

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Ryan Preece
Derrick Finley
Chip Bowers

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by the winning crew chief and team president Derrick Finley and Chip Bowers, as well as the winning driver, Ryan Preece.

We'll start with questions.

RYAN PREECE: I think I know what you're going to ask.

Q. What is that?

RYAN PREECE: I think we'll find out. It's all good. What have you got?

Q. Listening to your radio chatter...

RYAN PREECE: Exactly, I knew it.

Q. It seemed like you had a chip on your shoulder, but in a good way; a lot of F bombs, excitement. At one point these guys are crashing, what the hell are you doing kind of thing. You're telling your crew chief to be aggressive. You say you're going to go for it. Were you driving with a little bit more of an attitude tonight than normal?

RYAN PREECE: No. I think that's just 34 degrees. Honestly, there's just a lot of passion behind me. Anybody who works with me knows I come across, I'm extremely focused to the point that sometimes it can look like arrogance.

If you know me, I'm probably -- if I have a lot of respect for you, I'm going to be one of the nicest people to you. For me, tonight starting 18th, like coming into this race it was going to be a big hill to climb.

The reason being is we were in group one, in the first part of group one. Trying to make this race was goal number one. That was the first thing I said to them.

Even though my background is quarter mile racing, I knew



it was going to be extremely difficult because the track was going to get faster and faster.

So when we accomplished that, I felt like we hit the goal. We did a lot. That's not what you want to be like as a racer. You want to talk about, Man, we got the pole, won the race, all those things.

I knew the challenge. Starting 18th, getting to 9th, having the break, pulling out, make adjustments. I got D Rock right here who does a great job. It starts raining.

To me, I don't care what type of a race car driver you are, it's 35 degrees. You don't know where you need to be for air pressure or adjustments or all these things.

When they set these race cars up, they're in for dry conditions. You work really hard to get to that level.

Yeah, there was a lot of emotions there. Obviously I'm on the good side of it right now. I'm extremely happy and proud to have had this opportunity to be holding this trophy at a racetrack that I won here 12 years ago or 10 years ago, whatever it was.

This was part of that journey, to be at the Cup level.

I've been doing this full-time for the most part since 2019. I remember I was going to, like, I'm not kidding, move back to Connecticut two years ago. The stars aligned and this opportunity at RFK came about. I remember there were nights I thought, Is this going to come together or am I just going to be another story where it falls apart in the last second?

I'm grateful that it happened because I got this guy right here. I have our entire group, which is special working on this race car.

I know, because when I build race cars, I do these things, it's not easy to build speed. You have to have passionate people behind you. That's what we have.

Going to war every single week. I'm excited about 2026. I feel like this is, yeah, a non-points race, but winning at this level is not freaking easy, so I'm proud.

That was a long-winded answer, but yeah.



... when all is said, we're done.®

Q. This is an exhibition race. It does seem like it counts for you guys, means something for this team.

DERRICK FINLEY: Yeah, no, it definitely does. Over the winter we made a commitment we're going to start winning.

We had the consistency last year, especially with the points changing the way they are, a points format. One thing last year we were lacking was wins. We made a commitment we're going to start winning.

To be able to come out the first race of the year, do that, even an exhibition race, it means a lot to us, right? We can do it, we know what we need to do it, we're going to do it. That's how we're going to do. That's how we're approaching this year. We are going to win multiple times.

Q. How important and how special does it feel to win in your first race back since after the tragedy that happened to Greg?

CHIP BOWERS: It's extremely important. I think as an organization and Ryan and Derrick have both touched on this, we're an extremely proud organization. This organization was built on the backs of Jack Roush, his commitment to the sport, his commitment to the drivers and the people in our organization.

We've had a lot of success. It's time we get back to that.

To Derrick's point, we had a meeting with the drivers and crew chiefs and myself. We talked about being bold, aggressive, and committed. The acronym meaning we're going to get back to the front.

We do it with heavy hearts. We do it with Greg and his family in our hearts, in our minds. It's been a tough few months for us, right? We've had a little bit of tragedy to deal with.

It's a real testament to the family atmosphere that we have in our organization and the collective commitment to be ourselves and be committed to one another, and Ryan exemplifies that. I don't know if there's anyone in our organization that has not got a little bit of a tear in our eye right now to be happy for Ryan for all the work he put in, to get to this point in his career.

Happy for him and his family.

It's a testament to everyone in that shop, everyone in our organization. We're pretty excited. This is one of many, which Derrick said. We're committed to having a big '26; I think this sends the message.

Q. After the green-flag run when you got the wet tires on, you were 10th. What did you learn to kind of get through there? Was it just getting physical? What did you learn? Nobody was able to pass like you.

RYAN PREECE: Good adjustments. I know as a race car driver I'm going to search for grip.

Like I said before, when we set these race cars up to go fast, they're made for dry conditions. For all of us, no matter the simulation or all the tools that every team has, when you throw a variable like that with rain tires, the conditions, wet tracks, you can't prepare for that.

As a driver, you need to adjust. You got to look for grip. You talk about dirt racers looking for grip, start searching around. There's a flipside for that. If you start searching for dry, do you wear your tires out too quick.

There is a balance. For me, I feel like Derrick, my crew chief, my team, made the right adjustments. They did the right things.

From there, it was take care of it, manage tires. That's why I feel like on those final last restarts it looked like we shot out of a cannon. That was because I had so much tire.

As race car drivers, I'm sure you guys have heard us beat this drum over and over, we want to feel like we have more things that we can do to impact our races.

My hat is off to Goodyear. It wasn't our traditional soft tire. It was a rain tire. I still feel between them, as well as the increase in horsepower today on a quarter mile with the gear that we're running, you could feel it. There was multiple times I couldn't go wide open throttle. That's saying something.

I'm excited about short tracks this year. I'm excited about all the racetracks, as Chip has said. All we've heard for the past year is how consistent we are. I hold Chris Buescher on a pedestal. That's saying something. I've raced a lot of great people, but he is one of the best race car drivers that I've been teammates with.

To be able to study with him and kind of lean on him, take some of his strengths from the mile-and-a-half stuff as well as Brad, his strengths, how methodical he is on superspeedways, I feel like our team and our organization can be really lethal this year.

We just got to keep pulling the rope in the same direction and grind it out.

Q. Ryan, racing the way you do, you make it look easy under normal circumstances. That didn't look easy at all. Can you explain once it got wet the difficulty of driving those cars, the subtle things you do to keep them straight?

RYAN PREECE: Yeah, I mean, everybody probably enjoyed my radio chatter tonight. One thing that stood out is when I said we should probably take someone's windshield wipers out off and let them drive in the rain. I do remember I got a little fiery with that one.

It's not easy. You think about it, there's a lot of mist and dirt and everything on windshields. You're battling the track, fighting the conditions.

I'm happy right now because I'm sitting here in front of you with a trophy next to me. Everything happened to go my way. There's been multiple times in the past couple years that I wondered if it was ever going to go my way.

I'm thankful it did. I'm thankful I didn't choke, and execute. That's what it comes down to. That's what separates you from other people, is execution. I've always felt like when it comes to my racing background, my short track background, that's something I do really well.

I might not have the best pace in practice, qualifying's usually a little better, definitely somewhere I can be better. When you put me in racing conditions where you have to pass race cars, be aggressive, do those things, I'm going to do 'em.

Yeah, honestly, the thing that I'm excited the most about right now after this, we're driving seven hours, New Smyrna, we're going to go race tomorrow, race Friday, Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday. I'm starting off my week pretty damn well.

Q. How much did your racing here at Bowman Gray help tonight?

RYAN PREECE: What do you think, Chip?

CHIP BOWERS: Immensely (smiling).

RYAN PREECE: I like it. Like Derrick said, for us, Derrick, have you won a Cup race?

DERRICK FINLEY: Not as a crew chief, no. Competition director, other positions, but not as a crew chief.

RYAN PREECE: There you go. I'm happy for you. I'm happy for a lot of the guys on our team. I'm happy to get Jack back to Victory Lane. There's a lot of great things

today.

Q. Looking ahead to next week, Daytona is the place where you had that scary crash. Where is your mind at going into that week?

RYAN PREECE: As a racer, Derrick, I know you and the boys are so pumped and your adrenaline is going. You probably want to work on that race car and make it fast.

For me, it's going out for qualifying night, try to get it on the pole, and keep this momentum going. When you have this good feeling, you want to harness it and keep capitalizing on it, just let it set the bar for the season, how you want to continue to be.

The people that know me from racing modifieds and where I come from, how I won races, they know my passion, they know my drive and how I hate losing more than I love winning.

I want people nationally, around the country, to see that, too. I'm looking forward to it. I know it's an exhibition. It's a non-points race. But winning is special, and it's great to feel that.

Q. Derrick, what were you thinking during his radio rant?

DERRICK FINLEY: At the start when we were riding around under caution, it started snowing, sleet and snowing, I was like, This is crazy. I was right there with him. I was mad. I was agreeing with him. I sat there and I said finally, Okay, we're going to do this. There's no point in being mad. I was like, I'm going to try to change Ryan's train of thought here.

I got him a little pep talk. I thought I made him mad because he didn't talk to me for the next 30 minutes. I think he wasn't pushing the buttons.

RYAN PREECE: I was thinking about my wife and what I was going to get for all the radio rants.

DERRICK FINLEY: At first I was just as upset bit. There's something about 32 years in being in NASCAR, something I've never done, riding around in snow. I had to change my mindset.

I was trying to help Ryan, Hey, let's go win this thing. Still a trophy, still a paycheck, let's do it (laughter).

Q. What was your guys' fuel? Some of the crew chiefs were pretty upset that they let everyone come down and pit there for fuel. What were your thoughts on



that? How good were you guys at that time?

DERRICK FINLEY: We were questioning it. We were pushing hard with the officials trying to get us to get some fuel, let us get fuel.

We felt that was a pretty extraordinary circumstance, to be out there in the rain and snow and spinning out and running all these caution laps that don't count.

Apparently they agreed eventually. We came down.

But yeah, we were going to be close. We were going to go for it. We were leading we're doing it. When they let us come down and get fuel, we were good. I was really relieved and happy, so yeah.

I do feel bad for the people who just came down and got gas. In fact, we were talking about doing it ourselves. Because we were leading, we didn't. Had we not been leading, we probably would have come down and fueled up and lost our position.

Q. I assume you're driving a modified at New Smyrna?

RYAN PREECE: I am going to drive my modified, yeah, Saturday for the Whelen Modified Tour Race Monday Tuesday, but also my super late model on Friday.

Q. You own those?

RYAN PREECE: I do. My father owns the modified. Him and I kind of own that stuff. It's been a thing we've done for a long time. The super late model I own.

Q. So you're going to drive tonight is what you're saying?

RYAN PREECE: Yeah. Oh yeah. You want to come (smiling)?

Q. I guess no time to celebrate.

RYAN PREECE: Brother, I'll celebrate in New Smyrna, Daytona. I race, man. It's what it's about. This is going to make that drive a hell of a lot better because seven hours, I figure I'll get to my house at about midnight, get to New Smyrna about 7 a.m.; we'll just grind it out, have a couple of Celsiuses, maybe some coffee. I'll sleep on Thursday night.

Q. Snow delays this race, sleet; do you want to come back here for another one or should it go somewhere else?

RYAN PREECE: Bowman Gray is special. Here is what I'm going to tell you guys: The fact that this city still came out, like we had a great crowd for 34 degrees with potential for rain. I'm sure a lot of people had to miss work on Monday and Tuesday and couldn't come out here early enough. They came out for the feature.

For me, I can appreciate that. They love racing. I think I want to go to places that want us and love racing.

Me personally, I'd love to see it back in Florida, but I'd love to see it at New Smyrna. If we're going to keep doing what we did here, which is renovating this facility. NASCAR put a lot of money into it, made it safer for the weekly racers. If it wasn't going to be at Daytona, we're going to still bring it to different venues around the country, maybe make the venues a little nicer, make it safer. Not saying New Smyrna is not safe, I'm just saying safer barriers and all that stuff.

New Smyrna is such a phenomenal short track. I think if we were not going to come to Winston-Salem, I am selfishly say I'd love to see it there.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, congrats on the win.

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