

# NASCAR Media Conference

## Press Conference

Sunday, May 3, 2026

An Interview with:

**Jeff Gordon**

**Alan Gustafson**



**THE MODERATOR:** We'll begin our post-race pressers. We're joined by vice chairman at Hendrick Motorsports, Jeff Gordon. Jeff, this is the second win for the team and Chase this year, and Hendrick Motorsports has accounted for four of the last six wins here at Texas Motor Speedway.

Take us through what this team stresses as y'all come into this track and ultimately the success that y'all have found as of recent.

**JEFF GORDON:** You know, I feel like at Vegas and here at Texas our notebook is strong because of the success that we've had that you mentioned. That kind of gets you about three-quarters of the way there. I don't want to complain about the fact that we still feel like we have some work to do, because the 9 just performed flawlessly today.

Their car was really strong, and I felt confident if they got the track position that they could control, you know, the field and the race, and they did that. Just a great team effort, though.

So many correlations I feel like to Martinsville in the way of just the way the team executed. Great pit stops, great strategy to get the track position and the car and driver to do it once they did. Yeah, this was good.

Then, of course, Alex Bowman, obviously this has been a tough year for that team and for Alex. To have back-to-back top 5s is fantastic. Some great momentum there as well. I thought he looked good. The car looked good. He looked good. And a great fight for the 24 as well to get eighth. They were not great today.

That's where I say I felt we have some work to do. The 24 was not great. The 5 was not great. Hopefully there's things we can learn from the 9 and the 48 and keep working hard on that. But overall just super happy with the way that Chase and Alan and this 9 team are performing right now.

**THE MODERATOR:** We'll open it up to questions.

**Q. During your driving tenure, you had really good**

**seasons that were, like, in two different ways and that you had super consistent years where you were top 5 in points and you had seasons where certainly a lot of wins too. I think the 9 team with Alan, even with you dating back then, has had similar seasons too. I'm curious what does it do for the moxie of a team to do it in terms of winning in some pretty statement wins compared to just the nickel-and-dime, top-5 them to death?**

**JEFF GORDON:** Consistency helps because you're not trying to reinvent the wheel. You're fine-tuning. You're, like, hey, we're good. We need to be better. Let's keep working these areas, because we must be doing something right. At least the consistency keeps you in kind of a flow and a direction that I think you can build on and only get better. But if you don't win every once in a while, like I've always said, if you don't win every eight to ten races, man, just the hard work drains you, the whole team, driver, team, everybody, pit crew.

You got to have these victories, these mini-victories. It could be on pit road. It could be leading laps. It could be not just a win of a race, but those race wins are so critical I think to a team's season and success because that builds the confidence to another level that not only are we heading in the right direction, but we're capable of winning it all.

If you win on a consistent basis, then again, that's what adds to a championship-caliber team. You know, right now the 9 team, I mean, I think they have -- we've been up against the Toyotas this year and the Fords at some other places, and yet that 9 team has performed at such a high level as a team that that's just kept them in the game and given them the opportunities to capitalize at Martinsville and here.

I just hope this can now help us move forward and continue to build on getting stronger.

**Q. I'm just curious if you can expand on the dilemmas or sort of the balance of what you guys are showing with the win here and what you guys still have to work on, because you know, on the one hand, it's like, oh, this could be a place where Toyota dominates, and then you come in and win the race. It's like, well, I guess the new car is great, everything is great, but like**

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**you said, there's still areas that lack speed. Do you feel like you guys are right there? I mean, it's weird to say. You just won a race. I don't want to say you're off, but what's the level of where you want to be? How close is that margin right now?**

**JEFF GORDON:** Certain tracks I think we're further off than others. Today I didn't feel like the 9 team was off. Now, again, remember, you lost the 20, you know, the 19 and the 54. Those were three of the best cars out there. 19 had that damage on pit row. Two of the best cars, to go along with the 11, you know, weren't in the field at the end of the race. Take that and put that off to the side.

You know, it's all the above. It's wind tunnel. It's CFD. It's on-track looking at, you know, the data that we get every weekend says from on-track, our drivers' feedback, our engineer, crew chief. It's everybody just looking at where are we strong, where are we weak. We just look at the corner speed, and we've not had it at certain tracks, the Darlington, let's say, of the world.

I still think there's tracks that we need to get better at as a team, and then there are things we can do to make the car -- it's primarily aerodynamics, but there's always mechanical things that go along with that.

We just feel like the Toyotas came into the season really hot, and they did some great work over the offseason. I want to give them credit. We had a lot of change-over with the new car. We're searching and finding what's going to work, and some tracks it works good, some tracks it doesn't. Sometimes it's good for one of our drivers the way he likes the car to be balanced, and sometimes it's not.

I'd like to just see the consistency on the different styles of tracks for us to improve on and just have the security that the drivers want to push the limits of the car.

**Q. You alluded to Alex getting momentum building. You have seen it over the years, whether it's you yourself or with Junior to overcome adversity when it comes to all of that stuff. How gratifying is it to see him just clicking all of a sudden knowing the challenges he's gone through?**

**JEFF GORDON:** Yeah, I mean, I can't put myself -- I've never had to overcome the adversity he's had to overcome. Before he ever got to NASCAR, you know, he's gone through some tough things mentally and physically from driving for a team that had to close shop to getting a ride at Hendrick Motorsports and Dale Jr. praising him and then getting injured and some of those things.

I think it goes to show you the resiliency and strength that

he has. I almost think he thrives sometimes when he's down. He's a fighter. I think these last few weeks -- not just the last two -- when he's gotten back in the car has shown what he's made of as a human being.

For him, Chloe, his fiancée, and their life that they're building; and then this team, for Blake Harris and everybody on there, they needed a spark, and it's nice that they've gotten that. It's one thing to do it at Talladega, but it's another thing to do it where you've got to have grip and speed and execution and good restarts, all those things.

I think this one really means a lot to them.

**Q. Jeff, you're into May now. How many cars do you think consistently have a good shot to win a race on a given race day?**

**JEFF GORDON:** 12 (laughing). I don't know. I'm totally guessing. I have no idea, because track position is so important. You know, you get that clean air, you have -- like today we saw it get jumbled up a little bit with some strategy and some cautions that allowed people to get two tires or four tires. All it would have taken is a few more of those things and, who knows, the 67 might have won today. I would have never put him in a category of that caliber, but it can happen.

It's hard to really put a number on it. It depends on the track as well. But, you know, there's a lot of strong teams that are very competitive, and this series is competitive, but these cars are very close. I still think the best teams rise to the top. And so if you asked me about that, I would say that number gets lower because of full-team execution. It starts to separate you from your pit stops to the fine details. So that number might get a little bit smaller than that.

**Q. This is the track that Alex got hurt the first time in '22 and had the concussion and stuff. For him to come back and get third today, he was talking about, hey, I passed some people in points maybe. What does he have to do for the rest of the season to kind of prove that he is back in your eyes and Mr. Hendrick's eyes and things like that to prove that he's got what it takes to continue racing in this ride or even if he moves somewhere else to continue at this level of Cups?**

**JEFF GORDON:** I mean, just continue to improve and contribute the way he has been, which goes deeper than just results. It's all about the feedback that he has throughout the race, throughout the race weekend, Monday debriefs. He's doing all those things.

Alex is a great guy. He's been a great asset to Hendrick. He's had some misfortunes that were out of his control, but

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we think the world of Alex. He's like family to us.

We just want what's best for him and what's best for the team right now, and that's where our focus is.

**Q. After the race with Alex's third-place finish, you were there with the crew members. You were high-fiving. What were some things you were telling the pit crew guys? If you got to talk to Alex, what did you tell him after the race?**

**JEFF GORDON:** The fun part about my role now, I don't get behind the wheel, I don't drive the cars. The fun part for me now is seeing these guys -- seeing guys like Alan, the behind the scenes of the effort they put into it, the struggles that they have, the challenges that they face and overcoming those.

Nobody has faced bigger challenges than that 48 team and what they've been through. To see them smiling and happy and building something and building some momentum, I love that. I love being a part of that and seeing that happen.

**THE MODERATOR:** We are now joined by the winning crew chief of today's race, Alan Gustafson. Jeff, appreciate you coming in. Congrats on the win. We'll go straight to questions for Alan.

**Q. Throughout the course of the race, what were you trying to do track position-wise to make sure you were able to stay up front there with the various calls and the timing of you guys coming in?**

**ALAN GUSTAFSON:** Yeah, I mean, obviously get it and keep it. It wasn't super straightforward today with where the cautions fell. The proximity of the stages and then knowing, you know, really the first one for sure, I was a little surprised on the second one, but that guys were going to sell out to get some points. That can always be really treacherous.

You have to kind of do what you think is right to win the race, and you can't have everything. That was really my mindset through those two calls, is just doing what I felt like was going to put us in the best position to win.

Yeah, doing that sometimes, it puts you in some -- a precarious spots like today. You start behind guys that really haven't been up front on older tires, and certainly they're capable, but you just never know how that's going to go.

I think that was a big part of the race for us, because we ultimately worked that traffic really well. Chase did a great

job of getting through that traffic really faster than I think the 45 and the 11. I don't remember exactly who we were racing specifically for the lead at that time, but I do know he got through there a little better than they did, and that was probably the difference.

**Q. How tough is the final call when you have the lead and you know there's only going to be four or five laps to go, and there's probably going to be guys behind you on tires?**

**ALAN GUSTAFSON:** Yeah, it's super tough. I think you're just -- everybody is going to get an opportunity to see you show your hand, so that's what really makes it hard. I think in this situation, you know, I feel like the 11 and some of those guys who stayed out legitimately -- and they could. You know, they knew they had a shot to win. We didn't have a huge performance advantage to where they were going to do the opposite.

It's tough because ultimately the decision being right or wrong is very dependent on what your competitors do. I think in this situation it was a little easier just because we had got so far close to the end of the race, and track position is such a huge deal here, but it's tough.

I've obviously been on both sides of that a lot. You know, some of the times you feel the best about it, it doesn't work out; sometimes when you don't, it does. Super happy about it today.

**Q. Did you realize it worked out once you saw how many people stayed out?**

**ALAN GUSTAFSON:** I did besides clearing the 11. I think we had to clear the 11. Maybe not in one and two. We had to be able to run, you know -- I feel like if we could have drug down into three and four with him side-by-side, we would have been in good shape on the bottom. But, yeah, getting the 11 cleared was key.

Yeah, really nice to have Alex third. He obviously did what he can do to win the race, but you know he's at least going to give you a good shove down in there.

**Q. You're third in points. I'm curious --**

**ALAN GUSTAFSON:** How far back are we now, Bob?

**Q. You're 117 back, but I think what's bigger is that you are 79 -- looks like you're 79 up on seventh.**

**ALAN GUSTAFSON:** Nice.

**Q. Are you looking at how far back you are from**



**potentially trying to win the season title versus trying to be top 5, top 6, top 7 in the standings at the end of the regular season?**

**ALAN GUSTAFSON:** Yeah. Both, right? We want to get all we can get. Yeah, you want to stockpile points. I do feel like the spread is going to reset pretty tight, right? When you get, what is it, 100 and -- how much is it from 1st to 16th? That's a difference between first and second right now, isn't it? 100? Close to it? Yeah.

It's all going to tighten up a lot.

**Q. (Off microphone.)**

**ALAN GUSTAFSON:** I don't agree with that at all. How many races -- how many races have we run? Okay. Do the math, right? After ten, Tyler Reddick had over a 100-point lead. Theoretically, if you repeat those races, he could start 16th and win the championship, right? So I think anything is possible.

I do think, look, everybody wants as many points as you can get. Certainly the best teams are going to position themselves towards the top. I'm not sleeping on anybody. I mean, somebody can figure something out and get hot. I don't think 100 points makes anybody safe.

**Q. It seemed like a lot of teams were having trouble on pit road today getting in and out of their pits. Was there something that was going on? Is that a call -- that close there at Texas, is that a crew chief call coming in when it's entering into the pit and exiting out of the pits?**

**ALAN GUSTAFSON:** Yeah. So, first off, to address the issues, right, pit selection has a lot to do with that. Then you have varying strategies. I think you have to be very cognizant of when you have varying strategies. Specifically I know the 19 and the 5. I've obviously paid attention to that, and I was watching that. They showed it on TV quite a bit.

There was a big gap. In that instance the crew chief -- I would say, hey, how far back is the 5? And ultimately, if I'm doing right, if he's going to be six seconds back on track, then you know you need to watch them.

Sometimes you can have a cordial enough relationship with whoever that car is that you can make some agreement and say, hey, I'm doing rights, can you let me out? I don't know the details obviously of that. I hate that happened to both of them, but that's what happens. You have varying strategies, and you have big spreads and guys that are pitted near each other.

I'm going to assume on Joey. That sucked. I'm assuming he left his box and looked down to get his pit road speed, and the 41 was parked there. That's what it looked like to me. So, yeah, I hate that. I hate the danger that presents to pit crew members too. I think that makes the case for pit road speed limit personally, but that one to me caught my eye because it's scary when there's a bunch of guys jumping out there.

**Q. Being crew chief for the most popular driver, you get probably the most pressure of any crew chief in the garage. When a call doesn't go right, you hear about it.**

**ALAN GUSTAFSON:** I don't, but...

**Q. You don't. You don't see anything about that?**

**ALAN GUSTAFSON:** No.

**Q. Do you even think about that in those final few laps?**

**ALAN GUSTAFSON:** No, no, I don't. Yeah, I think to steal a quote from David Goggins, "You'll never find a hater who can do it better than you can." That's the way I look at it. Look, I do everything I can to help this team be successful and win. That's what matters to me.

When I go to bed at night, I know the effort that I've put in, I know the effort the team has put in, I know the reality. People are always going to have an opinion. Unfortunately, I think in a lot of cases there's platforms for people who really don't know what they're talking about that voice their opinion and get people to listen to it.

I'm super fortunate to work for HMS, and I love Chase to death. We have a great relationship and a great team. I just do the best I can, you know, and the rest is going to take care of itself.

**Q. This track is notorious for eating tires. How did tire management work out at this track today and factor into your win?**

**ALAN GUSTAFSON:** Yeah, I think tire management, it's not too bad. I think the bigger story on the tires for me was ultimately just hitting the strategy right on two or four. I think that was a big deal for us, and we did that when it mattered.

Then, yeah, having a car that was good on a long run, which also helped us out and a balance that would stay consistent. I think we got that better throughout the day.

Really the best it was was the last two runs. So really happy about that.

**THE MODERATOR:** Congrats on the win, Alan.

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