

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Denny Hamlin

THE MODERATOR: We've been joined by our race team owner, Denny Hamlin, for the second week in a row. Denny, congratulations on Tyler winning here at EchoPark Speedway. You often say that as much as you're happy Tyler is winning, it also means he beat you. So just take us a little bit through kind of your race and then also just watching Tyler win another one.

DENNY HAMLIN: Yeah, just for us personally, it's a little better day. We didn't finish in the 30s. We've had a pretty tough time getting to the finish line on these superspeedways.

But really about them, they're just doing a fantastic job right now. The drivers are doing great. The team is doing great, bringing fast cars. This is a big deal for Pinnacle, being the first time winning as a primary for them. Then to have the big dogs here from Pinnacle to witness it is awesome.

Really happy about the results. Definitely more happy than anything this week.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go to questions for Denny.

Q. I don't know if you realize this or not, but Tyler and Bubba are one-two in the points standings. What does that feel like after two races?

DENNY HAMLIN: Yeah, you know, it's very early, but it's not by circumstance. They're running up front. They're fast. Again, just doing a lot of the right things.

We're making up for lost time. Last year -- obviously we talked about last week -- we didn't have the wins that we expected as a race team, but they're making up for it right now.

It feels good certainly as a car owner knowing that you've got a couple of bullets in the gun. When the end of the race didn't go Bubba's way, you got another one there to pick it up. That certainly increases your odds of winning a lot of races when you've got multiple cars up front like we had tonight.



Q. It's not just the two wins today or the Daytona 500 last week, but even go back to last year, Bubba won the Brickyard, so you have won two of the last three majors. Is it time to start thinking of 23XI as one of the big three and now it's a big four?

DENNY HAMLIN: It's too early for that. I mean, we're many wins and championships away from that. There's no question that we're building fast cars and cars that are capable of winning week in, week out. We don't always hit the setup or things like that, but we're working hard.

This team being nonexistent six years ago is just amazing that we're able to do what we did with building this thing from scratch and now having the results week in, week out that is contending with the big guys.

Q. As Jordan said, this was a big win tonight for 23XI as a whole. This is the 11th win as an organization. Do you feel like this is an inflection point for 23XI as a whole?

DENNY HAMLIN: Well, it's just a great opportunity for them to -- I talked about it last week -- race free and be able, you know, for Tyler to get the win kind of early at Daytona. It's like he had that winless season last year. It's like, okay, now you can just kind of race free.

I saw it after we were both in that wreck that I was in. He comes out. His car is damaged, and he just starts shooting the middle again like his car is fine. It's, like, well, that's a guy that feels like he's got nothing to lose right there.

Not only that, but with Bubba being two in the standings, this gets him off on the right foot for the season. I can assure you that all drivers are looking at the standings week in, week out now. There is no, well, I'll check it ten weeks from now, five weeks from now. Everyone is looking.

It matters, and it certainly will be a good mental check for them knowing that they've got this year started off on the right foot. Hopefully that allows them both to race freely and know that they've got a few good finishes to start the year.

It's just momentum. Momentum is a big thing in this sport. Sometimes when you get it going, it's hard to stop.



Q. Have you had a chance to look at Tyler's car yet?

DENNY HAMLIN: I have, yeah.

Q. Did you think -- now that you've seen the damage, obviously there's no front fender, did you think there was any chance in the world that that car could have actually driven up and gotten it done today?

DENNY HAMLIN: Yeah, it's interesting. Aerodynamics is a very weird thing with these cars, and there are certain points of where air hits that it kind of deflects away.

We've seen in the past on superspeedways that the guys can get away with no fenders. Usually when they're tucked up behind somebody. It's usually very hard once you are out there trying to lead a pack. But I thought it was probably a good thing because it probably increased the drag enough to where he wasn't able to get too far out from the 19 there on that last lap from what I saw.

So that was either his driving, he was slowing the car down, or it just that's kind of all it had and it didn't allow him to have that yo-yo effect to let those guys get a run.

We've seen here at this racetrack, there's -- I mean, this place is carnage city. Nothing surprises me when you look in Victory Lane and a car has got no fender here.

Q. Bubba said that he'll need to take a look and see what he did wrong. How much when you're in that position, when you lose a race like this, you've done something wrong, or versus just you pick what you do and it doesn't work out?

DENNY HAMLIN: I mean, superspeedway racing is the king of hindsight is 20/20. If you knew where every car was going to go, then you would always make the right move, but you just don't know when you pull up in front of a line what that line -- how that line is going to react. Are they going to push? Are they going to shoot middle or going to go high? You just don't know.

I felt very confident that Tyler was going to do everything he could to push the 23 as much as he could to a race win. Now, he was going to probably go for it on the last lap like I would expect those two teammates to do, but one thing was going to be for sure, and that was the 45 was going to stay committed to the 23.

77 had a run coming on the outside there. Bubba just did not want to get back side-by-side and then have the 50/50 shot. He had been controlling the lanes really well the last half of the race, so he probably felt confident that if he

pulled up, he could then control the lanes like he had all night.

But people just become a little more desperate. They shoot gaps. Certainly it's always a learning moment. I don't think that -- if you are talking about who would you take in a neutral car, Bubba is going to be on the top three on a superspeedway list no matter what. He proves week in, week out on these types of racetracks that while you don't -- tonight he didn't make the race-winning move, his body of work is that he's one of the best at it.

Q. Contract year for Reddick. Are you happy that you've proven that he can still win with you, or are you, like, oh, no, other teams are seeing that he has -- potentially could be one of the top talents in the sport?

DENNY HAMLIN: I think everyone, regardless of his season last year, would always think of Tyler Reddick as a top talent. We picked him out many, many years ago for that reason. So there's no question that he's going to have a long future here.

Q. Denny, not to go to the worst part of your day, but the incident where Tyler Reddick got a little bit of damage on the front of his car was when you spun on lap I think it said 223 here. Can you explain what happened in that incident from your perspective?

DENNY HAMLIN: I need to go back and see it. I've truthfully not seen a replay. Haven't seen anything.

I felt like I got crowded by the 22 up in the fence. At that point the steering wheel got knocked out of my hands, so we made wheel-to-wheel contact at some point of this. But, you know, if that's an inaccurate take, then I think I could have it because I haven't seen it yet.

I just remember in the moment thinking I was out of room up there, but again, I need to look at it before I can really give a true feeling.

THE MODERATOR: Denny, thank you for your time.

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