

# Purpose: How Kyle Busch, Joe Theismann and a Strong Faith Add Up to Success in Life

*Joe Gibbs is well-known for his role as head football coach (leading the Washington Redskins to three Super Bowl championships) and NASCAR team owner (also three championships). But he also is a writer and speaker. He will be doing the latter of those two at the SSA's Spring Conference & Trade Show in Charlotte. Here is an example of the former, an excerpt from his latest New York Times best seller Game Plan for Life.*

Don't you want to be proactive and live with passion, rather than sitting back and letting life happen to you? Maybe that's even why you're taking the time to read *Game Plan for Life*.

Many people ask me what makes one [race car] driver better than another. Here's the way I see it.

A lot of people want to drive race cars. Some kids are fortunate to get into a position where they can start working their way up through the racing ranks. Usually, it starts at go-kart races, where you'll often see parents supporting their kids. As in football and other competitive sports, as drivers progress up through the ranks, they get weeded out. Finally, there's a group that winds up getting to race the NASCAR Cup Series—only forty or fifty drivers at any one time.

Once a driver is racing at this level, he's reached the top. But even within this group, only a few gain the admiration of the other drivers. These guys are competitors and want to be the best of the best. Just as a good number of players finally make it into the NFL but only a handful make it to the Pro Bowl, a lot of drivers compete in the NASCAR Cup Series, but only a small number each year will end up in the Chase for the Championship.

Most drivers get better with practice and experience, but only a few are truly gifted. Take Kyle Busch, the driver of our #18 car sponsored by Mars Candy (M&M's) and Interstate Batteries—he's got talent like few others. Recently, another team owner,

who's been in NASCAR longer than I have, said "Joe, I've got to tell you, Kyle Busch is the best I've ever seen."

It's true that Kyle is gifted. But I see a lot more than that in him.

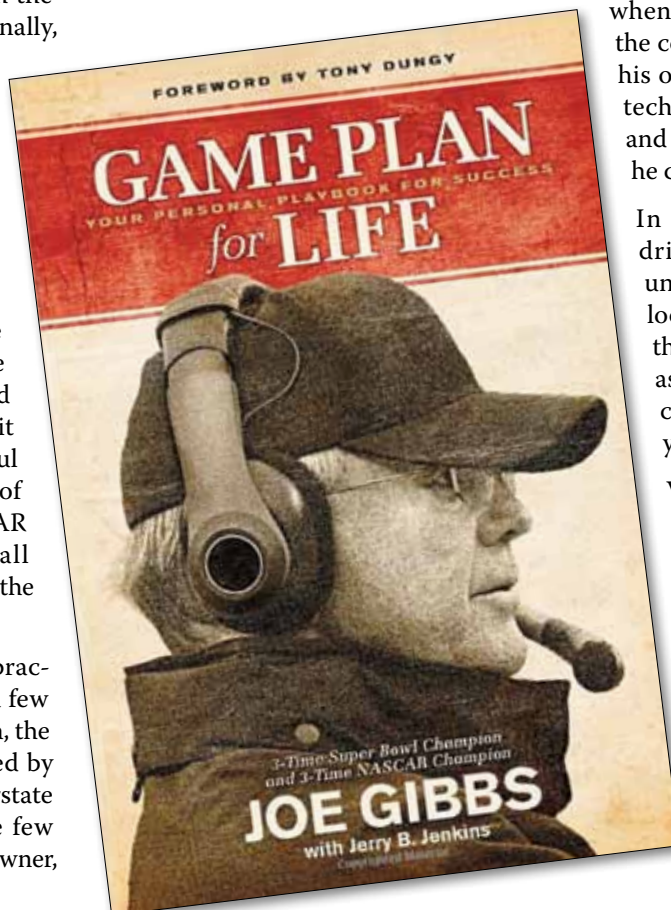
Kyle is completely focused. He has built his life around racing, with few other distractions. He owns a number of late-model cars that he also races; so if he's not at a NASCAR race, he's racing one of them. His dad works on late models with him. His girlfriend goes to the races. All Kyle wants to do every night is be in a race car, and he's arranged most of his life to do just that.

Kyle is very, very bright, as well. He knows his car and exactly what it needs to have the best shot at winning. Before a pit stop, he'll tell crew chief, Steve Addington, "I need a pound of air in the right front and we need to come off of the spring in back." We can't put technology in a car during a race to tell us those things—that's a NASCAR rule—so Kyle, in effect, becomes the onboard computer. He takes in the data—the racing environment, the feel of the car, his position in the race—and offers Steve solutions that will make the #18 car more competitive.

Kyle is also like a test pilot when he's in the car. He's got the courage and confidence in his own abilities to push that technology to the very edge and get every ounce of speed he can from the car.

In NASCAR, if you are driving a car "loose," it is unusually fast. But driving loose can be a challenge to the driver. A loose car feels as if the rear end is going to come out from underneath you.

When testing our Cup cars, we put sensors on the car to let us know how many degrees a car is loose. We've seen Kyle go way beyond what the average driver could manage. During time trials at one race, I heard one of the top drivers ask another driver "How can Kyle



do that?" Pushing the envelope is just part of what makes him great.

Kyle's got the gifting, the brains, the courage and the drive to compete in the top ranks of NASCAR. His purpose is to win every race.

His focus and determination remind me of Joe Theismann, the Redskins quarterback during my first stint as head coach.

I'll always remember one particularly miserable game against our longtime rivals, the New York Giants. It was sleeting, and Joe had thrown three interceptions in the first half—in addition to being sacked hard a few times. Right before halftime, we called a time-out, and Joe came over to the sidelines to talk about our strategy for our two-minute drive. He was literally spitting out blood and teeth. His two front teeth were gone.

If it had been me, I probably would have decided to sit out the second half. Not Joe Theismann.

In the fourth quarter, we were down by two points and the weather was

getting worse. By this time, it had become a virtual sleet storm. Joe engineered a drive that took us down the field and put us in field goal range. Mark Moseley kicked the game-winning field goal into some of the worst weather we have ever played in (and in the process set an NFL record for consecutive field goals made).

When people quiz me about Joe Theismann and what a great player he was, I don't think of the Super Bowl plays he made. I reflect on that miserable day and his second-half play that proved how tough and determined he was.

Joe's purpose was to lead the team to victory.

In professional sports, talent, focus, determination and passion help create a sense of purpose. But when it comes to playing the game of life, we need another critical component as well.

Recently, the racing community attended the funeral of a beloved friend, Max Helton. Max had been a pastor before he founded Motor

Racing Outreach, an organization that provides pastoral care to the teams and racing community at several hundred motorcycle, power boat and NASCAR races each year. It was hard to see Max suffer from cancer and finally pass away, but I was struck by something unusual that happened at his funeral.

Max was widely known, and many people were interested in speaking at his service. It was a fitting tribute to Max, but it made for a long service. Toward the end, they introduced the chaplain of my son Coy's motocross team, a young man named Steve Hudson. Steve bounded onto the platform with energy, and when he began with "Hey!" everybody sat up a little straighter.

What really got our attention was when he stood over Max's casket and said "Every single one of us is going to end up right here some day. The question is: What are we going to do between now and then?"

This is where a life of purpose comes into play.

*See Game Plan for Life, page 19*

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**Game Plan for Life**, from page 17

Steve was saying that you need to live a life of purpose, and that includes having a view of the endgame. You've got to know where you're going in order to get there.

Don't be like I was, investing in real estate schemes just to try to get ahead; fretting over job opportunities rather than just giving my career up to God. It's all about priorities and pursuing life with a purpose.

One of my favorite stories, when it comes to the issue of what we're doing with our lives, is the one where the disciples of Jesus had been fishing all night and had caught nothing.

Remember that? From the shore, Jesus tells them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat; and when they do, the nets are weighed down with fish.

Now think about that. These guys were full-time, lifetime fishermen with the best boat and the best equipment and they knew that body of water. Do you really think they hadn't fished both sides of the boat that night? I bet they had!

What that story says to me is that no matter how good we are at what we do, or how well we think we can handle life on our own, if God's not in it, we're going to wind up with a big zero. If we put God first, then we've got a chance to fill the nets to the breaking point.

Do you have a passion and determination about your life? Are you focused on playing the full sixty minutes in the game of life? As a coach and a race team owner, I've always emphasized a fast start to the season to instill confidence. Then I wanted the middle part of the season to set us up for a strong stretch run. I want to be consumed with storing up treasures in Heaven as I strive to finish well. ❖



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See page 43 for information about the SSA Conference & Trade Show with keynote speaker Joe Gibbs!

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