

# NASCAR Media Conference

## Press Conference

Friday, February 13, 2026

*An Interview with:*

## Chandler Smith

**THE MODERATOR:** We've now been joined by Chandler Smith, driver of the No. 38 Front Row Motorsports Ford. Crazy ending to that race. We're just going to go ahead and jump right into questions.

**Q. Run fifth through Turns 3 and 4, did you think you were going to be able to build a big enough run to get there?**

**CHANDLER SMITH:** The truthful answer is no. I thought they were just going to start wrecking in front of me, truthfully, because the 62 was extremely aggressive all night. 17 threw some interesting blocks, as well.

Yeah, it's just crazy, the seas parted, the 88 stayed committed to me, and I know everybody at the blue oval right now is smiling ear to ear because another Ford pushed another Ford to Victory Lane. We've been trying to get that to happen in the Truck Series for the past few years on an OEM standpoint. Super happy that we were able to -- myself and obviously Ty is a huge, huge testament to this win. Without him pushing us, we don't win this race.

Very, very grateful for him and very thankful for this No. 38 team. That truck that we had tonight was really fast.

Played it a lot more conservative than I usually do, especially with the new points format. The mentality for racing is a little bit different than it was with the playoff format. I think we ended up having the fastest lap tonight, we won a stage and we won the race, so I'm pretty happy. I'd be curious to see how our points accumulated once we get out of here.

**Q. Going four wide, did you know you were out front by that point, or did you need to wait on the spotter to tell you?**

**CHANDLER SMITH:** No, I actually knew because I expected the 62 to cover bottom because that would have been his best shot, but he went to side draft whoever was on his outside, and when he did, the 88 was hooked to me and pushed me straight to that hole, and I looked to my right, and they were all stalling each other out, and I just



blew past. I was like, Oh, my gosh, we just won Daytona. It was instant, just like that.

Man, I've been so close. I personally feel like I've been so close to being in such good spots. A few years ago when I was at JGR here, came really close to winning that race when Truex won. I believe I finished second or something like that. I feel like I've come so close to winning one of these superspeedway races in a few different divisions, and to finally get one, get that monkey off my back, they always say once you get that first win, the floodgates open.

So I'm curious to see if that will transfer over superspeedway racing with my career.

**Q. With the mix of people in the series tonight, guys who have never started superspeedway races before, veterans returning, all these different elements, are you surprised it was as clean as it was?**

**CHANDLER SMITH:** Kind of, but I would say this was easily the most chaotic super-speedway race I've been a part of in my career for a very long time.

Last year me and Layne were able to control this race really easily because we just went to the third lane and knew it was going to work and everybody was -- you look from last year, the year before that, the past five years, it was just a two-lane race, it was never three lanes, and it was bottom and middle.

Last year obviously we made the third lane coming in, and everyone caught onto that, and you had three lanes all night much pretty. We're not Cup racing. We don't have to save fuel. So once we get staggered three by three, it's really hard to go anywhere, truthfully.

It was a lot more challenging tonight. There was a few times we came from the back and was able to finally shuffle our way to the front. But you had to be so, so precise with your moves and your runs you were taking, try not to be too aggressive. The 77 and the 7 specifically was just so aggressive tonight.

It paid off for him in some instances, but at the end of the day, you've just got to make it to the end of these races. You've seen it tonight. You're never out of it until you get to the checkered flag.



**Q. You kind of led into it by calling it chaotic, which yes, it was, but I was curious, taking aside the winning aspect of it, was it fun behind the wheel? Because everybody I talked to on pit road, regardless of where they finished, they were smiling and having a blast.**

**CHANDLER SMITH:** It was fun. I was thoroughly impressed with how out of control I seen so many trucks tonight, how out of control those trucks were tonight, and we didn't have as many wrecks. I bailed I think halfway through the first stage specifically because I was like, these jokers are about to junk it. I want to make it to the end of this thing. And they were able to keep it all going straight. So I was pretty impressed by it.

I think that's why everybody has got a smile on their face, because everyone noticed we were all out of control and somehow kept it off each other, raced each other fairly clean, and I'm sure going back and watching the race, it was such a cool product to watch. I'm excited to go back and watch it.

We were probably a quiet dark horse the entire race in the sense of just we weren't probably making headlines. I'm glad we made the most important one, and that's sitting here in Victory Lane.

**Q. Hate to bring up a sore subject, but does the win tonight for you, does it make up for last night not going the way you wanted?**

**CHANDLER SMITH:** Truthfully, I pray a certain prayer before every race, and most of my prayers are very consistent in the certain sense of I'm always going to submit myself to the Lord's plan and whatever His will is for me. And I am a firm believer that I wasn't meant to be in the Daytona 500, 110 percent.

Once again, like I said, it's a consistent thing that I pray about is I just want to submit myself to God and His divine will for me. When I reflect back from my career from start to finish, all the trials and tribulations, all the highs I've been through, when I reflect back and look, I see God's hand, His provident hand in every single thing that that I've done, all the lessons that I've learned, even in life.

Once again, tonight is even more of a testimony. I could sit back and reflect back, you could even say this is maybe -- we didn't make it to the second round of playoffs last year, we had such a crappy first round and came down to New Hampshire in a must-win, and we finished second. And everyone was like, man, how are you not hanging your head by that?

Once again, I believe that God has a certain plan, and I'm

going to submit myself to that plan. And when I reflect to tonight, I could definitely see His hand in it. A lot of people call this racing luck. I don't believe in luck.

**Q. Chandler, the goal of every driver is to win at Daytona. Just to be able to do that is an accomplishment enough in and of itself, but to be able to do it the way you did it, four wide, coming to the finish line, something that's probably going to end up on the highlight reel here forever, how much more does it enhance the feeling of having won at Daytona and having made that accomplishment?**

**CHANDLER SMITH:** You know, when you put it that way, it kind of sits a little differently than it has, truthfully. Because it still hasn't really -- it just registered to me that we won, not how we won. All I know is the 88 pushed me to it and that's it. I keep forgetting we were four wide, and I don't know how close the finish was either.

Yeah, it's really special. To have my first superspeedway win come in a fashion like it did, especially with the highlight of how last night went, I just want to circle back to the testimony of God's hand working in my life and my career.

**Q. Have you gotten to see the replay yet?**

**CHANDLER SMITH:** No, have no idea what it looked like.

**Q. Looked like a C Fixed race, if you get where I'm going with that.**

**CHANDLER SMITH:** I don't know that that's good. I don't know that that's really that good.

**Q. People coming into this race, people talked about how stacked this lineup was. You had a bunch of Cup Series regulars, you had Tony Stewart coming back, Travis Pastrana. Does it mean a little bit more emerging from that stacked field?**

**CHANDLER SMITH:** Yeah, sure, for sure. Truthfully, my goal tonight -- don't get me wrong, I love when Cup guys come and race with us, and it was cool racing with Travis and Tony Stewart and whatnot.

But I've been laser-focused on my 38 team and focused on the goal at hand. Changing the mentality of playoff racing, how you approach each race, knowing how the playoffs are formatted so now we're in the Chase, it's just so much different.

Kind of didn't give it a lot of thought on -- the only one I really thought about was Cleetus because he started right

behind me, and I was curious on how he was going to push me.

So yeah, anyways, with that being said, the only Cup guy that I even seen really all night that was up there would be like Hocevar, McDowell and John Hunter. But it's super cool to see a Truck Series regular still win, even with all the iconic names and all the flashy titles and all that good stuff. Still cool.

I know Duke Thorson will be very, very happy. He'll say the Cup guys came down to the truck level. He's got some saying. I'm sure he's going to be pretty tickled to death about that himself.

**Q. It looked like the runs were massive tonight, bigger than normal. Is that a fair statement?**

**CHANDLER SMITH:** Yeah, I'd say so. These trucks punch such a big hole in the air. When you're consistently three wide like that, your runs are going to be ginormous because each lane is pulling each lane back constantly pretty much. It just creates such a big aero effect.

Once again, I'm going to say we're not Cup racing; we don't ever have to save fuel, so everyone is running wide open, so you're going to see those runs a lot bigger. You'll watch Sunday when people are saving fuel and they go wide open, man, that guy has got a huge run. The air is a lot different from a truck to a Cup car, but these trucks punch such a big hole like that. When you're three wide like that, yeah, the runs are going to be huge.

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