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Press Information

2014 Russian Grand Prix Friday Press Conference Transcript

10.10.2014

TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Eric BOULLIER (McLaren), Monisha KALTENBORN (Sauber), Franz TOST (Toro Rosso), Marco MATTIACCI (Ferrari), Graeme LOWDON (Marussia), Christian HORNER (Red Bull Racing)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Graeme, thanks for standing in for John Booth who is still in Japan. Is there anything you would like to tell us?

Graeme LOWDON: It's been an incredibly difficult week for Formula One but it's been an incredibly difficult week for our team. As you know, my team-mate Jules Bianchi had a terrible accident in Suzuka. He's in hospital there. He's in a critical condition and the thoughts of everybody in the team, and I know much wider than that, are with Jules at this moment and also with his family. It has been a really difficult time for the team, but I have to say we have been helped enormously by the Formula One family. I think it would have been really difficult for us to get through this week without the help of some very key people. I'd like to personally thanks Marco Mattiacci for his support and kindness, not just in his role at Ferrari, but personally as well. He was at the hospital immediately afterwards and I know provided an awful lot of comfort to those that were there. The Ferrari team also arranged for Professor Alessandro Frati to be present and I know that gave an awful lot of comfort to us, to the people that were there at the hospital and the family. So from our team to the Ferrari team we really want to offer a lot of thanks, it really made a difference. Also at the hospital was Professor Gérard Saillant from the FIA and I think we have to thank Jean Todt for arranging that. I think that was extremely helpful as well and certainly provided support to us. I know Jules is very close with his management team – Alessandro Bravi and Nicolas Todt – and I think they did an exceptional job looking after their driver. It's been a very, very difficult time but it's also been a time that has reminded us of just how much support there is for people within this sport, looking at the wider picture and the fans. Jules is an exceptional Formula One driver but he is also an exceptional human being. I don't know a single person who doesn't like him. You wouldn't wish that accident on anybody. Certainly Jules has so many friends that

it has really hit home very hard to a lot of people. Our priority from this point onwards is obviously to Jules and his family and we want to provide them with the maximum amount of support at what is really a very, very difficult time. From our point of view both myself and John Booth, and as you mentioned John is the team principal and the team principal is the most important person in the team and he has remained in Japan to offer what support he can, None of us are medical people – we can't help in that area – but we can provide another form of support, which we hope helps at a really difficult time. From a team point of view we want to thank everyone who has provided support, especially the fans.

Thank you very much, Graeme, thank you. In fact, I'd like to ask all of you for your feelings and thoughts on last weekend. Marco, as you've obviously been a great support to Graeme and the Marussia team perhaps you would start?

Marco MATTIACCI: It has been and it still is an extremely painful week for all of us on Formula One, but specifically for all of us at Ferrari, because Jules is a Ferrari driver, he's part of the Ferrari family and he is one of us. So we are extremely in pain at the moment. We have been trying to stay as close as we can to the family and we will keep doing this. To go to this weekend, we do it with a lot of pain but we are here to race, having Jules in our hearts. That's, at the moment, what I have to say.

Eric?

Eric BOULLIER: It has been an extremely painful week. Someone from the F1 community got injured and on top of that he's French and I'm French so I have known him for a long time, so I'm very sensitive about what happened and followed it very closely. All in McLaren we are very concerned and we pray for him and I think all our thoughts today are with him and his family, which I think are gathered around him now.

Monisha?

Monisha KALTENBORN: For all of us it's been emotionally a very difficult week. Particular regarding Jules, we've known him also for quite a while. It's simply these kind of tragic incidents that really get you out of balance and you just can't go to business as usual and our thoughts, our prayers are all with him and it'll take a while until you really can realise what's happened. We spoke also to Adrian about the situation and it's also very tough for him – standing right there. So it's not easy.

Franz.

Franz TOST: Yeah, the team is still shocked about everything, because Jules was many times with us, he is a very close friend of Jean-Eric Vergne and of course it's a very difficult time and our thoughts are with Jules and the family and I hope that he recovers.

And Christian.

Christian HORNER: Yeah, at times like this everything else becomes unimportant. Even though we are competitors on track when somebody gets injured the immediate

priority has to go to the wellbeing of that individual. It was a shocking accident. One could say he was unlucky or not, that's irrelevant at the end of the day. I have to say I know the effect it has had within our team with our drivers. I can only imagine... or I can't even begin to imagine what Graeme and John have had to deal with this week. When you have a team-mate in as serious difficult as Jules appears to be in it's very tough. I think the support that everybody had offered through Marussia, through Ferrari, to the family and close friends and relatives of Jules has been absolutely first rate. Obviously our thoughts and prayers are with him and hopefully for there to be some positive news in the coming days.

Graeme it must have been a difficult decision to decide to even run one car here?

GL: It was a difficult decision. The main thing we wanted to do was to do something useful and supportive as much as we can for Jules and for Jules' family – that was our primary objective. Also we're lying ninth in the FIA World Championship at the moment and that's a very important position for us and we're largely in that position because of Jules and therefore... you know he's a racing driver and he would want us to do the best we can. We thought that the right thing to do was to come here, take part in the event but as a mark of support to Jules and as a mark of respect to his mum and dad and to Jules' family we would withdraw the second car. It's fully scrutineered, it's there, it's ready to go, it's in the garage. It's got Jules' race number on it. We found that was something that we could do. Also it's been useful for the people in our team as well. They want to do an expression of support for Jules so I hope people understand what we've done and why we've done it and even if it makes a small difference it makes a difference in the right place. I have to say as well we did seek opinion from a lot of people to ensure we made the right decision. On a personal note I cannot speak to highly of the support that our team and myself have had from Bernie Ecclestone. Right from the accident occurring... in these situations, which are incredibly difficult, it's incredibly reassuring to know that people care and if I could sum up the support we've had from Bernie, it's that he cares. That has been extremely valuable and extremely helpful.

Q: Turning to this weekend, can I ask the rest of you for your and your drivers' impressions of the Sochi Autodrom circuit, with particular emphasis on the Russian drivers when we come to Sauber and Toro Rosso?

MM: Looking to what recently happened in FP2, we were quite surprised by the dynamics of the circuit and the reaction of our car. We have definitely seen which tyre got longer in order to work properly and again it's a circuit where the power unit is very important as is the traction. Overall, very impressed by the infrastructure, by the facilities but again, tomorrow we're going to have a very interesting qualifying because, looking to the tyre that gets a little bit longer, I would say longer than expected to work, so tomorrow will see something interesting, and as well, on Sunday. But again, point number one for us now we're here is Jules, so that can be considered important but at the same time very much to what is happening to our team at the moment.

EB: Well, I came here three years ago for an F1 demo and I was absolutely astonished last night when I came to see how it had changed. They have clearly built amazing facilities and all the complex around, from the Olympics Games and the F1 is

absolutely amazing. It's true that, as Marco said, we can't maybe enjoy it as much as it deserves because obviously part of our head is maybe busy thinking of what happened last week but we have to give credit to the promoter and the organisers of the Grand Prix. The facilities and the track and everything is absolutely outstanding.

CH: It's good to be here, it's a good circuit, probably a few too less corners for our liking but I think what's been created here is fantastic. I think the paddock has a great atmosphere. I've got the feeling that it's the kind of circuit that's going to produce good racing and from what we've seen today, I think tyre degradation looks like it's going to be pretty low so it's going to be an interesting Sunday.

MK: Sergey did a good job today. It's been nearly half a year since he sat in the car when he did his super licence in Bahrain so what was interesting to see was how he actually could adjust to the car and he built up his performance very steadily throughout the session so we're actually quite happy and satisfied with the work he did.

FT: I must say thank you very much to Putin and to Bernie Ecclestone that they realised that we have a race here in Russia because the Russian market is very important for the future, although we know there are currently some political sanctions but earlier or later they will be stopped. Russia is a country for the future, therefore I think it's very important to be here. Congratulation also for this fantastic facility and for this beautiful infrastructure. Daniil Kvyat is quite happy with the track, he likes it, he was also fast today. I think we have a good possibility here to be with him in Qualifying Three and to score points. I am expecting that we will have interesting race.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Vladimir Rogovets – Sb Belarus Segondnya) My question to all participants: I remember how much you were asked about participation in the Grand Prix of Russia. Today you are here, I think it's very good for Formula One but you can see the situation is completely different than what you told some of my colleagues. What do you think: why would the mass media make a very negative image of Russia? Who and why is used?

MM: It's a question to the wrong audience. We are team principals, not media moguls so what this theme that the press or someone else takes, to be honest, is not my job or our job to reply. I think we're here at a very difficult moment, trying to put in place a decent race. That's it. About the media spin, I couldn't care less.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi, La Gazzetta dello Sport) A question for Graeme.

We would like to know what you find analysing the telemetry of the car so you can explain to us what happened exactly before the accident because we couldn't see anything about it.

GL: I can't really go into the detail. I think something as important as this accident requires looking at thoroughly. One of the great things about Formula One cars is there's an incredible amount of data available to allow us to analyse things and learn things. I think in an accident like this, there is very little point looking backwards. It's

very easy to have the benefit of hindsight. It's so much more important and valuable to look forwards. I think there's an awful lot of information to be looked at. We have some very, very clever people. There's an awful lot of working groups in the FIA and I'm sure there's an awful lot that can be looked at and learned. I think that's really the key thing.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Question to Christian. Yesterday it was confirmed that Mercedes will now be supplying Lotus. That means that Renault, your engine supplier, will only be supplying three teams next year: yourselves, your sister team Toro Rosso and Caterham – which is supplied with rear end technology by Red Bull Technologies in any event. Does this mean the Renault Formula One operation will become more and more Red Bull-centric? Do you see that as positive, or do you see it from a perspective where Red Bull will have one less car and therefore less data etcetera?

CH: I think that, as far as Red Bull's concerned, it will make little difference but as far as Renault's concerned, it allows them to focus fully on one solution: on Red Bull Racing. Obviously there's some challenges ahead, it's been a disastrous year for Renault this year and they're working extremely hard to close that gap to the Mercedes. The problem is it's a little bit of a moving target because one minute we agree something then suddenly people can't remember what they've agreed and they change their mind, so we've got a bit going on at the moment. Obviously Renault are working extremely hard to narrow that gap to Mercedes, as I'm sure Ferrari are and Honda will be when they enter the sport. But, as we can see from the performance over the last few weeks, it's still quite a gap to reduce and so a concentrated and focussed effort behind one team can only be a positive thing for Red Bull.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) The obvious follow-up question to what you've said Christian, but also to Marco. You're obviously, I assume, talking about the engine unfreeze and the development and progress on that. Where do we stand at the moment? Will it actually be unfrozen for next year or will this year's regulations be carried through.

CH: In Singapore the teams unanimously agreed on a position and then, I think, subsequently from that meeting, Mercedes changed their position. We've subsequently had a strategy meeting and it's been voted on a majority basis for that to go through to the Formula One Commission for in-season upgrades to be allowed. We'll see what the outcome of the Formula Commission vote is. FIA are in support, FOM are in support. Obviously the non-Mercedes teams are in support – so we'll see what that holds in approximately a month's time.

Marco, anything to add to that?

MM: Just the word: thinking of frozen engines – this is not Formula One. Y'know? To talk about frozen engines. So I agree with Christian, now today we have the majority of the votes to move ahead on the idea to unfreeze the engine. Let's see what's going to happen during the F1 Commission.

Q: (Elena Ivlieva – Russian Television Channel 1) I'd like to ask Monisha, tell me

please, how do you feel in that's man's society, in this man's fairy tale?

MK: Looking around here, actually quite comfortable. Of course you see that it's not the typical area where women really work but it's changing, it's changing very rapidly, which is good. There were already a couple of women working in Formula One but you never really got to see them. It's not as bad as maybe people want to make it look like. Nobody is really nasty to women in there. You're just judged by what you do and what you achieve. So, I don't think being a women is any hindrance to a women here.

Q: (John Burns – New York Times) One of our colleagues here has raised the very difficult question of media approach to Russia – which I have to say does not reflect what I read in the Western press at all – on the basis of that observation I'd like to ask you what I hope is a slightly more modulated question about whether to race or not to race. It's quite plain that there were very heavy considerations in favour of racing, and anybody who suggests otherwise is not, to my mind, being very intelligent. At the same time, there is clearly a question 'does sport have a conscience?' Can people like you allow yourselves to engage in a debate? I'm not asking you to justify racing here or to join those like Ari Vatanen who felt otherwise but I would be interested in hearing one, or perhaps several of you, discuss the question of how you go about resolving these issues that inevitably arise – and not only here. We had the issue in Bahrain, the issue will arise again elsewhere. I'd be interested to know how this plays out in your mind. I'm not asking you to justify racing – I think that would be foolish – I'm just asking you to what degree you can afford to address these issues among yourselves or address them in front of us. I hope that's an intelligent way of approaching this...

CH: As I've said before, Formula One is a sport and we are all sporting teams. When we enter the World Championship, there's a calendar and obviously that calendar is put together by the promoter and approved by the FIA, controlled by Bernie Ecclestone and Jean Todt accordingly. I think that we have to place our faith in their judgement. We are sporting teams, competing in a sport that is popular throughout the world, and wherever we've raced, we've always been extremely well received and welcomed and we do our best to put on a good show. Sport can be a fantastic unifier and we see ourselves not in any way political, but purely as a sporting team, coming here to do the very best job that we possibly can.

FT: Nowadays the big events always are being criticised, whether it's the Olympic Games or the football World Cup or Formula One. There are always negative critics. I think it's simply unjustified. We should be concentrated to do our job. We do Formula One. We are responsible for entertainment. People want to see Sunday afternoon an interesting race and we are not – and we should not be – involved on the political side. Because once we are being taken into this corner, we can't race anywhere. Because there are problems in Arabia, there are problems maybe in Brazil, there are problems in Europe as well. There are problems in China, there are problems in Russia. To be honest, I don't care about this. The only thing I'm interested in is that we have a fast car. The rest is politics. We are here for doing sport, for bringing entertainment and that's it.

Q: (Haoran Zhou – F1 Express) A question to Graeme. Can you tell us about

Max's weekend so far? The best you can do trackside for Jules is perhaps to put on a good performance and maintain ninth place in the Constructors' Championship. Tell us about Max's weekend so far.

GL: You're right. Max has got a tough job actually this weekend. We try to build our teams around drivers and it's normal for a driver to have a team-mate to push against and to learn from and to race against and for the team to act in that way. It's also just a normal feel, y'know, as you go in the garage or anything else like that. So we recognize that we've made a situation for Max where he has a lot of extra things to think about – but we hope that as well we'll try to defend our position in the championship. Max knows how important that is and I think – well I know – he wants to demonstrate himself support for the work that the team's done and that Jules has done as well. Of course the whole focus of the team for us this weekend is Max. It's been said before, our job is racing. We've got a race to do and we've got a championship to take part in. I know Max is very focused on that and I know he's very, very keen to play his role within the team. Hopefully we'll have a good race weekend.

Q: (Manuel Franco Peral - Diario AS) For Franz Tost. Any news about your second driver for next year? Obviously Carlos Sainz is an option for Toro Rosso.

FT: There are also other drivers. We have Jean-Eric Vergne, which is an experienced driver, we have Carlos Sainz Jr which is currently leading the 3.5litre Renault championship, then we have Pierre Gasly, we have [Alex] Lynn. Fortunately Red Bull has a lot of very fast, high skilled drivers in the driver pool and within the next weeks, Red Bull will decide who will get this seat.

Q: (Silvia Renée Arias– Parabrisas Magazine) I would like to know if, after the accident, did the team managers meet, for talking about safety – or do you expect to meet? Is it necessary or not?

GL: That happens in the normal course of business for all the right reasons I think. We shouldn't be complacent enough to wait for an accident to discuss things and the way the sport works. I know that everybody sees us every one or two weeks racing against each other but, as Christian's quite rightly said, there's a huge amount of work that goes on between the teams in a cooperative fashion. We all want the same things in the sport and there's a lot that happens behind the scenes and there are forums for this kind of thing to take place and for learning to happen. Everyone's concerned when they see something like this but there's a shared goal amongst everybody in Formula One to improve things all the time.

Q: (Arianna Ravelli – Corriere Della Sera) Question to Mattiacci. What will change for Ferrari and for you personally with [Sergio] Marchionne as president? And maybe if you think you will receive more support from the shareholders than before?

MM: Ferrari is a precious asset of the Group so has always received the utmost support from the Group and the shareholders, so it will be like this in the future as well. At the moment I don't see change.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Christian and Marco, returning back to the question of engine freezes and unfreezes, setting aside whether they are or aren't Formula One, you said that the Strategy Group had voted, then it was going to the Formula One Commission. Surely that requires unanimity for next year, or not?

CH: I think the process for change for next year - you know better than anyone, Dieter, having gone into the Commission - it does require unanimity for that to be implemented for next season.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzette dello Sport) A question for everybody: we talked a lot last week about the necessity to have the safety car on the track when there is a tractor on the track? What is your personal opinion; do you feel that you just have to change the procedure about the safety car in this case, and for Mr Mattiacci, how long do we have to wait until we have some more updates about the drive line-up for next year please?

MM: On the first topic, these two things are quite challenging but anyway... On the first topic, I think there is an investigation going on, to understand exactly what happened. I think it would be a mistake to start to give today suggestions to reason with if? What? I think what I can say is that in the last 20 years, how the FIA dramatically improved circuit safety and I think with the utmost attention in making sure that we will have all the utmost understanding for that, so what kind of measures for sure will be taken to avoid it in the future. But to start now, to guess what could be done or what could be improved, I don't think we have enough elements to make that kind of suggestion.

Q: Regarding your driver line-up?

MM: I don't have any update, any news, any announcement to be made.

Q: Any knowledge of when we might hear?

MM: I don't have any news, any update, any announcement to be made.

Q: Does anyone have any further comment on safety cars?

FT: First of all, Charlie Whiting and his team have done a really good job in Suzuka with the safety car and generally to run this race under these really difficult circumstances. The accident will be analysed, it has to be found out why the accident happened because it's not normal that a car which comes off the track goes under a recovery vehicle and lifts it up. It means there must be a tremendous speed behind this, as to why this happened, because there were double waved yellow (flags). And the next point is that maybe what we could do in the short term is if there is a double waved yellow, that the drivers have to go with reduced speed of course but with the pit limiter and then they are all with a very slow speed then they have all the same speed. That means they have no advantage and disadvantage and I think what we also should take into consideration that the recovery vehicle would be mounted with a skirt around it so that it's not possible for a car if it spins off to slide below such vehicle. The rest we will see. I think tomorrow there is a team managers' meeting where they will all sit

together and they will discuss what could be done in the future to prevent such accidents.

Ends

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