

From ADUSA Appreciates to “I Do” at Talladega

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Talk about a winning streak! When E-Commerce Customer Care Representative Stephanie Greidanus used her ADUSA Appreciates points to buy a Chili's gift card, she had no idea the reward would lead to a grand prize NASCAR experience – or help set the stage for one of the biggest personal milestones of her life.

While dining at the restaurant using her gift card, Stephanie entered a Chili's-sponsored sweepstakes tied to NASCAR. Months later, during a lunch break, she answered what looked like a random call. “I almost didn't pick up because I thought it was a telemarketer,” she said. “Then the woman said she was with Chili's and told me not to hang up. Apparently, I'd won a contest and had 24 hours to respond to the email before they moved on to someone else.”

Stephanie's first call was to her then-fiancé, Terry Linker. “I told him, ‘I won NASCAR!’ He thought it sounded too good to be true,” she said. “He asked if I'd given them our credit card number. But it was real.”

The grand prize included an all-expenses-paid trip to the NASCAR Cup Series at Talladega Superspeedway, complete with hotel, travel and VIP access. For Stephanie and Terry, it also opened the door to something they'd been trying to do for years: get married. The couple had originally wanted to tie the knot in Las Vegas in 2020, but the plan was derailed when travel shut down during the pandemic. Since then, life kept moving – and the wedding kept getting pushed back.

After Stephanie won her grand prize trip, however, an idea began to form.

“Turns out, it's pretty simple to get married in Alabama,” she explained. “Terry said, ‘If Chili's wants to pay for our wedding, let's do this.’ We'd been putting it off for six years, so we decided it was time to make it happen.”

With the paperwork handled and a traveling notary arranged, Stephanie and Terry officially tied the knot before heading to the speedway. Stephanie even wore a veil to the race – a detail she initially wasn't sure about. “I don't love being the center of attention,” she said. “But once people started congratulating us, I was so glad I had that veil on. Everyone was so kind, and it made the whole day feel even more special.”

The newlyweds received what Stephanie described as “five-star VIP” treatment. They toured the race team's hauler, met Carson Hocevar – driver of the Chili's-sponsored car – and walked along pit road before the race began. “We were so close to everything,” Stephanie said. “We could smell the gasoline and the hot tires. We even had headsets on so we could hear the driver talking to his team. It was unbelievable.”

The day became even more surreal when Carson went on to win the race. Because of his victory, Stephanie and her new husband were able to go down to the winner's circle and celebrate amid the confetti.

“If I had to describe it in one word, it'd be breathtaking,” Stephanie said. “Every time I tell the story, I remember another part and think, ‘No, that was the best part.’ I still can't wrap my head around it.”



