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Press Information

2013 Italian Grand Prix Friday Press Conference Transcript

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TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Graeme LOWDON (Marussia), Monisha KALTENBORN (Sauber), Ross BRAWN (Mercedes), Martin WHITMARSH (McLaren), Stefano DOMENICALI (Ferrari), Christian HORNER (Red Bull Racing)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Stefano, as it's your home race, I'll start with you if I might. First of all, we've had two practice sessions today. Have we seen the same sort of upturn here as you had in Spa in terms of your performance and can you maintain that through the rest of the weekend?

Stefano DOMENICALI: From what we have seen today, for sure above all in the second session, Red Bull seems to be very strong. I have to say, we have seen them doing a lap time immediately, so normally this is a good sign. Therefore, I am expecting, for sure, them to be very strong, and I'm sure the other team surrounding me they were a little bit doing some other stuff. I think it will be a tough weekend, for everyone, because with this kind of temperature also the car will be under pressure. At the end of the day we need to understand all the data we have collected and make sure that we have selected the right configuration for the car for tomorrow and this is really the work that the engineers will do tonight. I really hope that we can do a good weekend because in front of our people it will be very important and of course, as we know, if you want to put the pressure on the guys who are in front of us we need to try to be faster and faster and it is not enough to try to be very close to them in case they have an issue and then be ready, otherwise we will; lose our opportunities.

Thanks very much, Stefano. Graeme, yesterday Max Chilton told us of his hopes of staying with the team. What chances are there of that? Where are you in terms of drivers for next year and how important is your position in the Constructors' Championship – that 10th place?

Graeme LOWDON: Well, we're all competitive people so every position is important and we want to maintain that 10th place and given half a chance move forward as well. So that's really important. As far as drivers, it's kind of this period onwards when we really start to make some key decisions. Typically it's a lot later in the year that we make any announcements but both drivers have done an extremely good job and at times under quite difficult circumstances. There's a very good harmony in the team and a good team spirit and it would be nice to maintain that but let's wait and see.

Monisha, Sauber have had a very close relationship with Mexico for a few years now, so how important is the Mexican Grand Prix, which is on the draft calendar we have seen this weekend?

Monisha KALTENBORN: It's very important, not only for us a team but for Formula One itself, because we know that Latin America, generally America, is a very important market, so it attracts new partners as well. As far as our partner is concerned, it just shows that the strategy they have with motorsport is being implemented step by step. It was about the drivers coming into Formula One and the next logical step is hosting a race there. So I think it's a great step.

It's important for the team?

MK: It's important for the team because we could see already in Austin last year, we felt like it was a home grand prix there if you could just hear people chant Checo's name. So I'm sure it's going to be a great atmosphere.

Ross, the team has emerged very much as title contenders, but still a big gap to Red Bull Racing. How long can you maintain your challenge before it starts impacting on next year?

Ross BRAWN: I think it depends on what work you're talking about. Obviously work that is unique to the current car would be taking away from next year's programme. If it's work that is still relevant for next year of course we're still keen to develop ideas and continue with developments that would be relevant for next year. Those sort of micro-decisions are going on all the time with what we should or shouldn't do. I think I said we'll have a clearer picture after Singapore about our emphasis going from Singapore until the end of the season. I think Spa, a medium-low downforce circuit, Monza, a very low drag circuit, and Singapore, a high downforce circuit, after that mix we'll see where we are. There's very little variability left now in terms of what we can move from '13 to '14 and vice versa, so our programme is pretty set and we think we've got a programme that is not compromising the '14 car at all.

Christian, historically Monza has been quite difficult for you in the past, for Red Bull Racing. What are you expecting this weekend? How good has it been in FP1 and FP2, certainly FP2 looked amazing today, especially the long runs. How do you feel the team is making an impact here?

Christian HORNER: We've had a strong start to the weekend, particularly in free practice two. We've worked through a programme and obviously the drivers are tuning themselves into the circuit and fine-tuning set-ups as well for the rest of the weekend. Monza traditionally, bar 2011, has been a difficult hunting ground for us and has exposed some of our weaknesses in previous years, but we just have to do the best that we can. For sure we know that Ferrari will be quick here. We know that Mercedes will be certainly quick and McLaren aren't too far away either this weekend. I think it's set to be a very competitive grand prix and we've seen so many times that Friday means very little, so hopefully we can be on the podium here. That would be a strong result for us here.

Martin, great celebrations for the 50th anniversary of McLaren. Where do see the current team standing in that heritage?

Martin WHITMARSH: I haven't thought about it that way. I think this isn't the way we want to celebrate the 50th year of McLaren but I think we're immensely proud of what's been achieved over that time and it's been quite incredible how we've been able to grow that business. We'd like to be being more competitive – it's a very hero to zero business. So to come out this year, as tough as it's been, we've been able to

pull ourselves a little bit back but we're not with the quicker cars, yet. I think over the last couple of months we've had an unusual situation. Certainly for many years, this time of year we've been fighting for wins or championships and we've been devoting *probably* too much resource to the here and now and not enough to the next year. We're very clear [now] that we're very concentrated on next year. That's made it quite tough on the race team and the drivers. As we're racers we can't come to a race event without parts to try so Fridays have been experimental days, probably been difficult for the drivers then to do the set-up work they'd like to. But we gather data and we've been able to use the experimental day of Friday to make a little bit of progress and we're probably going to keep doing that because we can't afford to detract from next year's programme in the principal development facilities – wind tunnel, CFD and the like. So I think the team has responded to a kick up the pants we've had for ourselves. The team has pulled together, although we don't like going motor racing without the real prospect of winning. I think we are very close as a team. I think we are working well together under difficult circumstances and we're determined to do a better job in the coming races. But really focused on making sure we come out next year very, very strong.

And would you like a brief word on Mexico as well?

MW: I think Monisha put it very well. It was amazing Texas last year that you felt you were actually in Mexico, not in Texas, although maybe other parts of Texas feel that occasionally as well. It's clear that there's a huge passion there. Some of us, I think Ross at least, remember going to Mexico quite a few years ago. We know it's entertaining, different and certainly passionate, so it's good for the sport. It's a huge and exciting market for Formula One and for some of the teams.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) We now have one official candidate for the FIA Presidency elections happening in December. I know that you guys don't have any input on the vote but I would like your opinions on both the elections and the candidate himself.

Stefano?

SD: I heard today that there was a programme announced by the candidate for the presidency. Of course I haven't had the chance to read it but I will do it in the next days. I think that in Formula One it's important to proceed with stability and continuity – it's one of the things that we are always missing. So, I believe that what is important to keep as a relation with the FIA is this kind of thing and so therefore I would like to see this happening – but of course it is not us that will decide that. That's it really.

Martin?

MW: Well, I don't know David Ward well enough and I haven't had time to look at his manifesto so I really can't comment on him. I think Jean – and clearly I don't know Jean as well as some of the people here – but I have to say taking him as the President, I think he has not used this sport for his own ego, which I think is very tempting. I won't go back into the past but I've seen and survived so far three presidents – only just, one of them – but I think Jean has acted in the interests of motorsport. I think for some people there hasn't been enough commotion, action, controversy around him. Those are good in some people's minds but I think for those of us that participate in the sport, having some consistency, someone who

takes decisions that are in the interests of the sport quietly and efficiently is very beneficial. As you say, we don't influence the outcome but I think Jean has done a good job so far and we'll see if he's successful at continuing to be the President.

Graeme?

GL: A general point is that democracy is a good thing, isn't it? So you've got to welcome the process. I had a very quick look at the manifesto that came out from one of the candidates and there's lots of topics that it's good to have healthy debate on those topics and I'm sure that's what the FIA members will do. In terms of the process, anything that's democratic has got to be welcomed and if it provides transparency, provides the opportunity for debate, I think it'll be an interesting process to watch from that point of view. I agree with a lot of the comments Martin said about what Jean has done. I haven't been in the sport as long as Martin so I haven't had the same number of presidents to live through but I think we're looking forward to a healthy debate.

Monisha?

MK: Well, like Stefano said, most important is the stability and the continuity in the sport. I think we all know there are many challenging issues we are facing and in any case I hope that whoever comes up with the presidency will take up these issues and continue what has started and take it to the next level. Because we're clearly reaching a point where certain decisions have to be taken ahead. And that's what I hope will be done.

Ross?

RB: Obviously I know Jean very well, having worked together for ten years. I think stability and consistency are very important. I think Jean has taken a quiet line, particularly in terms of Formula One and that – as Martin said, those of us who have experienced the other end of the scale – is welcome. And I think the opportunity to do another period as a president of the FIA is important, that we have that continuity. I think Jean has stabilised the situation and now wants to move on to progress things and I know the huge commitment he makes to the sport overall. We are part of motorsport but there's a huge amount of other things going on that he's active in. And I think the continuity is very important.

Christian?

CH: I guess to have an election you've got to have more than one candidate. It now relies on Jean to become a candidate and declare that he's prepared to continue as well. I think as the others have summarised, he's done a very good job in his presidency so far. It really has very little to do with us, it really is an FIA issue and between the different ASNs – and who knows, there may even be another candidate. Maybe Martin's going to throw his hat into the ring as well... No. As I say, I think Jean's done a very good job and everything's already been said.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Monisha, with the arrival of the Mexican Grand Prix next year, does that put any pressure on you to retain Esteban Gutierrez for next season, and if so, what does the future hold for Nico Hulkenberg, bearing in mind you're seemingly committed to employing Sergey Sirotkin?

MK: Actually one thing really does not have anything to do with the idea to look at... We started our relationship with Esteban much before we actually got into contact with Telmex, because he came into the Formula BMW programme and from there

he progressed with the team. So there are two different issues. As far as generally our driver line-up is concerned, we know that we would like to have Sergey next year as our driver but he still needs a super-licence and that's something which you should take seriously. People shouldn't think that we just feel that he's just going to get it like that. We are convinced he can do it, we will do our best to prepare him and there still is a big step. If that all works out we will see what options we have and announce that in due course.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – The Citizen) To all team principals and Graeme – I believe you're sporting director, is that your official title?

GL: President and sporting director

Q: (Dieter Rencken – The Citizen) To all six, the resource restriction agreement (RRA) would have expired at the end of 2012. It was then extended by the so-called Singapore agreement which I believe extended it by another five years to the end of 2017. What are your individual views on this document? Is it legally enforceable, are you going to be providing all the documentation required at the end of the season to the correct authorities?

GL: Well, yes to all of the above. My understanding is that the Singapore agreement extended the RRA and modified some of the terms and extended it to 2017. I think that's well documented and we're certainly operating our business in accordance with that agreement. It was an agreement that everybody signed and we'll report accordingly. Whether there is a different mechanism that all the teams agree prior to 2017, which has mutual agreement, then I guess that's a different question but as far as we're concerned we're adhering to it and will continue to do so.

MK: Well, we are working to that as well and as far as I know, everybody is. More important is to see that in all this time we could identify the flaws it had which was natural, because you just realise with the experience you have with this kind of agreement and we all know we should take steps into cost-cutting directions so more important for me is: what can we make of this experience and how can we improve that to maybe have something which is then really again supported by everyone and we end all these discussions about it?

RB: We're operating to the RRA. I think we're part of the group - as I think most of the teams are, if not all the teams – part of the group to see how we can go forward with an improved RRA, how we can operate more effectively in the future. This is a very competitive business, so interpretations are very important. We see it in all the sporting regs, we see it in all the technical regs and we need to have an improved system to make sure the interpretations of the RRA are also debated and discussed and we have a proper forum for resolving those issues, because that appears to be where some of the disagreements come between the teams. But we do need to have a system, we need to have a system in the future, that controls the costs, that controls the amount the teams can spend. We as Mercedes, are supportive of any correct initiatives to achieve that.

CH: What was the question again?

Q: (Dieter Rencken – The Citizen) The Singapore agreement, in your opinion, is it a legally enforceable document, will you be submitting all your documents at the end of the season?

CH: Is it legally enforceable? Probably not in reality. There are things in that agreement that committed things like KERS for one and a half million and so on that didn't actually happen. Will we work to it, in accordance with it? Yes. Will we submit our figures? I would have thought so. Is it effective? Not really. Have there been other things introduced into sporting and technical regulations that will have a genuine effect on costs next year? Yes they have. I think the reduction in wind

tunnel usage, in getting rid of aerodynamic testing and so on will again have a significant impact on costs for next year. Of course, it depends where your cost drivers are but I think we still have a responsibility as a group to not ignore costs and certainly 2014 looks to be a very very expensive year.

SD: As everyone has said, I would say we are sticking to these figures but I think that the most important thing is to look ahead because for sure this is an element of a lot of discussion, debate that we all had together in different ways, in a very competitive world. Everyone is trying to maximise his situation because it's part of the game. It is true that we need to find a solution that has to be clear to avoid any strange interpretation but so far, that is in terms of numbers, in terms of presenting the data, nothing has changed.

MW: Yes to all the questions but I think that as someone has said, I think it's very clear we will probably do more than we've already done. I think some of the things that have now gone into the technical regulations, sporting regulations have effectively migrated there from the original RRA and that's positive, I think. As Christian's observed, I think the control of aerodynamic resources - this is track testing, this is CFD, wind tunnel time - has been effective, I think and I think as Christian also mentioned, despite our best efforts, the costs next year are very stiff, I think, particularly for the smaller teams. I think those teams who have a strong association with an OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) have a good degree of financial stability but I think it's very clear that we need to work hard to ensure... we should be fighting for all eleven teams that we've got on the grid now, we should be fighting for their survival and making sure that they've got sustainable business models because if we don't, at some point there will be a crisis, there will be the domino effect and we've got to... we act sometimes better under crisis, but generally it's better to avert the crisis and work together beforehand.

Q: (Alan Baldwin – Reuters) We've seen the draft calendar for next year: 21 races. We all know you've got views on expanding the calendar. I just wondered if you could say how likely it will be that you think there will actually be 21 races next year and if you think there's any chance of New Jersey making it even though it's not on the draft calendar at the present?

MW: I think 21 is tough. I've got no personal knowledge of New Jersey so I can't comment on that. Will those 21 all happen? There's lots of rumours and speculation in the paddock about whether they'll all make it. Ultimately I think Bernie's job is to go out there and put the calendar together. I think he sometimes has to speculate as to the viability or how realistic some of them are. It's easy for us to jump and complain about the calendar. I think he's got to put it together and I think we should be grateful that in the last few years, from pretty difficult and challenging times, not only has he maintained a calendar but he's been able to bring some new venues into the sport. New Jersey, of course, would be fantastic in my opinion, it would be great for the sport. If you then say who would you lose? We've all got our personal favourites and our personal least favourites, but I think it would be very disrespectful to use this platform to voice those personal opinions. I think Bernie's just got to work hard to make sure we've got a good calendar. He generally succeeds one way or another and I suspect he will next year.

SD: I would wait. I would say that as you know there will be a discussion, the World Motor Sport Council at the end of the September, so I would wait for that date to see exactly what will be the situation because you are old enough in this world to know that things may change quickly, so let's wait and see.

Q: Graeme, just a comment from you; do you welcome 21 races from a smaller team's point of view?

GL: We've always made it very very clear that we're here, in Formula One, to compete and that means a level playing field, then that means that if there's 21 races, then we race at 21 races. If it's 20 then of course the cost goes down but that's not really how we have to look at it. We can't pick and chose what we would like about this sport. We can't ask for a level playing field and then try and look at something like that. As Martin has quite rightly pointed out, Bernie puts the races on, the negotiations with the promoters from the outside seem to be tortuous, to say the least. In some cases, they are difficult to predict, some of the twists and turns, there are announcements that that race is happening and sometimes they don't. Certain venues are more attractive. Sochi is a venue that is of particular interest to us because we obviously have a large following in the Russian market place, but I think in general it's important for us to be consistent in what we ask for as a level playing field. If that's 21 races, that's 21 races.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Towards the end of Max Mosley's reign (as FIA president), he was committed towards cutting costs at a time when the sport was imploding, manufacturers were leaving. Under Jean Todt, he has implemented a regulation change for next season which is costing every single team multi-millions of pounds and seemingly put a number in jeopardy. Do you genuinely believe Jean Todt has done a good job for Formula One?

CH: I think you're referring to the engines, Ian, when you're talking about the increase in costs and in fairness to Jean, the engine discussion was in place before his presidency. Where collectively we all made mistake was not to say no. Some of us did but at the end of the day there's a process that these regulations have to go through and the teams, through the old Concorde Agreement, had the opportunity, through the Formula One Commission etc etc to stop it and we didn't so we can only, in many respects, blame ourselves.

Q: (Sam Collins – RaceCar Engineering) We've been told earlier this weekend by Pirelli that the deadline for them to supply you guys with the tyre information that they need has been put back by a month, so I would like to ask all of you how that has affected your 2014 car development?

CH: Not at all, because we don't know what to expect from Pirelli. So it seems to vary from weekend to weekend. I think they're finalising their plans etc. It's the same for everybody.

SD: One thing that I would say in all fairness I think that it will important also to give to them the possibility to test, when the new cars are there. For example, in wet conditions, we need to make sure that we will be able to do it before arriving to some weekend where we will find wet and suddenly we may discover something that was not expected, so I think we need to also consider that.

Q: (Silvia Renee Arias – Revista Parabrisas) Domenicali, talking about his future Felipe Massa said yesterday 'ask Domenicali.' I would like to ask you...

SD: I think that he did a good answer.

MW: He's a very nice man.

SD: No, but I think that in that respect nothing has changed in our position. I know that everyone is waiting for information, waiting for news, as they have for all the summer, I have to say, because if you look back, all the summers were like that. Nothing to add on what we said a couple of weeks ago. We will take our time, there's no rush to make a decision. We want to make sure that we make the right decision. We will support Felipe because this is absolutely clear: he's a great guy,

he's very much a team player and this is something that we will discuss at the appropriate time and of course, I will tell you, not only to you but to everyone.

Q: (Craig Scarborough – ScarbsF1.com) Having looked at all your aero packages this weekend, you have obviously spent quite a lot of money developing packages just for Monza. Would you like to see a return of other high speed tracks - seeing as it's the only track now that demands these packages – like Hockenheim or Paul Ricard?

RB: Yes. I would personally, yes, I think that when we had Hockenheim and Monza as the two low drag circuits it was always interesting to have some variety. I think the type of racing you get at these circuits is a little bit different and I would welcome more circuits of the type we have in Monza. Not sure how we achieve that, unfortunately. Monza is now an outsider in terms of the wings we have to make, it's a special aero package for here, made for only one race but that's the case for Spa as well. Spa's in the middle; all the other circuits I can think of we race maximum downforce. May be different next year with the engines we have; may be different with some of the rule changes next year because the lower wing disappears and the rear wing is a little bit smaller, so there are some changes coming which may narrow the gaps between high downforce and low drag circuits. But I do enjoy racing in Monza; apart from the atmosphere which is always great, it's a very interesting technical challenge for both the team and the drivers, so it's a great race.

CH: I think that Spa and Monza now... Spa... the cars have improved and the circuit's been changed slightly there. In many respects the Spa package is very very similar to here. We're able to use an awful lot of elements here in Monza that we've used two weeks ago at Spa. It's unique, it's different, it's got heritage, it's obviously a very quick race. Strategically it's a different race, the degradation tends to be pretty low here. The fuel effect is obviously one of the lowest of the year as well and I think it adds that variance to the calendar. That's the great thing about Formula One. You go from Monaco to Monza, they're two poles apart and it's part of the technical challenge that is Formula One.

MW: I think it's been said. Variety is good. I think this is a great circuit, the place is full of history, the fans are fantastic. I wouldn't necessarily want to come to Monza twice but I think circuits like this are great but probably, as Ross reflected, we're not likely to see new ones built like this.

GL: I think it's probably fair to say we spent a little bit less on our Monza package than the other teams that are here, but as I mentioned before, from our point of view that's not really the point, the challenge is the same for everybody. From a personal point of view, I think Monza has a special magic from the minute you come through the walls of the park, it's just got an atmosphere that is really something special and provides the teams with an environment for racing that's really quite unique so from that point of view it's a great place, and as I say, in terms of the financial return and Craig, you're quite right, this is a very very different circuit to others so it's difficult to make a business case, if you like, around it when you're keeping a very strong eye on the finances. But I think that's really not the point when it comes to Monza.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – The Citizen) Graeme, you've spoken about the level playing field and it's the same for everyone and you spoke about the finances. Is the level playing for your team in particular really that level? Is it the same for you as for the others, given that you don't have a commercial agreement with the commercial rights holder and you're unique in that respect?

GL: You're right, it's not level at the moment, but it's my job and the management team that I'm working with, it's our job to get it level and I think we are making some

progress there. We've been very consistent. I think we've got a very very good racing team. It's not for me to judge, but I do believe we deserve our place in Formula One, this is not an easy sport and it's not meant to be easy. I think the fact that it's difficult is one of the good things about Formula One, but we are the only one of the new teams that gained an entry in June 2009 to still be here and I think that's all credit to the people working in the team. I would love to take all the credit myself but I can't. I think we'll just continue and hopefully discussions with the commercial rights holder with a view to reaching a position where we are on a level playing field.

Ends