuck together and continued to believe in each other, Kyle continued to believe that if we just had a shot, we could close it out. That was what was put on display today.

Q. Jeff and Rick, as you fall down a lap, Denny has the pace, did you think the 5 could come back and be in contention?

JEFF GORDAN: No.

RICK HENDRICK: No, no, no.

JEFF GORDAN: I mean, got to be honest. At that point I really felt like they were out of it. But I was also listening on the radio. Cliff never wavered that they were out of it. I love that about him, his leadership.



I think the spark to me was a couple cautions that kind of helped him stay in the game there. Them and the 19 were moving their way up there, kind of got stuck. They made the two-tire stop prior to the last one, right? When they were hanging in the top five, I heard Cliff going, We're okay here, guys.

I don't know exactly what he meant by that because we were running out of laps. But the car had speed, had balance. It wasn't bad.

Then when that last caution come out, I mean, William Byron, those guys, they had a great year, hate it for them because they've been in this position last three years, that being the caution.

My first reaction was, Oh, no, man, the 24 has got a problem. Then I started hearing Cliff on the radio talk about, We're definitely taking two. Don't let me put those words in your mouth, but to me it sounded like there was no choice, no doubt. Then it just came down to how many are going to take two and what are the 11 going to do.

Q. Cliff, Joey Logano said that you're a great team, even when you're down and out you find a way to win the championship. What does that mean that even when you blow a tire, a fellow champion talks about you that way?

CLIFF DANIELS: It's an honor to hear that from Joey, a three-time champ, the 2024 champ. That's something that I think has been built and bred into the culture of Hendrick Motorsports for many years, long before what we showcased on the 5. You think back to many magical moments with Hendrick Motorsports that were on the cusp of overcoming an obstacle, setback.

That's really something that's been put on us this year. Everyone, if you draw your season plans on the whiteboard, you don't include all of the things that happened to us this summer, you don't include the struggle, all the challenges. There was no other way.

Now that I can see it fresh, but in the rearview mirror there was just no other way for us to get toughened up, gritty enough, determined enough to show that level of perseverance that is what the team showcased today.

It's far more than just me, than Kyle. It's all the men on the team, the support system they have at home, the hours and the grind and the resiliency to be able to show what we showed throughout the season, then especially to end the race today.

I'm very grateful to be a part of a team and an organization and a group of people that all share that belief.

Q. Cliff, you talked about the two tires. It worked out. Was it a gamble at the time?

CLIFF DANIELS: So something that I want to acknowledge, and I think these guys deserve a lot of credit, there's a group of engineers, that one is here at the track, we have some others in the war room and on an intercom with me. Cal Stewart, Brian Ross, Shelton Ware, Nathan Woodby [phonetics], kind of a team of guys that were on the intercom with me talking throughout the day. I'm going to give those guys the first bit of credit.

I can't remember what place we were in at the time when the first caution came out that we took rights. They pushed me. Almost a no-brainer to do something different. I wanted to have a really fast, efficient, four-tire stop, gain a couple. We were going to restart probably in the top eight. That wasn't going to be enough. Those guys are like, Hey, man, think about doing something different here.

I give a lot of credit to those guys because they pushed me in that moment to see what you're asking of that's almost the call that we have to make to get ourselves up front and to give ourselves a shot.

Once we got the final caution, we knew it was going to be a green-white-checkered, that decision almost made itself because Kyle in our code words had already called it out to me, that told me he was already going to have confidence and belief if we did it, he felt he had enough under him to go make it happen.

There was a lot that was powerful in the communication and the way that we went through that to make those calls. They were bold, but they were probably proper for the situation, and Kyle to have enough belief in it to go drive his butt off and get it done.

Q. We saw a lot of tire problems, accidents you can call it. I was a little bit shocked when I saw this. Denny Hamlin was here and said it's related to the tire pressure. With teams running on the low tire pressure, do you not see it as gambling with safety? Why is this done when it can be dangerous?

CLIFF DANIELS: Yeah, I understand your point with safety. First I have to give Goodyear a lot of credit. We've been trying to improve the product on track of tire wear, tire degradation, falloff of lap time, to be able to mix up different lanes, have guys that have tires wear out and all that sort of thing.



What we do as the teams is we try to push every area to extract the grip out of the tires that we have to do. There's several ways that you can do it: with load, with camber, with pressure. It's one of those things where the performance side of it, there's so much to be gained in what we have to push to get the performance out of 'em, that safety is absolutely a concern. The longevity and ability of your day to stay in the mix is, of course, a concern.

What's interesting to me is the run that we had a failed right front tire, we had actually come back up on air. I wouldn't put us in the category of pushing the limits of air. I was trying to be conservative and still had an issue.

Today was a really hot day. There was a lot of punishment of load and pace in the car and in the tires. I certainly don't think in any way that is a miss on Goodyear's part. I think we all knew what we were all working with coming in today. And it was hot. It was the perfect conditions set to really punish the tires, with the tire they brought, with what we had on track. That's just kind of the way it was.

It's all about teams pushing what we have to do for performance.

Q. (No microphone.)

CLIFF DANIELS: We can to a point. There was a wheel force test a handful of weeks ago where Goodyear brought this tire. All the OEMs get a chance to come test. You try to learn all you can. It's difficult to replicate the exact environment of the pace, the load, just the rubber on track, the grip level on track, what it means to have the entire Cup field here.

Plus, to your point of can we simulate it, there's a lot of numbers that we crunch of all the things that I'm describing of pace and load and pressure and camber and all those things to try to predict it the best we can. When you're living in a world where a 10th or two of a psi of air pressure can make the difference of a tire having an issue to lose inflation and you have a flat and crash or extract performance for grip, that is a very tough window.

You almost start getting into the calibration of a gauge to get it that tight of a window. That is the window that we're living in.

Q. Cliff, you told us last week at Martinsville you feel like this 5 team, after everything this year, is as strong or stronger than it's ever been. Do you take this race and leave it on repeat in the office now?

CLIFF DANIELS: I would say that we do. Gosh, if there's

one thing that we've done well this year, it's the growth mindset. You can never settle on what you accomplished yesterday. You can never settle on maybe what got you to a point.

More than ever this year, again, in sports and in life, we all have a whiteboard, whether it's in your mind or when you want to go compete or accomplish something, it's the things that aren't on the whiteboard that are the most important, the things that you don't see coming, the challenges that you have to overcome. That's what teaches you about your beliefs and your character and your resilience.

The things that were absolutely not on the whiteboard is what made the team this strong this season to be able to come here and overcome what was a pretty dismal day for a while.

There's going to be a lot of power in that message moving forward, which is your point. Something that was kind of on my mind through the summer and through the Playoffs is just continuing the growth mindset, what can we do to improve ourselves, our process, who we are. I told the team I want to be champions in life and racing in that order. If we do the life part right and take care of our families and each other and the team, hopefully the racing part takes care of itself.

That mindset isn't going to change. We're going to celebrate tonight, enjoy all the things that come from this. If we're going to do it again the next year or the year after, it's probably going to be really daggone hard, and it's going to be the things that aren't on our whiteboard that make the difference.

I don't want to miss what those things are. I want to make sure we have a team that's built to see those things and feed on those things and be better because of it.

Q. Kyle said he's chasing you and Tony Stewart, two drivers he looked up to, that have multiple championships. For you to see him now have multiple titles, he's in your organization, thoughts or emotions around that? What he said about trying to chase you and your titles.

JEFF GORDAN: Well, I have the utmost respect for his abilities behind the wheel. Couldn't be more proud of the effort that Rick put into bringing him to Hendrick Motorsports.

I've known Kyle for many, many years, watching him race Sprint cars. I always knew if you can put him behind the wheel of a Hendrick Motorsports car, he'd do special



things.

I also believe that records and championships, they're made to be broken. As long as he's on our team, I want him to win 10 (smiling).

He and I have a good relationship. I think being from California, close to one another, Elk Grove and Vallejo, the sprint car stuff. We built a good friendship.

You motivate people in different ways. He motivates himself in measuring and looking at what's the next goal, the trophy, the championship. I use it for him, too. Buddy, you got three to go. You're only at one. You got to get to two before you can get to three, before you can get to four.

We have a standing joke about, C'mon, come and get it.

I hope he gets it and plenty more after that.

Q. Jeff and for Rick, when you saw how Kyle emerged after that final pit stop, that he was ahead of Denny, did you say, We got this? Did you know, knowing Kyle, how he is, did you feel a certain, We got this?

CLIFF DANIELS: I'm curious about this answer (smiling).

RICK HENDRICK: Things were happening so fast, you know, I just thought the race was over. I didn't even know when Roger came to see me, Roger Penske, I didn't know the 12 car won because I was watching the 5 car and how they were running.

I know when there's a restart, and you get Kyle in position, he's going to be tough because he will put the car in places that other people maybe won't, and he's got the talent to drive the car on the edge.

I almost jumped off the box. I mean, I was ready to call Joe and say congratulations to Denny. All of a sudden here we are, we're going to win this thing.

I think I had one lap to think that, right, Jeff?

JEFF GORDAN: I mean, wanted to see how the lineup went. He was happy with two tires prior to that. Felt pretty confident there. There was a nice gap between he and the 11.

But you saw what Corey Heim did in the Truck Series. He was leading in the first turn, almost. Denny was so good on short runs. For him, with four tires, against the two tires, being in the inside lane, being able to have all that room, I really thought he was going to go up there and wrap the apron and be right there. Maybe not the lead, but

be right there.

Then on the launch, I didn't think Larson got a great launch. There was a bit of a gap between the 48 in front of him. I was like, Oh, no. I thought he was going to go to the middle. He went to the outside. He and the 48 were really tight.

I was watching the 5, him getting around the outside. Wasn't really even paying attention to 11 until he came off of two. I said, Okay, he's still navigating some traffic.

I've seen it since then. The 22 was down there putting a pretty good corner together. That kind of stalled out Denny until the next lap where he dove in there, knowing he was kind of running out of time. Then he bobbled in.

It wasn't until then that I felt like we got it.

At the same time with Kyle Larson, even though they're screaming in his ear, You got it, I think he still wants to win this thing. He's pounding the rear bumper of the 6 and Keselowski down the back straightaway.

I do know when we got the middle of three and four that he had it. But it wasn't until then.

Q. Jeff, what is it about Kyle Larson that if you put him on two tires and he's in that mix that he can get the job done?

JEFF GORDAN: Well, I mean, his experience in all kinds of racing, whether it's sprint car racing, making aggressive moves that work.

This year, Cliff talked about the team has been through a lot, Kyle has been through a lot, right? You think about the double, the month of May, the 600. It's the first time I saw his confidence get brought down a notch. I think it was a humbling experience.

Through all that I never saw him stop being his aggressive style. To me, when Kyle Larson has a shot at a checkered flag or a championship, he's going to give 110%. You know that now. He might scuff the wall, or who knows what might come from it, but he's come through the other end of it in a good place in his experience, victories or success doing it, that he brings that every time.

Q. Rick, Kyle has two. How many more do you see in his future?

RICK HENDRICK: I think Kyle will win a lot of championships. It's so hard. I look at Denny and how good Denny's run, and he hasn't got one. These things are



really hard under these rules to win, to win a championship.

You can win all the races, win a ton of races. You get here, have a flat tire, things can happen. A lot of these things are kind of out of your control.

I like the old system. I like locking it down a race before you go to the Finals. Sleep a lot better. It's a lot more fun.

No, it's just hard. You've got to be here. I mean, Denny had tremendous speed today. It just didn't work out. But I think Kyle can win, I think Kyle can, I think William's going to win a lot, and I think Chase is coming. He is really coming on. Alex was really good here today.

I think we're bringing four really good cars to the track. If we're there every week running in the top five, going to win races, then we're much better at Phoenix than we have been in the past. So I'm glad we're not coming here for the championship next year, though.

JEFF GORDAN: That's all I was going to add. We knew today was going to be a big challenge, but we were already getting excited about Homestead next year.

RICK HENDRICK: We want Homestead (smiling).

Q. Jeff, you had the opportunity to race Kyle when he came into the sport. Now to see him as a two-time champion, how have you seen him grow both on and off the track?

JEFF GORDAN: Oh, gosh. I mean, just since he's been with us, the maturity level. I mean, obviously he has three kids. As a father, that certainly forces you to mature quickly. I'm not saying that he wasn't mature.

When I first met him, he just kind of had one singular focus and goal: just be aggressive, win races, be a dirt racer on top of being a stockcar racer. He never wanted to give that up.

I think what I've seen now is how he embraces his teammates, the whole organization, Chevrolet, what they're doing. He's just seeing the bigger picture and his role in it and how important the other people around him are to that effort.

He engages in our meetings. I guess I thought when he came, it was -- great race car drivers can be pretty selfish. Don't say anything, Rick (laughter).

RICK HENDRICK: I'm going to tell him you said that.

JEFF GORDAN: They can be really selfish. I kind of had this impression of him coming in and being pretty selfish. You're coming into a four-car organization.

He's surprised me. He's been anything but that. He brings stuff out of the other drivers in the meeting. He's giving everything that is on his plate or mind in the meetings. That brings out that same thing in others around him. It elevates the whole organization.

That's what Rick has built as a foundation: you're only as good as the information you have, and the information sharing, the collaborations. He's really embraced that. That makes me excited about our future, not just with Kyle but the whole organization.

Q. Cliff, what is it about you, what makes you a good motivator, a good coach?

CLIFF DANIELS: Yeah, it starts with having great people around you. I know that may at face value seem like a little bit of a cliché answer.

There's always things that I look forward to find inspiration. There's so much inspiration just in walking or driving onto our campus at Hendrick Motorsports. We're surrounded by great people. We have the best boss in the world, great leadership around us. We have a lot of really good teammates, people we get to work with every day.

I'm inspired by my family, they were here just a little while ago. Not sure where they went. All those things to appreciate the world around us, the team that we have, the organization that we have. There's just a lot in that.

One of the books that we read as a team this summer was called "Acres of Diamonds." You don't need to go elsewhere to find diamonds. You can find diamonds in your own dirt. That's what we do really well at Hendrick Motorsports and the 5 team. That's not going to stop anytime soon.

Q. How did your Sunday look as far as trying to balance the four pit boxes, help, but stay out of the way?

RICK HENDRICK: I stayed out of the way and went to the 48 box. I told our guys, I've been through this before with Jeff and Jimmie, I've been through it with Terry Labonte and Jeff. They're racing each other for the championship. I said, Look, I'm going to the guy to finish the second first, I want you to know it, and then I'll go celebrate with you. I didn't want the crew seeing me going down and celebrating and they just lost.

I did that today. I stayed on the 48 box until the end. That's kind of a neutral zone. It's kind of like having multiple children. They're playing against each other.

No, it's important to our organization to show that we're impartial. We want to give them everything we have. Cliff has had his guys, his crew, read three books. I mean, I don't know how many crews in the garage area are reading books. We use a Maxwell reader every day, every conference call in the automotive group and in motorsports and all the meetings. Chad Knaus and Jeff Andrews and those guys, Jeff Gordon, Cliff. It's a well-organized group that really want to work together.

We're very fortunate to have this guy sitting beside us over here, with GM, that's doing data. His people are working hard to support us. We're very fortunate to have the kind of effort we have from Chevrolet. We get a new car next year. Jeff's told me not to get excited yet.

I think when you get to any company, it's all about people. I think they rub off on each other. To me, to see all the pit crews come across, come over, congratulate each other, the drivers, the crew chiefs. I call Blaney after Martinsville because I thought he was a class act for coming to Victory Lane. He showed up again today.

I told him, I said you're a big man to end up getting knocked out at Martinsville. Look, he won today. He still came to Victory Lane today to celebrate. Not to celebrate, but to congratulate us.

It's respect among people. Cliff's an awesome leader. Jeff and Chad. We're in the people business. I don't care what kind of business you're in, if you can get everybody to pull together and believe we're stronger together, it's hard to break that down.

Q. Cliff, you sat in here after the 2021 championship, talked about how you didn't sleep at all that year, not the Saturday night before the championship race, because of what the team had done. Has your sleep habits improved over the last couple years? How was last night?

CLIFF DANIELS: They've improved the last couple of years. It was hard to get some sleep last night. Had a lot on our mind.

Yeah, all the things you think about trying to be prepared. But I've had a few years to work on my sleep habits, so hopefully I guess by Wednesday I'll pick those back up.

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to do a special toast to Jon Edwards, a very special person in this room, everyone on

the stage.

CLIFF DANIELS: Had 'Jon' on the car today. That was cool.

JEFF GORDAN: I do want to just say thank you for everybody in this room. Jon was special to all of us. You guys had a special relationship with him. I just want to thank all of you for the support. You came to Charlotte when we had the service for him. That meant the world to all of us at Hendrick Motorsports because Jon meant the world to us.

We miss him dearly. I believe he was riding in that car with our boy Larson over here today. So thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Jon would be very unhappy this was not an 9.8% IPA. We love Jon. Congratulations to the 5 team. Jon, we love and miss you.

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