



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

**Press Information**

**2015 Singapore Grand Prix  
Friday Press Conference Transcript**

**18.09.2015**

**TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – John BOOTH (Manor), Monisha KALTENBORN (Sauber), Franz TOST (Toro Rosso), Claire WILLIAMS (Williams), Toto WOLFF (Mercedes)  
PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Toto, maybe we can start with you. You had Pharrell Williams in your garage this evening but are you happy with the performance of your car – fourth for one of your drivers and seventh for the other and apparently giving something away in the long runs to maybe Red Bull and Ferrari?**

**Toto WOLFF:** Yeah that was a pretty spot on analysis. We are not with the performance today. We haven't really made the tyre work in the way we should on the one-lap performance and on the long runs either. We have seen some spectacular laps from the Red Bulls. Yeah, just need to get our heads together and assess what's happening.

**It is of course the time of year when we start looking forward to next year and the future. Do you envisage making any changes in your roster of customer teams from the ones you have today?**

**TW:** This is also a situation, which is a dynamic situation and we are looking at what is happening with curiosity. Of course we have always supported independent teams, so depending on what's also happening with Lotus and Renault we will be looking at the situation of supply for next year.

**OK, thanks for that. Claire, coming to you: 188 points on the board at the moment, this time last year, after 12 rounds, 150 on the board; third in the Constructors' looking reasonably solid. So, are you proud of your progress or frustrated by your missed opportunities this year?**

**Claire WILLIAMS:** Always proud of the progress our team makes. I think that we have obviously made a couple of mistakes, certainly in the past couple of races, around our pit stops. But we know the issues, we identified them and we are always very open and honest about what they are and as long as when we next come to a race track we don't make the same mistakes then I'm happy with the work the team does. As you said, we are ahead on the number of points we've scored so far this

season versus last year. We were fourth in the Constructors last year versus third at this point now and we believe that we can close that gap to Ferrari and that is our agenda and our objective for this weekend. We've got to get some more points and extend that gap to Red Bull as well.

**In terms of moving forward for 2016, you've obviously got the same drivers, that's been confirmed, what are you demanding from your technical personnel to make that step change you need to challenge?**

**CW:** A quicker race car. Pat and his team do a really great job with the resources that they have available to them. We obviously have to do a better job commercially to bring in some more revenue for them, to give them a stronger budget. But they know the job in hand and obviously we have another year, a final year of stable technical regulations ahead of the changes that are coming in '17 and we need to capitalise on that stability in order to make sure that we bring the best car to the track when we start racing again next year. This is a good opportunity for us to galvanise where we are now and the position and the competitiveness that we have and to drive it forward.

**Thank you for that. Coming to you Monisha: great start to the season with those points in Australia. Then you got caught up by some of your competitors. Recently you've been back in the points and here in Singapore you have a big upgrade. Tell us about why your season has gone the way it has?**

**Monisha KALTENBORN:** Well, if you as a team have certain limitations on resources, it might be finances or personnel, you have to make sure you spend it on the right things that are viable for you to implement. So we knew that we put emphasis on the start of the season, knowing very well that in the course of the season when we tried to bring a package in later, [which is] what we did, the competitors are going to catch up and probably we will be passed down the ladder, which we were, so it was expected in a way. But we focused on our route and brought this package now to Singapore and what we're seeing, as a basis, we're happy with but we understand that we still have to work a bit more on the set-up, analyse the data better and maybe not exactly at this race but maybe at the next races we will see the full potential.

**There is a lot of discussion at the moment on power units, costs and the best way forward for all teams in Formula One. What are your personal thoughts?**

**MK:** Well, we've always had the view that you had to bring the costs down. We had reached already the point with the Resource Restriction Agreement that we felt was a good basis. We've seen that with the new powertrain costs have hiked up that much, so we've always supported the idea that you try to bring a kind of cost cap on the engine prices, so we think that is a move in the right direction.

**Franz, talking about engines, where are you on engine supply for next year. It's now late September; are your engineers anticipating a change of power unit in their 2016 design?**

**Franz TOST:** As Renault decided not to supply us anymore with engines of course we have to take into consideration to change the engine.

**Can you tell us anymore?**

**FT:** Confidential talks are continuing, therefore I don't know at the moment which engine we will have in the car next year. I hope that we will get a result soon but currently we have confidential negotiations and as I mentioned before I hope we come to a result as soon as possible.

**Your drivers have started in the top 10 on the grid on 10 occasions this season but you've still got just 35 points on the board. What do you have to do in the final races to improve the situation? Is it just reliability?**

**FT:** It's reliability, because we didn't finish many races where we could have scored a lot of points because of reliability issues and I hope that we as a team and our partners will have it under control for the rest of the season and that we can catch up and finish races. For sure it's not in the hands of the drivers. If we give them a reliable car they will score points.

**Thank you. Coming to you John. First of all, the Alexander Rossi and Roberto Merhi decision was described as being 'in the long-term interests of the team', so that does imply a 2016 seat for the American, what are the considerations on that, and how was day one?**

**John BOOTH:** Day one started out extremely well. Alex had a really good first session up until a small mistake with a big penalty unfortunately. I think Alex has proved to us over recent years that he is an exciting young talent and we are very happy to give him the chance to show that talent.

**And what do you mean by long-term interest of the team?**

**JB:** I think that's Roberto's words rather than my words I think. It will help us assess as we come to the end of the year and start thinking about driver line-ups for next year. Any information will help us.

**Tell us about the work on the 2016 chassis. What engine is it based around and how much resource have you been able to throw at it?**

**JB:** Well, the engine situation is very similar to how Franz described it. I think there is a bit of an engine merry-go-round at the moment and it'll be interesting to see how it settles. We are in discussions with manufacturers and we hope to have that resolved fairly soon. Work on the 2016 car is progressing well. We are not quite back to where we were with staffing levels, but we have a very strong design team; we've made some good signings over recent months, and we're moving into our new factory as we speak. So the team is back under one roof for the first time in nearly 12 months.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) A question on engines to all five please but first of all to the independent teams. There's obviously talk about the cost-caps or price-caps on engines – but there's also talk about two different tiers; in other words a current engine and a last year's engine. How do you feel about that and is**

**the discussed or proposed differential of only €4million between the two steps sufficient to make it attractive to take last year's engine. And to Toto, what does this do to your business model? Because obviously if you've got three customer teams and you could recover €25million per team it was €75million per year. If it's now down to €12million it's only €36million. Is it an incentive for Mercedes to continue supplying engines at that sort of rate?**

**CW:** There were a lot of questions in that! First, in general as an overview, I think what the Strategy Group have come up with is a good way of trying to control costs around what is a very expensive power unit that we now have in Formula One. I think that each team needs to make an independent decision as to what variant they go for – and obviously at Williams we have options available to us and we need to take every argument under consideration before we determine which avenue we want to go down. Obviously as Williams we want to make sure we have the most competitive power unit in our car. I think with regards to your question about whether the delta between the numbers are great, I actually think that those numbers are significant for teams. For a team like Williams, with the budget we have, a cost-saving of €4million is always going to help because it means we can divert that spend in another area: it can go on aero or it can go elsewhere – so I think those numbers are important. You can't get these engines down to... they're expensive engines for the manufacturers to have to build. They've got to recover their costs, we've got to pay for them. We can't be unrealistic about those expectations. I think your other question would be best directed to Toto.

**Franz?**

**FT:** I think it started in the wrong way from the beginning onwards because when it was decided to come up with this new regulation, FIA or whoever should have told the manufacturers, "look, you have Formula One, you can use this as a marketing tool – but you have to invest the money to develop the engine and to provide some teams with engines to a fixed price." Then it should have been negotiated and the manufacturers could have said yes or no. Now, after this new power unit is running for the second year already, to say to the manufacturers "you must come down with the cost" is a little bit late because the development is quite expensive and it has to be. The different manufacturers have to develop the engines and the power units because otherwise they will never close the gap to Mercedes. Therefore it's difficult. I'm totally against the usage of a one year old engine because then we have a two class team on the grid and this will not close the gap. This will even increase the gap. Then we have, I don't know, five, six, seven cars which are running away. They will have after ten laps 30 seconds open the gap and races will become totally boring. It's difficult but I think it's too late. The power unit from the beginning onwards is very, very expensive. What we're bringing here, it's high technology, the development and the research costs a lot of money and now, of course, we have to pay the price.

**John, you have a bit of experience of running older generation engines. Do you have a point on that and answering Dieter's question.**

**JB:** To answer Dieter's question, we're in favour of any type of cost control in Formula One, whether it's engine or other forms of regulation that keep costs under

control. We're in favour of any steps in that direction – but I don't think F1's the correct arena to have two tiers of performance.

**Monisha, you half-answered this question with your previous answer but do you have anything more to add to the specific points raised in this question?**

**MK:** I agree with what's been said, that we would not support anything that leads to a two-tier system – and I think there's a danger in it as well, that it sets a precedent for other areas. If you do this on the engine now, what if then you come up on the chassis or parts that you could also save costs there? A team can very well be in a situation where you take up this option before you have to close your team – but nevertheless it's a dangerous route and we should make sure it's not a precedent for other areas.

**And the final word to Toto, on the question raised by Dieter first of all, and then the second part which is specific to you about how this affects your business model as a manufacturer.**

**TW:** First of all, as Mercedes we take costs very seriously. We understand that it's difficult times for most of the teams and that we should, all together, try to get the cost level down – that is clear. As to the specific question Dieter, I would like to throw a question back: where do you have your information from? Because I have never seen any sport or any business where price-sensitive information or competitive information is being discussed in public. So I wouldn't want to comment on any of the discussions. What I'd like to comment is that the Strategy Group discussed possible avenues of reducing the costs for customers and making the model feasible. That will go into the F1 Commission, it's going to be voted on. So whatever's out there in the public is pure speculation. Borderline nonsense.

**And the subject of the business model, is that covered by your answer?**

**TW:** That's covered, yeah.

**Q: (Joe Saward – Grand Prix Special) This is for Toto only. Car manufacturers across the world are spending US\$20million a day on research and development into various things. Why are you charging anybody in Formula One? You don't need to, this is R&D work, you should actually be doing it for nothing, shouldn't you?**

**TW:** Yeah, we're all here for nothing, because we love the sport and we enjoy ourselves. Joe, there is a commercial reality out there. Whoever is in the sport does it because he hopes to have a sustainable business model. The same for car manufacturers. We are operating – and it is along the lines of what Franz says – on a set of rules. We have developed an engine and we have developed a car looking at regulations and trying to do the best possible job. If we find out a couple of years later that, oops, we've forgotten to set the framework right, this is not how you operate today. So, like any other business, you will try to work on your P&L and optimise where it is feasible but again, as I said in my answer to Dieter, this is our joint platform, and we need to have that discussion, and it important to not be hard line and close yourself up and say “well, I need to optimise on the profit.” On the contrary, you need to look at it in a sensible way but these discussions need to be reasonable and need an outcome which is feasible for everybody.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Toto, your question gets answered by the financial statements that you publish every year at Company’s House in the UK, £120m odd. It’s very easy to have a look at it. I know you do R&D work for other people – for the group - but a lot of that – 80 percent of your work roughly – is Formula One, so it doesn’t take rocket science to work out exactly what you’re charging per customer team. Plus people do talk in this business, as you know. But my question is that if it’s nonsense, as you termed it, are you saying then that the price cap would be exactly what you’re charging at the moment and if so, how seriously are you taking cost-cutting then?**

**TW:** So, I haven’t questioned your information about our official accounts which you’ve researched and it’s absolutely right but there are numbers flying around with two tier engines of eight million or 12 million and what the gap would be on our bottom line and I think this is just wrong. We shouldn’t discuss prices. I have my opinion on fixing any price and there’s a pretty simple legal view but that’s going much too far for a press conference after Formula One free practice. Nevertheless, the governance is like it is, there have been discussions around that and you should take them seriously, that’s absolutely clear. We are serious about cost-cutting but let’s take it to another level, let’s take it to the F1 commission and let’s discuss possible outcomes.

**Q: (Kate Walker – motorsport.com) Toto again on engines, I’m afraid. If the F1 commission and WMSC do end up approving a year old, second tier engine scenario as has been discussed, would that enable you to open up greater supply routes to other teams that were only interested in the older engines?**

**TW:** Personally, I’m not a fan, I think, like anybody in that room, of two different engines because you don’t want to have two classes of competitors and that’s one thing, but if you can supply an engine for a much cheaper price because you can run it longer on less harder power levels, and the difference in price is considerable, you can give somebody a choice. You can give a team a choice in saying that I would like to be in there just to ramp up my organisation, for example. You’ve seen like Manor came out of the ashes and it was reasonable to opt for a reasonable price model on the engine, without wanting to speak for John. But I think if you have that second option, why not? I don’t think that many teams are going to take that up but we just wanted to throw another possibility into the game, not expecting that it would generate lots of interest.

**Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and SpeedSport Magazines) A question to all of you about the ban on wind tunnels: if it is going to happen, will it save money and why throw away something that is used in the automotive and aeronautical industries and could be related to F1 as well?**

**MK:** Well, since I’m not a member of the F1 strategy group there’s not really very much I can say on that. I’ve heard different views. Some say they have been banned, some say they haven’t. I personally think we should not be banning anything like this, not because we have a wind tunnel which we think works very well. I don’t think it’s the right way. Whatever we’ve banned in the past has always come back and it’s always been more expensive, so I think you rather have to find a sensitive

balance between the different tools you have or create some kind of another borderline and be free actually to do things within that cap or borderline and why should we ban wind tunnels?

**Q: John, your team when it first started didn't have a wind tunnel, just used cfd back in the day, if you remember. Is it time to go back to that model?**

**JB:** Probably not. Reference the gentleman's reference to the use of wind tunnels in automotive and aerospace, I think you will find that aerospace in particular is using wind tunnels less and less and relying more and more on cfd. I can see a time in the future when wind tunnels are banned totally but maybe not for the next two or three years.

**FT:** I'm against banning wind tunnel usage because there's always a reason behind it. Some teams are pushing to ban anything, whatever it is, because maybe they don't have the proper infrastructure or maybe they have an advantage with another tool. No, we should keep a balance. I think if we reduce the wind tunnel running time, also reduce cfd like we do currently, maybe to go a step forward, then this is the right way, but not to ban anything because there is another way to compensate for it which is much more expensive in the end.

**CW:** I think everyone is fully aware of Williams's position on wind tunnels. We've made huge investments over our time in Formula One in our... we have two tunnels at Grove and we place considerable importance on them as a tool for developing our race cars, verifying the parts that we develop at the factory before bringing them to the track. We believe that there's a safety element in there as well and we absolutely do not and will never vote for the banning of wind tunnels in Formula One. We're very clear on that. And I think they're relevant. How can you operate at the pinnacle of motor sport and not use one of the finest tools in aerodynamics. It doesn't make any sense to us.

**TW:** Absolutely, I can only agree with what Claire said. We are a road car manufacturer and we have just commissioned a brand new wind tunnel in Stuttgart because a wind tunnel is needed today to put a car on the street, verify what's being done in cfd and to get correlation. It's a safety aspect and certainly Formula One shouldn't be the playground for funny experiments for opportunistic reasons and following Claire's argument, whatever is being said or is being heard from any vote in the strategy group about wind tunnels is just... I don't want to use that word again but...

**Q: (Joe Saward – Grand Prix Special) Wind tunnels: can anyone up there tell me what Formula One wind tunnels give to the world apart from making the cars go faster and secondly, those who have wind tunnels, can you rent them out and make more money? Is not cfd a much better way to go forward?**

**CW:** I'll answer your second point first about the costs involved, which I forgot to mention earlier. We've actually done a deep analysis of the costs involved in running our tunnel and how much it would actually save if we closed it and the numbers are not... they don't correlate with the numbers that are currently in circulation at the moment. It is minimal, the amount that you would save. Again, the compensatory elements... you would just save that money elsewhere as F1 teams, any cash that you would save somewhere, you would go and spend somewhere else.

The relevance of wind tunnels? I think Toto answered the questions of relevance. In the world that we operate in, to be able to verify what you're developing at the factory in the tunnel is hugely important before you get it to the track and we've streamlined what we do development-wise at the factory and the fact that we can bring the upgraded parts of the car that we do now and that they work straight away when we get to the track is because of the work that we undertake in the tunnel. If we didn't have that tunnel capability we would be bringing thousands of parts to the race track at huge expense, wasting a huge amount of money when we realised when we came to Friday practice that they weren't effective and that they didn't work.

**FT:** The correlation between the race track and cfd – at least at Toro Rosso – has not reached the level that you get valid results; you need the back-to-back tests with the wind tunnel, to know which direction to go, therefore I think they are necessary.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) To the back: Franz, if I recall your words correctly, you said next year Renault will not supply us with engines. Is that official?**

**FT:** I can only say what I read in the newspaper, what Ghosn said in Frankfurt and I think this is serious. I haven't got it in a written form from Renault so far. I'm quoting rumours, yes.

**Q: (Graham Caygill – The National Newspaper) Franz, as James mentioned earlier in the press conference, Max and Carlos have shown some great pace this season. Do you and the team feel vindicated because there were a few eyebrows raised at the start of the season on going for a such a young line-up and do you think maybe the FIA, in hindsight moved a little bit too quickly changing the superlicence rules so that people like Max in future can come through?**

**FT:** Yes, as we know, the FIA changed this regulation. You must now be 18 years old to come into Formula One. I personally don't think this makes sense because if young drivers can start to race in single seaters aged 15 or 16 years old, then earlier or later it was quite clear that one of these drivers will be in a position to come into Formula One and once more, it's not a decision how old someone is, it's a decision how fast and skilled someone is. I know a lot of old drivers who are simply too slow but I know as young drivers they are much faster therefore I take the younger drivers. Anyway, that's the decision that was made by the FIA, in future that it's no longer possible who is younger than 18 years and I'm more than happy that Red Bull decided to bring Max into Formula One, because, as we all can see, he is showing a fantastic performance and up to now, he has made less mistakes than other much more experienced drivers.

Ends