

NASCAR Media Conference

Press Conference

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An Interview with:

Chris Gayle

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by our race-winning crew chief, Chris Gayle. We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Obviously there was confidence and hope that the notes from last fall would apply. What did you learn?

CHRIS GAYLE: Yeah, for sure. I mean, obviously weren't as dominant last fall. We did kind of like, I don't want to say stumble into something, we tried something different that worked. You go back to having a winning event like that, go back and fine-tune on that, exploit what we think was better. We were able to do that.

I was optimistic. Practice went better than I thought. I haven't lived it that many times here with Denny. Third event here at Vegas. I have lived a lot where the balance in practice versus the balance in race were completely different, disconnected, hard to have a good practice session and a good race.

We were pretty consistent last fall. I think that was one thing that happened, is we were happy in practice, fairly happy in the race. We were able to do the same thing this time. We had short-run speed. Not to give Denny Hamlin a hard time, but that was probably where we struggled the most compared to long run speed and taking care of tires. We had that in practice. We qualified well.

Today, honestly, the adjustments we expected to have to do we were able to do. It was nice and rewarding. I got a little worried about the pit road speeding penalty. We had enough car speed to overcome it, but you can get trapped in somebody else's stuff, something happens out of your control because you put yourself in that situation.

You could see he buckled down his mistake, I'm going to make up for this one, got through traffic pretty well on that one. It's a good day.

Q. Denny gave a lot of credit to the team. What did you see from your driver as he rallied through the lost track position?

CHRIS GAYLE: Yeah, what I talked about before, before short-run speed. Last fall, I mean, I'm not going to lie, he



surprised me with that last run and how he passed Larson on the outside. He was pushing.

Typically he was more of a thinking guy, not pushing and reacting like some of those guys will, to put the car wherever it took.

Had more overall car speed, he's had more confidence to do that consistently. I think you saw that at the beginning of runs today when he wanted to go take control and lead the race.

Q. Denny has talked a lot about how difficult it was for him to get back into the groove this season.

CHRIS GAYLE: I knew this question was coming (smiling).

Q. Obviously he went through a lot of things. For you, what was it like to get back into it this year? How good does today feel?

CHRIS GAYLE: It feels great today.

Leaving Phoenix, that was probably the most dejected I've been in my life from a personal standpoint or more a business standpoint, right? I mean, I probably sat around for three days rethinking everything I could have ever done.

Then you go through those three days of where you're like kicking yourself, what are you going to do about it. You get over it. How am I going to react to this? I could let it bother me forever. That's not going to happen. I can move on, learn from it.

I don't know necessarily why it worked out the way it did. There were some decisions I made in that, some I would do different, some I wouldn't.

You have to move on. I sat around. I'm old enough now, I have a daughter. How do you want other people to think and see you that are close to you? That's how I decided.

It did take me about three days to kind of get over it. I felt horrible because Denny is going through all the things he's going through at the time, right? I can't really help it. From a personal side, I could have delivered that championship



to him. I wasn't able to do it. Now he has to go through all this.

In hindsight seeing the bigger picture, putting it all on myself. I could have made some decisions different, but...

Q. Three days?

CHRIS GAYLE: Three days of kicking yourself hard.

Q. You do have a great team with the 11 team. Your driver came back to you broken a little bit. What did you have to do to get him back?

CHRIS GAYLE: We just talked about the stuff going into the season. Really we just talked about, Okay, it didn't go the way we wanted. How do we rewrite what's coming in the future? What you don't want to do, same problem I have, same thing he's got, there's a lot of things that happened in the past, you don't want to drag them forward, create more problems for yourself.

He said he would get there. I'm not fully ready today. I could tell he wasn't locked in. We were having some conversations. I was probably ahead of him at that point. I could tell with his responses he hadn't thought about some of them.

You kind of get through the speedways, he gets through a couple of those, it starts to kind of click. We had the good run at COTA. That helped. A little better run at Phoenix. I think you see him each week getting more and more locked in. That's how you do it. You keep the confidence going.

He knows we're still bringing fast cars. Nothing's changed. He still has wins in front of him. You just let that build.

Q. The way the race was shaping up with no stoppages until the late yellow in stage three, did it affect preparation negatively, positively? What was happening with the car?

CHRIS GAYLE: No, it didn't really affect anything. You get spread out here and you can make that happen a little bit. I was a little concerned on that last run it was going to be 50 laps. We hadn't quite done that. We were seeing cords on the right front of a lot of cars.

My fear was we were going to get four to go and somebody was going to have a right front tire problem or something like that that would create another late caution that potentially we'd all come down pit road, another set of variables that might take the race out of your control.

Here you'll get some guys short pit, some guys even stint. We short pitted the first stage, then lost all that track position. We were in a position where we needed to almost evenly split to have better tires, especially with what we were seeing for tire wear on the longer runs. It kind of helped us be faster the whole time on that second stage.

THE MODERATOR: Chris, congratulations.

CHRIS GAYLE: Thank you.

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