

# NASCAR Media Conference

## Press Conference

Sunday, April 26, 2026

*An Interview with:*

## Carson Hocevar

**THE MODERATOR:** We've now been joined by our race winner, who I don't believe needs any introduction, but Carson Hocevar.

Carson Hocevar, I won't go too deep into an opening question, but just talk a little bit about what today means to you, but really what the last couple hours have felt like from your vantage points.

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** I've never been at a Cup track this long. I didn't know media people stayed this long. This is new to me.

No, it's just unbelievable. I mean, I've been no secret of being a Dale Jr. fan. Just watching him win so many races here, I obviously feel like I've put a lot of emphasis on the superspeedways. Ever since the 500, I felt like we were going to have a shot at this one. We had a shot at both of these last year. Felt like I was not owed, but I've had a lot get taken away from out of my control that at some point the racing gods were going to give me a little bit of something.

Yeah, I mean, I literally posted on Instagram, I remember driving, I don't remember exactly where, it clicked in my head, I really think we're going to win. I posted it, risked getting clowned.

Yeah, it just worked out I guess. I was so confident in our group.

**THE MODERATOR:** We're going to go ahead and go to questions. I know we have a few.

**Q. People from many years from now will be talking about your celebration. Can you take us through how long have you planned this, how did you do that, what was that?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** It wasn't clean by any means. It took me a while. I don't know if the TV saw it, but I felt like I was really close to the inside wall and I did not have that steering wheel on, so I was panicking for a second.

I've dreamt about that in the off-season. I just wanted to



have something that was meaningful for me. I mean, obviously being a Jr. fan, I remember that iconic clip, he was inside the car, helmet off, enjoying the fans going backwards.

But the fans, they don't really get to know if they hear 'em or see 'em and everything. So I had thought of just like, Man, I have really long legs, I wonder if I can hit the throttle and sit on the door and ride, just kind of see everybody. I just wanted them to get as loud as possible. I felt like they would if they could see me seeing them.

Yeah, I mean, ultimately I just wanted to make sure I soaked every bit of it in. I think I could tell you what everybody was wearing, where every seat was, where every 77 shirt was. I think I could have pointed it all out to you because I remember it so clearly right now. That means more than anything else to me, just that I know this has been a blur. I could tell you exactly just off turn four, it was like, I have it, to right now, I could tell you every second.

**Q. You were standing up?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** No, I was sitting on the door. I had my left foot... What I had to do is I couldn't get -- I couldn't twist my foot around with the steering wheel on to drop the clutch. I had to drop the clutch with the wheel off.

Sorry, Steve. Perfect. I told him a while ago he should have just become CEO over a long time ago. It worked out really well for me in this change. I'm superstitious. Can you reannounce that next week, if you don't mind (laughter)?

So I had the wheel off, I dropped the clutch, and I was hustling to get the wheel on. And I got the wheel on, turned around. So it just kind of idled for me. And then as I felt more comfortable riding on the door, I was just kind of moving the steering wheel a little bit, stayed straight. Then I started giving it gas. Yeah, that's how I did it.

I was really worried about how I was going to hit the wall and do the burnout against it. It wasn't that hard of a hit. Just burned it down. I wanted to at least burn it down next to the deal. That was the biggest thing. It took me a while to figure out how to do it. Once I did it, I haven't had a phone, I haven't seen anything, hopefully it was cool.



**Q. Some drivers would not try to think of a celebration because they feel like they jinx themselves. What is it about you that has been planning this for months?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** Yeah, well, I mean, it was just one idea. I was Luke like, Man, that's a good idea. I got to remember that, remember to do that, so...

Yeah, I mean, ultimately I've lost a lot of these and known how bad it sucks to lose. The biggest thing is I just wanted to take it all in. Like, I didn't want to ever get done with the burnout and say, Man, I wish I could just do the burnout.

I was just like they're going to be on my time, whether I'm out here burning it down for an hour. I'm glad it took me just like a minute. For me it felt like an hour out there trying to figure it out. I was going to take all the time I wanted to, enjoy I.

I felt like it was an if, not when. I felt like I wasn't jinxing myself. I was kind of putting the confidence in it. I knew we were going to do it at some point. I knew we were going to do it pretty soon.

**Q. You've lost some of these. Why did you win this one today? Why did you make the right moves and none of the wrong ones?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** The cliché is you got to lose some to win some. There were a lot of times where I felt like we got taken out leading or up front and I didn't even know if we were going to make the right move or not. I felt like there were a lot of days last year that were good enough to win. I didn't get to the end to see if I was going to lose or win.

I wanted a few more shots. Obviously the 500, I think I've ran that back about a thousand times in my head. Was pretty confident the next superspeedway I went, to Atlanta, big superspeedway we went to, that we were going to do it and take it back.

**Q. You've been a NASCAR fan from way back. Surely you've imagined what it's like to win a race, go to Victory Lane. How did reality match up to your dreams?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** I mean, it's just everything I thought of. Yeah, just means a lot. Just to see how excited everybody was on my team. It just takes a lot to race at this level and everything.

It really does mean the world. I've dreamt about this. It feels like I'm really living the dream that I dreamt and

thought of and daydreamed, everything in between.

But now it's all, like, getting clear. Everything was kind of blurry. I didn't know the faces, what it was all going to look like. Now it's kind of all cleared out. All the bodies are there, now I just have faces to put it to, reactions and everything.

**Q. You said you've played back the final lap of the Daytona 500 plenty of times. Three-lap restart with three laps to go, was that in your mind then?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** Yeah, I mean, it was. I feel like I visualized winning ever since we rolled off pit road with 40 to go really. There's a lot of times I've visualized what it's going to feel like and everything.

Then I stop myself and say, no, I got to stop. I'm getting too far ahead. For whatever reason today, I never said that. I just, like, kept thinking bit. Every caution, I literally thought about that we are going to win, what it's going to feel like after, what I'm going to do, what it's going to be like. I literally thought it the whole time. Maybe I should have started doing that a while ago. Shouldn't have stopped myself, maybe we would have won.

Yeah, I was just so confident realistically. I thought these superspeedways reward the best team. I think we have one of the best teams that executes on all levels. If we hit it right, I think we're always up front. There was every a doubt in my mind.

**Q. Have you heard from Cleetus yet?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** No, I haven't had my phone. I mean, I was pumped that he ran second and had a shot to win. That really would have burned it down if we both won.

Yeah, how awesome. I'm sure I'll talk to him.

**Q. Is there any other team in this garage beyond Spire that would let you grow up the way that you have as publicly all the blemishes along the way? Any other organization that would let you do it, do it as I think Luke called you, unapologetically yourself?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** You know Jeff (smiling). His whole company lets Jeff be Jeff, so he's got to let me be me. I think that's the best way to put that.

Yeah, there's a reason that I love him and I love everything. The reason everybody's coming into the building is because of him. Dan Towriss and Cassidy, everybody, to allow Jeff to run the show basically on getting the best cars and people and everything.

Yeah, he's told me a thousand times that you just got to let myself see if the burner is hot and see if I burn my hand. I'll figure it out eventually. It took 91 races to figure that out.

I'm just so happy it was him climbing through the window to congratulate us.

**Q. Your top 10 in points.**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** Are we? Holy shit.

**Q. Eighth.**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** Damn, I was pissed we didn't get stage points in stage one. I'm not so mad anymore. I was so mad.

**Q. What is the ceiling this year? Do you feel like you are on the trajectory that you mapped out for yourself where you should be each year?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** I do, yeah. I mean, honestly, like, it's crazy to say, I feel like I've been reliving the same trajectory as my Cup three years. This has felt almost similar, same sort of team, level, and everything when I was first walking in. I just felt like I watched Niece grow up and get to where it was when it started winning races. Now I'm at Spire at the different level.

That's what I just kept telling myself. It all felt so familiar. I just moved garages, reset the career mode, basically, or season or whatever on the video game. Jeff and I always joke about that, we're in the video game. When you're a kid, you might have the custom car, race it up there with -- most of the time easy level is pretty low. Yeah, you're just in the video game. We finally did it today, so...

It's so cool (smiling).

**Q. Dickerson says one more win, he's letting you race Tulsa?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** He did say that. It's on the record. Heather is shaking her head yes. I need one more (smiling). We'll just do it next week, sure (smiling).

**Q. You said in Victory Lane you felt like the weight of the world had been lifted from your shoulders. The way Jeff sees it, he wants to make you the centerpiece of Spire. He thinks you can be a champion in two years. Not a lot of pressure, but you just seem to roll with it.**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** Yeah, I mean, you can't do everything they're doing and then, number one, be shocked if it happens, or two, be not confident in it.

When they're hiring people or convincing sponsors to spend more money, convincing Dan to spend more money, whatever, you have to actually believe it yourself; otherwise, you're just selling nothing really. If you don't believe it, nobody else is going to.

I think Jeff truly believes we can make a championship organization out of this. I mean, that's why we're all here. That's why we're all living it. We believe it ourselves. This isn't a shock to any of us. Everybody says they want to win, but we truly believe ourselves.

**Q. Does his belief help your confidence?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** Yeah, I mean, we're each other's heroes almost in that. When he gets down on himself, I tell him to go watch Sprint cars. When I get down on myself, he tells me to go watch dirt late models, then we talk about Cup racing after.

It's just so fun (smiling).

**Q. I don't know if you're a religious man or watched "The Office" at all. Coming out of turn 14, could you feel God in the Chili's car tonight?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** I mean, a little bit. I'm starving. I could use some Chili's right now. I love "The Office." I just felt like a thousand pounds laid off me. I don't even remember. We were all probably keying up. I was just yelling, I was so happy.

**THE MODERATOR:** We have someone who called in to ask you a question.

**CLEETUS McFARLAND:** Brother, it's Cleet. I'm so proud of you.

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** Thank you, brother. I appreciate it.

**CLEETUS McFARLAND:** Dude, you drive that thing to the front every weekend. I knew it was coming. I knew you were going to do it. You drove your tail off. We're all so proud of you. Great job.

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** Thank you. I really appreciate it, Cleetus. I hope you were jumping on the wall or wherever the hell you were. I hope you were jumping up like I was yesterday. I mean, you're going to win one soon.

**CLEETUS McFARLAND:** I was screaming. I was



screaming. Then the burnout, immaculate, brother, immaculate.

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** I just realized, I literally did the celebration riding on the door at LeMulleys. Oh, my God (laughter).

**CLEETUS McFARLAND:** You're the man, dude. Great job. Congratulations.

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** Appreciate it, brother.

I'm such an idiot. I forgot about that. I did that.

**Q. I don't know if you could hear it from your car before you got out and sat on the door, but almost instantaneously the crowd went berserk when you took the checkered flag. You were a Dale Earnhardt Jr. fan growing up. You know how the crowd reacted to Dale, Cleetus yesterday. You only get that level of noise and enthusiasm for a select group of people. Why do you think it is that you connect with the fans, in general, to the level?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** I don't know. I mean, I'm just me. A lot of race fans, they probably always dream of racing. Maybe they vicariously get to drive through me. I'm online a lot, in the stands. I'm just me. I'm not playing a character, I'm not acting for anybody.

I know how much the race fans mean. It means a lot. I feel like in racing there's a lot of times there isn't the buzzer-beater moment or whatever. It's just a long marathon that a lot of times doesn't get that crowd pop. Here that obviously shows up a lot because there's a lot of different moving parts.

There's going to be a lot of pictures and videos. If there's a video of how loud the crowd got, that's going to be the one that I cry to, just enjoy it. Like, that's what means the most to me, is just that people spent money to be here, and I did something that got them to yell and cheer or throw something.

That would be the coolest thing.

**Q. When was the first time you heard the crowd?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** The first trip backwards. I really heard them when I was on the door. I think they got louder when I sat on the door and everything. Yeah, I'm just so happy I did that.

I'm going to be on my phone all night just watching this stuff.

**Q. You talk about being a Dale Jr. fan, watching the celebrations growing up. What do you think about the idea there's a kid watching today, you're who they're going to base what they're trying to do on, their racing career, maybe even they end up racing against you someday?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** Yeah, that's just the coolest thing. Yeah, I mean, I'm just going to say it's the coolest thing. It really is. It just means so much to me.

It's just going to be a really full-circle moment for me. Hopefully in 20, 30 years there's a picture of me next to some kid in the grandstands or somewhere, now I'm racing him, then I feel old and everything. I'll probably be mad at how they race and everything because I'll be old and washed up.

But no, it means a lot. It's going to be the coolest thing. Races like this hopefully propels that length of years a long time.

**Q. Back to the window ride. Are you aware of the parallel to Dale Earnhardt in 1986 sitting on the windshield?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** Yeah.

**Q. Was that intentional?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** No, I didn't even think of that till now. No, I didn't even think of that till now. I just really wanted them to see me. When I'm in the car, especially high up, they don't know that I can see them. If I'm literally looking and pointing at them, it's pretty obvious.

**Q. Any chance we might see this become a signature celebration or a ban?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** I don't know. Steve, is it banned? Perfect.

**Q. The celebration, you're going to be from now on every single Talladega race in those clips, those commercials, highlights. How does it feel not only getting this win here but adding to the history becoming a mascot for Talladega at this point?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** That's going to be so cool for me. Like, I mean, that's stuff I dream about. Anytime I'm at a racetrack, there's history on the wall...

I remember the drivers meeting, there was a picture of me walking out at Martinsville for .1 seconds. Oh, my God, I

made the drivers, the hype the reel, whatever was on the drivers meeting day. Oh, my God, I made it for .1 seconds.

Yeah, I think about that stuff all the time. I want to do well enough to be a part of that.

**Q. I asked Luke his perspective on this as a gristled veteran. When you are dealing with so many gut punches over the last few years, what is it that keeps you guys pushing forward, not getting angry at each other, frustration? Just the overall confidence?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** I just think we had so much faith in each other. It's not the human factor that we weren't winning. It's parts or little things that we could fix.

Everybody on our road crew is the same as before I walked in. The car that was 33rd in owners points when I was walking into it, it's all the same. The only thing that changed is crew chief, spotter, driver. We added an engineer, too. Like, nobody left. Nobody's left since I walked in on that car. Nobody's left since.

It means a lot for me in terms of, like, I must not be hard to deal with, or too hard, that none of 'em left. But they all believe in each other.

We've had so much faith in each other, I don't think we've ever pointed a finger at any of us. We've always said we can get our cars better, we can communicate better, we can go to pit practice more. It doesn't matter, we were going to take care of it.

**Q. In Victory Lane you mentioned your grandparents. Tell us a little bit about what that win meant for you and your family.**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** Yeah, it meant a lot. I've never really lost a family member, so it was difficult for all of us really to lose my grandma. Grandpa stayed around. It's funny, I mean, he's still like it's the first day she's gone. Just loves her so much. It just means a lot.

You never know how long they're going to last after the first one, right? It seems like that comes up very fast especially with how much they rely on one another.

I wasn't going to say the time was clicking, but the days weren't getting any younger. I just really, really wanted to make sure my grandpa got to see it.

**Q. Chili's, your sponsor. When is that trip coming and what is the order going to be?**

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** It's excited. I don't drink, but I'll

have a Presidente I guess now. I'm excited. I'm going to have to apologize to them after why there's burnout marks in front of the Chili's.

Yeah, I'm just going to get everything on the menu. They can afford it, so...

I'm so excited.

**THE MODERATOR:** Carson Hocevar, thank you so much for joining us.

**CARSON HOCEVAR:** Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it. It means a lot.

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