



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

PRESS INFORMATION

THE UNITED STATES GRAND PRIX QUESTIONS TO MAX MOSLEY

What about the American fans who travelled long distances and spent a lot of money to see a race with only 6 cars?

My personal view, and it is only my personal view, is that Michelin should offer to compensate the fans on a fair basis and ask the Indianapolis Motor Speedway to coordinate this. Then Tony George and Bernie Ecclestone should jointly announce that the US Grand Prix will take place at Indianapolis in 2006 and that anyone who had a ticket this year would be entitled to the same ticket free-of-charge next year. But I emphasise, that's just my personal view.

Should you not have just forgotten about the rules and put on a show for the fans?

You cannot do that if you wish to remain a sport. Formula One is a sport which entertains. It is not entertainment disguised as sport. But even more importantly Formula One is a dangerous activity and it would be most unwise to make fundamental changes to a circuit without following tried and tested procedures. What happened was bad, but it can be put right. This is not true of a fatality.

Why did you refuse the request of some of the teams to install a chicane?

The decision was taken (quite rightly in my view) by the FIA officials on the spot and notified to the teams on the Saturday evening. I did not learn about it until Sunday morning European time. They refused the chicane because it would have been unfair, against the rules and potentially dangerous.

Why unfair?

Because modern Formula One cars are specially prepared for each circuit. To change radically a circuit like Indianapolis, which has very particular characteristics, would be a big disadvantage to the teams which had brought correct equipment to the event.

Is this why Ferrari objected?

No, Ferrari had nothing whatever to do with the decision. They were never consulted. Ferrari, Jordan and Minardi, as the Bridgestone teams, were not involved.

Why would a chicane have been unfair, it would have been the same for everyone?

No. The best analogy I can give is a downhill ski race. Suppose half the competitors at a downhill race arrive with short slalom skis instead of long downhill skis and tell the organiser to change the course because it would be dangerous to attempt the downhill with their short skis. They would be told to ski down more slowly. To make the competitors with the correct skis run a completely different course to suit those with the wrong skis would be contrary to basic sporting fairness.

Never mind about ski-ing, what about Formula One?

OK, but it's the same from a purely motor racing point of view. Suppose some time in the future we have five teams with engines from major car companies and seven independent teams with engines from a commercial engine builder (as in the past). Imagine the seven independent teams all have an oil surge problem in Turn 13 due to a basic design fault in their engines. They would simply be told to drop their revs or slow down. There would be no question of a chicane.

All right, but why against the rules, surely you can change a circuit for safety reasons?

There was no safety issue with the circuit. The problem was some teams had brought the wrong tyres. It would be like making all the athletes in a 100m sprint run barefoot because some had forgotten their shoes.

How can you say a chicane would be “potentially dangerous” when most of the teams wanted it for safety reasons?

A chicane would completely change the nature of the circuit. It would involve an extra session of very heavy braking on each lap, for which the cars had not been prepared. The circuit would also not have been inspected and homologated with all the simulations and calculations which modern procedures require. Suppose there had been a fatal accident – how could we have justified such a breach of our fundamental safety procedures to an American court?

But it's what the teams wanted.

It's what some of the teams wanted because they thought it might suit their tyres. They wanted it because they knew they could not run at full speed on the proper circuit. We cannot break our own rules just because some of the teams want us to.

Why did the FIA stop the teams using a different tyre flown in specially from France?

It is completely untrue that we stopped them. We told them they could use the tyre, but that the stewards would undoubtedly penalise them to ensure they gained no advantage from breaking the rules by using a high-performance short-life tyre just for qualifying. We also had to make sure this did not set a precedent. However the question became academic, because Michelin apparently withdrew the tyre after trying it on a test rig.

Michelin were allowed to bring two types of tyre – why did they not have a back-up available?

You would have to ask Michelin. Tyre companies usually bring an on-the-limit race tyre and a more conservative back-up which, although slower, is there to provide a safety net if there are problems.

Is it true that you wrote to both tyre companies asking them to make sure their tyres were safe?

Yes, we wrote on 1 June and both replied positively. The letter was prompted by incidents in various races in addition to rumours of problems in private testing.

So, having refused to install a chicane, what did the FIA suggest the Michelin teams should do?

We offered them three possibilities. First, to use the type of tyre they qualified on but with the option to change the troublesome left rear whenever necessary. Tyre changes are allowed under current rules provided they are for genuine safety reasons, which would clearly have been the case here. Secondly, to use a different tyre – but this became academic when Michelin withdrew it as already explained. Thirdly, to run at reduced speed through Turn 13, as Michelin had requested.

How can you expect a racing driver to run at reduced speed through a corner?

They do it all the time and that is exactly what Michelin requested. If they have a puncture they reduce their speed until they can change a wheel; if they have a brake problem they adjust their driving to overcome it. They also adjust their speed and driving technique to preserve tyres and brakes when their fuel load is heavy. Choosing the correct speed is a fundamental skill for a racing driver.

But that would have been unfair, surely some would have gone through the corner faster than others?

No, Michelin wanted their cars slowed in Turn 13. They could have given their teams a maximum speed. We offered to set up a speed trap and show a black and orange flag to any Michelin driver exceeding the speed limit. He would then have had to call in the pits – effectively a drive-through penalty.

How would a driver know what speed he was doing?

His team would tell him before the race the maximum revs he could run in a given gear in Turn 13. Some might even have been able to give their driver an automatic speed limiter like they use in the pit lane.

But would this be real racing?

It would make no difference to the race between the Michelin cars. Obviously the Bridgestone cars would have had an advantage, but this would have been as a direct result of having the correct tyres for the circuit on which everyone had previously agreed to race.

Did the Michelin teams have any other way of running the race if the circuit itself was unchanged?

Yes, they could have used the pit lane on each lap. The pit lane is part of the circuit. This would have avoided Turn 13 altogether. It is difficult to understand why none of them did this, because 7th and 8th places were certainly available, plus others if any of the six Bridgestone runners did not finish. There were points available which might change the outcome of the World Championship.

But that would have looked very strange – could you call that a race?

It would seem strange, but it would absolutely have been a race for the 14 cars concerned. And they would all have been at full speed for most of each lap. That would have been a show for the fans, certainly infinitely better than what happened.

Did not Michelin tell them quite simply not to race at all?

No. Michelin said speed must be reduced in Turn 13. They were apparently not worried about the rest of the circuit and certainly not about the pit lane, where a speed limit applies. If the instruction had been not to race at all, there would have been no point in asking for a chicane.

Didn't the Michelin teams offer to run for no points?

I believe so, but why should the Bridgestone teams suddenly find they had gone all the way to America to run in a non-Championship race? It would be like saying there could be no medals in the Olympic rowing because some countries had brought the wrong boats.

What about running the race with the chicane but with points only for the Bridgestone teams?

This would start to enter the world of the circus, but even then the race would have been open to the same criticisms on grounds of fairness and safety as a Championship race run with a chicane. It would have been unfair on Bridgestone teams to finish behind Michelin teams on a circuit which had been specially adapted to suit the Michelin low-speed tyres to the detriment of Bridgestone's high-speed tyres, and the circuit would no longer have met the rules.

Have you ordered Michelin to produce details of all recent tyre failures as reported on a website?

We cannot order Michelin to do anything. We have no contractual relationship with them. Their relationship is with the teams. However, we have an excellent understanding with both tyre companies and with many of the teams' other suppliers. We find they always help us with technical information when we ask them.

Wouldn't Formula One be better if one body were responsible for the commercial side as well as the sport?

No, this is precisely what the competition law authorities in many parts of the world seek to avoid. It is not acceptable to them that the international governing body should have the right both to sanction and to promote. This would potentially enable it to further its own financial interests to the detriment of competitors and organisers. Apart from the legal aspect there would be an obvious and very undesirable conflict of interest if a body charged with administering a dangerous sport had to consider the financial consequences of a decision taken for safety reasons.. You can be responsible for the sport or for the money, but not both.

Didn't this entire problem arise because new regulations require one set of tyres to last for qualifying and the race?

No. The tyre companies have no difficulty making tyres last. The difficult bit is making a fast tyre last. There is always a compromise between speed and reliability. There have been one or two cases this season of too much speed and not enough reliability. Indianapolis was the most recent and worst example.

Finally, what's going to happen on June 29 in Paris?

We will listen carefully to what the teams have to say. There are two sides to every story and the seven teams must have a full opportunity to tell theirs. The atmosphere will be calm and polite. The World Motor Sport Council members come from all over the world and will undoubtedly take a decision that is fair and balanced.

Paris, June 22, 2005

FOR MEDIA INFORMATION PURPOSES - NO REGULATORY VALUE

For further information on the FIA, please consult our Internet site:
www.fia.com