

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

Sunday, March 8, 2026

An Interview with:

Jonathan Hassler

Michael Nelson

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by the winning crew chief, as well as winning team president from Team Penske, Jonathan Hassler and Michael Nelson.

Jonathan, it was a day of ups and downs. Take us through what kind of strategy you had to pull off in order to get back to the front, ultimately put Ryan in the best position to win today.

JONATHAN HASSLER: For us, most of the strategy was show up and have a fast race car. I think a lot of the passes that we made, we were able to make on track. Obviously at the end of the race we were a little bit behind the 20. We thought we were probably equal to those guys on speed. It was pretty easy for us kind of being behind to choose to do two tires there.

Yeah, our bed was kind of made. Fortunately it all worked out.

THE MODERATOR: Michael, significant win today for the organization as you complete the INDYCAR and NASCAR sweep. Talk about that from the team perspective, what that means for such an historic weekend for Team Penske.

MICHAEL NELSON: As most people know, Roger Penske does this to win races. That's what he loves to do. To give him something he hasn't achieved before, to give him race wins twice in warm-up weekend with two different series means the world to all of us.

It's really exciting to be able to pull that off today. I'm very proud of all of our people, to have both poles and both race wins. Didn't look so good for a while. These guys had a really fast race car and were able to put together the right strategy at the end and get the car back into position to win the race and execute it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Is there anything that Ryan does as a driver that makes him so good here?



JONATHAN HASSLER: Yeah, I think it's a track where there are a lot of different grooves that could come into play. I think he's really good at being able to make passes when a lot of guys can't. I think he's really good about making sure his car will run fast in places that other guys can't. That gives him clean air and allows him to make a lot of passes.

Q. Jonathan, in that last restart, did you think that Ryan was going to be able to hold off Christopher Bell on four tires?

JONATHAN HASSLER: Yeah, I didn't quite know how it was going to play out. I didn't know who was going to take two, who was going to take four. I knew in our position trying to take two as the best shot of getting a win, a good result. I knew there were other guys that did that.

When we lined up, he was seventh or eighth. We definitely had a chance. To get that caution, broke that run up and shortened it out definitely helped us a bit.

Q. The way November played out factored into your two-tire decision.

JONATHAN HASSLER: Yeah, it definitely does. We try to study everything that's happened. We try to be smart about history. Yeah, we thought there would definitely be a lot of guys. If you look earlier in the race, there were a lot of guys that successfully did two. I thought we'd have a good chance with that.

Q. Josef Newgarden came into the media center yesterday after winning the INDYCAR race, said the NASCAR guys, they better step it up. How important was it to keep the bragging rights this weekend?

MICHAEL NELSON: Yeah, no, he put the pressure on us. We had an event last night with our sponsors, all of our drivers. He definitely pushed hard on us to try to keep up our end of the bargain. We would have done the same.

We're just glad we were able to get it done, bring it home today. He had a great race yesterday. Really great for Team Penske.

JONATHAN HASSLER: Yeah, same thing. I echo what Michael said. To see those guys do well, it was a really fun



race to watch. I really like this event. There were a lot of the NASCAR guys and crew members that stayed after and watched the race, got to experience firsthand what we don't get the opportunity to see.

Great weekend for everybody, fans included. So pretty cool.

Q. Jonathan, you had a couple issues with loose wheels on pit road. Is that one thing you're going to study this week? How much does it say you were able to overcome all that?

JONATHAN HASSLER: It definitely says a lot about the speed in our race car. Obviously it's something that we've got to be better at. We're not going to be this fast week in and week out. We got to clean it up on pit road.

I said it to some other people. We made a change this year on our team. We knew we'd probably have some days like this. It's nothing that's totally unexpected. The team is fully capable. We're going to go back and study.

Our motto is to try to get better each and every day, and we'll continue to do that.

Q. The ability for you to overcome the loose wheels twice, maybe that doesn't happen at Phoenix five, six years ago. Is it the tires and the horsepower that allows you to do that?

JONATHAN HASSLER: Yeah, I think this is a track, like I said before, that has a lot of different grooves. You can run low. You can run right on the edge of the apron, you can cut down on the apron, run the wall.

Being able to do that is something that allows passing with this package and this car.

THE MODERATOR: Jonathan, Michael, congrats on the win today.

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