



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2013 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix Friday Press Conference Transcript

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TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Graeme LOWDON (Marussia), Paul HEMBERY (Pirelli), Cyril ABITEBOUL (Caterham), Franz TOST (Toro Rosso), Claire WILLIAMS (Williams), Martin WHITMARSH (McLaren)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Franz, can we start with you? Obviously, Daniil Kvyat coming in next year. What lies ahead in the next few weeks and months in terms of getting up to speed for his Super Licence, practicing, testing? And what expectations do you have for him?

Franz TOST: We will have a test with him next week to get the Super Licence. Afterwards, he will go out on Friday in American and in Sao Paulo and of course we will have winter time, where he has to do a lot of work with physical training, mental training, then working on the simulator to prepare him as good as possible for the next season. I'm convinced he will do a good job because he is a very high-skilled driver. He has done, this year so far, a very good job in GP3 where he still can win the championship. He has 131 points, seven points behind the leader, and I'm quite sure that he will show a very good race tomorrow, and on Sunday. Apart from this he showed a very good performance in Formula 3 – in the FIA Formula 3 European Championship – where he won the last race in Zandvoort, starting from the pole position. If I remember correctly, his first race, in Hockenheim, he was also in pole position and finished the race in third. For us, for Red Bull and for Toro Rosso, he is a very high-skilled driver and I think that he will have a successful future.

Does this a little bit like a home race for you, because obviously IPIC is getting more and more influential in your set-up. Most of your sponsors seem to come from their group, so is it beginning to feel like a home race for you?

FT: Yes, the grand prix here in Abu Dhabi is one of the highlights for Scuderia Toro Rosso because we have a very close business relationship with IPIC, which is a company based here in Abu Dhabi and our main sponsors, Cepsa, Nova Chemicals and Falcon Private Bank belong to this company and therefore we are every year very much looking forward to coming here and I just hope that we will improve our performance, which was not so good today, to show a good race on Sunday.

Moving to Graeme, you've already secured Jules Bianchi for 2014. What's the right kind of driver to put alongside him for next year? Which direction are you looking?

Graeme LOWDON: It sounds simple to say a quick one but that's what everybody wants – a quick driver. I think something special about next year are the new regulations for the power unit. That's going to create really quite a few new challenges for everybody up and down the grid. I think there's a very strong

argument to say keeping the same line-up we currently have would be a good thing. That said, typically at this stage of the year, in previous years we wouldn't have finalised our driver line-up and it's the same this time. I think we'll just have to evaluate where we stand, what's the best solution for the team moving forward and then announce in due course. I have to say both drivers this year have done an exceptional job. I think a lot of people have forgotten that we started this year with a rookie line-up and that's quite unusual and I think both guys have done a very, very good job, sometimes under some difficult and challenging circumstances. So, we'll see how we move into next year but I think there is a strong argument to say that trying to keep the same line-up would be a very positive thing for the team.

You've secured your commercial arrangement with the commercial rights holder. What does that allow you to do now and what difference does it make to you?

GL: I think in all honesty the biggest difference is how we're perceived in the outside world. It was a very strange situation when most of the teams in Formula One – in fact, all of the teams in Formula One – had an agreement with the commercial rights holder, apart from our team. It quite clearly would lead to questions when we're looking at potential partners and sponsors for the future. Probably the biggest thing is that external perception in a way. We're perceived to be on the same grid, in the same pit lane as every other team now and it's just removed some of that uncertainty and allows us to focus on what we should be focusing on, which is going racing.

Cyril, coming to you. Obviously you're in a race with Marussia for that important 10th place in the Constructors Championship. This time they're ahead, a position that hinges on their 13th place in round two. Do you believe you can get that 10th place back off them again before the end of the season?

Cyril ABITEBOUL: It's tough. It's going to be a challenge, in particular because we don't have all the answers in our hands. Obviously, we need to do the best we can, make sure that we go for them in turn one in particular, but also to finish the races, that we are reliable. Even if we do all of that and if we achieve a good result, we need more, we need a little bit of external help. Maybe a bit of retirements would assist. So, hopefully that's something we will secure. We secured that last year in the last minute of the last race, so why not again this year? But I'm not against having that a bit earlier than last year to be honest.

Q: What's the state of play with your drivers for next year? What are the important criteria for you and when do you hope to have that concluded?

CA: We would like to have that done fairly quickly, I would say. In particular sooner than last year – because we were late in confirming our line-up –because there is an awful lot of work to be done between the teams and the drivers. A lot of teams are changing, including for the drivers, and the sooner we can integrate and work together, the better it will be for next year. Having said that, in terms of what we want, there is a lot of options. Consistency is a good thing, so one of the options is that we continue with the two drivers that we have, building on the relationship that we have started. But everything is changing anyway, so I think one thing we want is someone who is reliable in his feedback because we will have to develop the car during the season. We didn't develop much the car this season. Next season will be a totally different ball game – in particular the start of the season when everything will be new. We will have to adapt ourselves, the drivers will have to adapt themselves, so experience might be something that is interesting but more than

anything I think someone who's capable of being almost transparent and providing the most accurate feedback as possible to the engineers who're trying to understand how the car is working, is something that will be important for us.

Q: Claire, do you feel you're putting in place or making progress towards putting in place your ideal line-up for 2014?

Claire WILLIAMS: We're making progress. I think we'd ideally like to be able to make our driver announcement soon. Historically we've probably left it until the end of the season. I couldn't give you a date now as to when we're going to make the announcement but we're definitely making progress, yes.

Q: Obviously we find ourselves in the Middle East. You and your father have done a lot of work in Qatar. Is there any chance of getting any closer to them getting involved in the race team?

CW: We've been in Qatar for three years now. We've had a business out there that's developing flywheel technology and also working on road safety campaigns. It's not an easy marketplace, it's Frank's project – I think he came out earlier this week or last saying he'd really like to get the deal done and he's working really hard to do that. He's coming out tomorrow and will be spending some time down in Qatar next week – but we'll have to wait and see.

Q: Paul, can you give us an update on what the situation was with Paul di Resta's tyre during that session.

Paul HEMBERY: From what we've understood there was something to do with the brakes. Not sure what but that's the only info we've had so far.

Q: Where does Pirelli stand in terms of tyre supply contract for 2014?

PH: It's done really. There's one last piece to be done with the FIA. The lawyers are dealing with that – when you get lawyers involved with anything it tends to add time to whatever you're doing. So, it's just rumbling along.

Q: What are the next steps you're taking in terms of preparation of the tyres for 2014?

PH: There's a couple of things that are happening quite quickly. We've got a 1000km test with McLaren coming up in Valtellina. We will be bringing to the Brazil race for P1, a couple of sets of tyres of the prototype for next season. We're hopeful to do a couple of tests in December and January with an old-generation car and there's been some good ideas going forward as to what we could do during the pre-season itself. It's clearly a big step forward, if we're looking at it selfishly from our point of view, to be in Bahrain for pre-season testing, the temperatures will be right, aggressive track and that will be very, very useful for us to understand the real impact of the new cars.

Q: Martin, obviously you're on a big recruitment drive at the moment, Peter Prodromou amongst others that you've been pulling in. Can you share with us your vision for the team and where you want to take it the next few years.

Martin WHITMARSH: Well, I think it's the same vision we've always had. We're here to win and this year's fallen short of that. So, when those things happen you reappraise your organisation, the resources, and you try harder. So, we've been going through that process and that's meant we've been out recruiting and we're pleased with some of the recruiting that we've done. But in the meanwhile we've still got to produce a quick car next year – so we're working hard to do that.

Q: You've got Kevin Magnussen and Stoffel Vandoorne to bring through into Formula One. Are you making any progress towards getting them a race drive for next year – or any kind of drive?

MW: Yes, we are. I think both will be racing next year. We didn't set out to have perhaps the two hottest prospects at the same time but I think that's in effect what we have with both of them. They both deserve to be at the highest level and we're working hard. I'm fairly confident that we'll have both of them racing next year.

Q: In Formula One?

MW: No, both of them racing next year.

Q: Either of them in Formula One?

MW: Possibly one of them.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Luke Smith – NBC Sports) Franz, I want to talk about Jean-Eric Vergne because he obviously missed out on the Red Bull seat. Where does his future lie within the Red Bull set-up? Is he purely a stop-gap before you feel that either Antonio Felix da Costa or Carlos Sainz Jnr are ready for a seat at Toro Rosso?

FT: I don't see this. He will race for us next year. Jean-Eric Vergne is a high skilled driver. He has shown a couple of very good races and if the team provides him with a good competitive car, he is always - and at every race track - able to show a very good performance. I see a good future for him.

Q: (Mark Bryans – PA) Claire, I just wanted to ask, in terms of driver line-ups, is it more important now more than ever to get that nailed down sooner rather than later because of all the regulations coming in and the changes that are happening throughout the sport next year? Will it be better to have those people in place going forward sooner than you would normally?

CW: Yeah, I think clearly you want your driver line-up confirmed as soon as possible, so that they can start working with your engineers in order to support the development programme that you have in place, but most drivers have contracts that run up until certainly the last race of the season, and if not, the end of December so they can't necessarily come in and help you when you want them to anyway. But yeah, inevitably, you want them to come in as soon as possible and just to get the whole announcement made as well and out there in the public domain and everyone can move on and everyone knows everyone else's future.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – RacingLines) We've got five team principals and a very interesting split because you've got the two in the front who are members of the Formula One strategy group and then we've got Franz who's... although Toro Rosso isn't the associate team is, and then at the back we've got two who aren't. I'd like to ask all five team principals' opinion which side of the fence you're on, how you justify or don't the strategy group and particularly the two at the back, because what we have is a situation where a majority is actually dominated by a minority, a privileged minority and that, where I come from – South Africa – used to be called apartheid?

Q: Let's start with one of the non-members, Graeme.

GL: Thanks James. I think it's disappointing not to be included, that's one thing for sure. If we're looking at sports' governance then sport is fundamentally built upon the ethics of fair play and everything that goes with it. And so, when you're looking at a body that is making really the strategic direction then it would certainly be nice to have some inclusion. You would look for some form of democracy, some transparency and some accountability. From our point of view, we're not too sure how it's all meant to work or is going to work because we're not part of it, so it's really quite difficult to even say whether this new body is going to be able to make the correct strategic decisions, but inherently, you have to think, when you're outside of a group, you have to think 'how can that group be making a decision that could be beneficial for everyone involved, including us?' So it's quite an enormous leap of faith, I think, that the teams who are excluded from it are being asked to make, that the structure will work. Obviously only time will tell and the group has an incredibly onerous role to play, because it has the future of the sport that so many of us depend upon and our employees and the wider supplier base. So it has a very very important task and you would intuitively think that in particular an element of democracy would be good but I guess time will tell.

CW: I think that from the outset we would like to say that Williams as a team, we're pleased that we are on it. Clearly it's important that we are and the reason being is that we're an historic team in the sport, we've been racing for 36 years. But Graeme talking about the democratic process around it, I don't necessarily want to comment on that but I think from our perspective, certainly, we will be going in there, clearly representing Williams but also, I hope, representing the other teams and the greater good of our sport as well.

CA: First, I think an F1 strategy group is a good thing. I believe it's something that was missing generally in the landscape of Formula One; that's - to a degree - running the risk of upsetting some people. Maybe it's a bit too technocratic. Having said that, I think we need to preserve the working group that will properly execute and follow up any decision that is made by the F1 strategy group. So I think generally that to have a group that is also thinking of the marketing side of things, the commercial side of things, ensuring the final consequences of the decisions that are made by technical sporting people, is the right thing to do. And maybe we will not come up with some situations in which we are... for instance, the engine which is quite expensive - so that, in itself, is a good thing looking ahead. Having said that, I think that regarding inclusion, I would totally share Graeme's view and more than anything, I just simply don't understand why all teams are not represented. I think we would not want a situation whereby one team can block a process and we need to make sure that we are progressive and that's one of the things in any democracy but that, in itself, does not justify the fact that half of the grid is not represented.

Q: Franz, you're in a unique position in that your sister team is very much represented.

FT: Exactly, I have a good relationship with Christian Horner from Red Bull Racing and therefore we are a little bit involved, but nevertheless, the strategy group does not approve new rules because this comes from the Formula One Commission and in the Formula One Commission all the teams are involved and there's a working process; there I don't see any problem.

Q: Final word from Martin; is there a FOTA dynamic to this, in terms of the fact you're part of that, you represent their interests as well as your own?

MW: I think that we're in an evolving process at the moment. The full governance of the sport hasn't been defined in the new Concorde. I agree with many... there's as much inclusion as you can have in the sport is a good thing and I think we've been consistent in that. I think McLaren endeavours to be a good citizen within the sport.

But I also agree with some of the things that Cyril said, that Formula One... we haven't done enough contemplation of the strategy or the strategic development of our sport. I think we can do a better job together in that regard. Let's see what happens. I think it's going to evolve over the next few months and hopefully it will evolve to a shape and a form where everyone feels comfortable.

Q: (Christian Nimmervoll – Motor Sport total. Com) At the beginning of the engine cycle, one manufacturer was allowed to make some changes.

Obviously next year a new engine format is coming in – the turbo engine. I wonder if any process is in place, if any discussions are going on with regard to homologation and what happens when the engines are spread quite a lot at the beginning of the season? Is there any process in place to address that?

CA: Yeah. I think the first thing is that no one really knows what's going to happen at the first race, so it's very difficult, because we are talking about a framework or some re-tuning that will be allowed according to something that we don't really know for the time being and there won't be a magic KPI (Key Performance Indicator) or performance indicator that would summarise the whole performance of the package. So I think there must be an element of good faith in this process, see where we are, making sure that we get something that is sensible, such that any manufacturer who is short of performance is capable of doing something, also someone who is really too strong is capable of doing something else. Honestly I think it's a bit *terra incognita*, I think we have to wait and see, unfortunately.

MW: Well, in answer to the question, actually there is no process at the moment to do so. Clearly it isn't as straightforward as just understanding peak power which is the traditional metric. As Cyril pointed out there are lots of metrics that will affect the performance of the car, the efficiency of the cooling system, fuel efficiency etc etc. So it's a much more complex process but inevitably, if there's a big mis-match, then the sport would be wise to deal with it. We can't and shouldn't afford to lose automotive manufacturers from the sport. They are the biggest investors in our sport and it's important that we find a situation where the sport is perceived to be level, it's got a good competition and there's an active interest from as many automotive manufacturers as possible. But at the moment there's no process.

Q: (Gary Meenaghan – The National) To Cyril and Graeme: could you please put a value on securing tenth place, not only in terms of finances – basic financial value – but also in terms of how it will affect the future development of the team going forwards?

GL: Sadly, we can't put a value on it because the terms of our commercial agreements are confidential and quite rightly so. But we're all here to race, everyone in the team is a racer so... I get on very well with Cyril but I want to beat him and that's the essence of our sport and that goes for every single person in the team. As you know, it takes a few hundred people to design and build a car and to race it and every single one of them is highly competitive and you can see when you go back to the factory there's a... the factory's a great barometer of what's happening competitively at the race track. Tenth sounds a lot better than eleventh, ninth sounds better than tenth and so it goes on.

CA: Exactly the same. We believe that we deserve this tenth place and we are going to fight to obtain it, as I said at the beginning, but one thing I should make clear is that it does not jeopardise the team's future - maybe my future but not the team's future.

Ends

