



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

## Press Information

### 2013 Brazilian Grand Prix Friday Press Conference Transcript

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TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Eric BOULLIER (Lotus), Stefano DOMENICALI (Ferrari), Ross BRAWN (Mercedes), John BOOTH (Marussia), Cyril ABITEBOUL (Caterham)

#### PRESS CONFERENCE

**I'll start with you Cyril. One last chance to try to snatch that 10<sup>th</sup> place in the Constructors' table? From Caterham's perspective, how costly would finishing last in the championship be? Can you afford that to happen?**

**Cyril ABITEBOUL:** As you know, I can't answer that question. I think it will be essentially costly for the morale of the team. Everybody believes that we deserve it. All due respect, I think we both have done a good job, but the figures tend say we deserve it just a little bit more than those guys. So, I mean that will be a race. I think whatever the result we are committed to the sport, so it's not going to make a huge difference. I mean that will give a bit of a headache to my financial director but apart from that it's not going to change our entire strategy to Formula One.

**How has the morale been in the team? From what we were hearing yesterday the rain dance was being performed on a regular basis by your drivers.**

**CA:** Yeah, well it has to be performed again on Saturday. It's been a drier season on Sundays. We've had quite a few events with some rain on Friday, sometimes on Saturday as well, and each time we've had rain on Saturday in particular we've been able to do something, in Spa and in Monaco, where we managed to qualify in Q2. So it's a good memory. We like rain, so let's see on Sunday.

**We'll come to you in a moment John for your thoughts on this battle, but the big changes, Cyril, coming up next season with the regulations. How beneficial would it be to have a more experience driver at your team, a Heikki Kovalainen for instance?**

**CA:** For instance! First of all I need to make sure that Lotus is not going to keep him. But apart from that, it will be a good thing to have some experience. But everything is changing next year. So, how much experience matters when everything is changing is one question. Having said that what we really want to have, because development, iteration, will be very fast at the start of next year in particular, you need a driver that all engineers, all the team can rely upon. So you want to have proper feedback, accurate feedback to be able to improve the car on an event-to-event basis. So that's what we need. We need a driver who is transparent in the way that he is driving the car and providing feedback to everyone.

**John, 10<sup>th</sup> place in the Constructors' Championship: can you afford to lose that 10<sup>th</sup> place this weekend?**

**John BOOTH:** I think I pretty much agree with Cyril on his take on it. There may be a small financial consideration. But it's the sporting matter that is more important. We are the smallest team, we operate with the smallest budget, but we are racers and we want to improve. Tenth place would be a massive plus for the guys in the factory.

**I'm sure you don't agree with Cyril when he says that Caterham deserve that 10<sup>th</sup> place more.**

**JB:** It's been a good scrap this year. There has been a large spell in the middle of the year when Caterham looked much stronger than us. We had a good race last week and we think we're getting on top of our issues. But it's been a long, long season. We took that 10<sup>th</sup> place in Malaysia. The last update we brought to the car of any significance was Barcelona, so it's been a long old season hanging on to that 10th place and it's been pretty nerve-wracking to be truthful.

**With the updates that haven't been coming since Barcelona, where do you see the improvements that have been made at the Marussia team?**

**JB:** We've brought some small improvements and we've worked very hard at optimising what we have. I think we have gone forward but it would have been better to have two or three large upgrades through the season. But we are the smallest team and to build a 2014 car that has to be on the track in Jerez in January was a big feat for us and we've had to concentrate on that very hard.

**Thanks very much. Eric, if I can come to you. The fight is on for you for second place between yourself, Ferrari and Mercedes. Off the track, the fight continues to try to attract extra investment to the Lotus team. Can you give us all an update on where you stand with that on this Friday afternoon in Brazil?**

**Eric BOULLIER:** Well, there is still some discussion ongoing, especially now between bankers. The process is not fully completed but I think part of it has been done, which is obviously a good sign for the weekend and we hope that everything is closed by early next week.

**When you say backers, you refer to Quantum Motorsports?**

**EB:** Yes, sorry. But about the fight for the championship, I think second place, or even third place we need a little bit of help to get there. But maybe thanks to the funny weather we have we can expect the best of it.

**Looking ahead to 2014. With the uncertainty over the extra investment to the team, how has that hindered your chances of attracting the right driver to the team, the driver you see as the man you want to partner Romain Grosjean?**

**EB:** Obviously you need to have the right package to get the right driver. But obviously sometimes the right driver is with the right package. So we will do our best to keep our force all together. That for me is the main point. Make sure the team is sticking all together. Keep, let's say, the best expertise we have onboard and make sure we can deliver the right cars and the right package on track, that's the most important point.

**Still confident you will get the man you want in that seat?**

**EB:** I'm still confident I will get one of the guys I want, yes.

**Q: Stefano, you bid farewell to Felipe Massa this weekend, eight years that you've worked together with him at Ferrari. How would you sum up Felipe and what have been your highlights of the last eight years with him?**

**Stefano DOMENICALI:** Well, first of all let me say one thing before going to the question, that is to express my solidarity to the Italian population of Sardinia that has been hit very deeply by flooding and the hurricane. Our thoughts are with those families and this population that is suffering a lot in this moment.

Going to Felipe, I think Felipe is leaving with an incredible weekend here, today in this city because, you know, we have the tendency to pass through everything without thinking. I think that what Felipe did with Ferrari has an incredible history. We had incredibly moments together. Difficult too, of course – but he is an incredible guy who deserved what he had and even if it seems a little bit too personal, I consider him a world champion 2008 because he deserved that title here in São Paulo. So, I think what I can say is that he has always shown his dedication to the team, to the Ferrari family and we wish to him all the best success for his future because he's young – but for sure he will bring Ferrari in his heart forever.

**Q: In terms of that second-placed fight, what would it mean to take that second place in the championship, to make up the 15 points to Mercedes and what would it say about your season if you didn't end up as runners-up?**

**SD:** Well, first of all, we are fighting with a very strong team and we will not cheer like hell if we be second and we will not be depressed if we will not be in second position because of course in sport you try to do the maximum that you can. Unfortunately this year it was not possible to fight for first position as we were last year. This year, we have the duty to try to do the maximum, knowing that it is not easy. But in this condition everything is possible. So nothing will change in our approach and we will stay focussed up until the end. And of course, we will try to do that up to last lap – but it will unfortunately change so much the consideration on a very difficult season that has been the case for us this year.

**Q: Finally Ross, it's not often in your career that you'd celebrate second place in the Constructors' Championship but I'd suggest if you finish runners-up there would be a wry smile on your face. Are you happy with what you've achieved at Mercedes?**

**Ross BRAWN:** I think happy with the progress. Obviously I hope this is not the end. I hope there's more progress in the next few years because certainly our ambition is to win the championship, win the Drivers' and Constructors', so second place would be a boost for everyone in the team, particularly as we came from fifth last year and I think the improvement in the performance of the car has been quite significant this year. We've scored over 300 points so far this season; we scored 140-something last year, so it's a substantial improvement over where we were and I think everyone can be pleased – or reasonably pleased – with that. Of course it's not where we ultimately want to be, so we need to have a measured response if we're able to finish second.

**Q: You've assembled quite a team at Mercedes, on and off the track. With consistency over the winter, is it possible to challenge for the championship and be on a par with Red Bull?**

**RB:** We believe so. They're very, very strong competitors. They don't forget. You can't forget the things you know. They were very impressive in the second half of this year. The progress they've made in the second half of this season has been

very impressive but it is shaken up a bit next year and I think the fact we made a commitment almost two years ago now to start the 2014 programme... we are a team similar to Ferrari where we do an engine and a chassis and I think that's a significant benefit for next season. The engine has been very much designed alongside the chassis to get the best integrated package. I think the engine is going to be one of the differentiators next year. I don't think it's going to be the only one but I think it's much more significant than the engines have been the last few years. So, there is scope to be mildly optimistic that we can have a run next year.

**Q: Finally, with regard to 2014 and specifically the tyres, you didn't really get a chance to try out the prototype tyres today because of the rain. With Pirelli requesting a December tyre test with at least one of the teams, is that feasible for a team like Mercedes or for any team on the grid? And is it vital, before the first proper pre-season test?**

**RB:** I think whatever flows now has to be fair for all the teams. I think we're in a very delicate position. I think we all want to help Pirelli provide the best tyre they can next year but it would be unfortunate if one team had the benefit of running a tyre to the exclusion of all the other teams. Today would have been the ideal situation for everyone to get a first look at the 2014 tyre, take the data away, and that would have been reasonably fair. I think if we end up with only one team running the 2014 tyres before next year, with no provision today or no ability today to run the tyre, that could end up a pretty unfair situation, that someone's going to have an insight into what the tyre does and how it works. So, I think we have to look at that very carefully, how we can do something that is fair and proper for all the teams.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Stefano, regarding exactly the last question, tyres, Pirelli is claiming more tests before the start of the season. This year tyres had an effect on the game and you were affected by that. Are you worried that kind of situation can be reproduced in the future?**

**SD:** Well, for sure the tyre situation has had an effect on this championship because with the change of specification, for sure something that never happened came in place this year. I think that we always give our will to help Pirelli in order to find the best solutions, in order to find very competitive tyres that can be used in all the conditions, where the drivers can push and show their driving skills, so on our side we have given our will to help them in all the conditions that they can. I agree with what Ross said about being able to be balanced and having the equality within the teams but it will reach a point where for sure if there's no kind of test, the negative hit of not having a test will be really important, so I think that in the next days we need to decide what to do for the future in this very hot topic.

**Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Eric, Kimi was third in the Drivers' championship and this year he's not in the top three; how would you rate his season: was it worse or better?**

**EB:** Well, sportingly I think it has been better obviously. Last year he was just re-joining the F1 field so maybe he needed a little bit of fine tuning at the beginning of the season, even if he was scoring good points. I think this year he started with a win, so obviously he had a much better start and I think overall it was better.

**Q: (Tariq Panja – Bloomberg News) I'm not really a Formula One reporter but I'm a sports reporter based in Brazil. This country will have two of the major**

**sporting events, the World Cup coming next year and the summer Olympics in 2016. Ross and Stefano, you've been coming here for many years, what do you think of Brazil's preparedness for these mega events? Has it been improving over time as you've been coming to this track, for instance?**

**RB:** I think there's a number of things we enjoy about Brazil. There's always a great passion here for sport. The crowd is always incredibly enthusiastic and that feeds through to the teams. We enjoy racing here. It's fair to say that these are not the best facilities we enjoy during the season but I think the enthusiasm and passion for the sport compensates for that and we do enjoy coming here. We don't have any problems in terms of organisation and preparation here, everything turns up, all goes through customs OK, we don't have any dramas that are unusual, so we have a good race here and we don't have any unique problems.

**SD:** I couldn't agree more with what Ross has said. On our situation, it's really great, we enjoy being here and I can understand the situation of the Olympics and World Cup is different because you may have people coming from abroad, you have different locations, different logistical problems but on that, honestly, I'm not in a position to comment because I don't really know the situation. What I can say is that what we are experiencing is a unique atmosphere, when the passion is one of the key factors and I'm sure that will also happen in the events that will come in the future here in Brazil.

**Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Question to John and Cyril: speaking to Christian Horner yesterday, he remarked that even for a team of their resource and their standing given they're four times World Champions, that trying to find the additional cost for next year, which he estimated to be around £20m was proving incredibly difficult. He did also note that if it's difficult for them, it must be exceptionally hard for you guys. So can you give us an idea as to the troubles you've been going through, trying to find those kind of resources for next year?**

**JB:** I'd love to be struggling as much as Christian is struggling at the moment, that's for sure. We have known about the cost of the powertrain for many months now, so it shouldn't come as a surprise for anybody and everybody I assume has planned accordingly. As far as we're concerned, we knew about the cost and we think we have a manageable business for next year and going forward.

**CA:** Not much to add; obviously it's something we anticipated and that has even affected our strategy of spend for this year because we knew that there would be so much to invest both from a factory perspective in terms of engine costs, contractual costs but also in terms of car build, so that we have a cash flow that is structured in order to absorb all of that. We are going through that now. But there is a reason why, to do a degree, we have started development quite early; it was precisely to absorb those costs.

**Q: So basically cut down this year and leave yourselves room for next year?**

**CA & JB:** Yup.

**RB:** I think it is challenging next year, but we all have to remember that if we cut the budgets in half we would still go racing. It's the standards of which we want to go racing that causes the pressure on the budget. It's not that there's insufficient money, it's the fact that we all want to compete at the highest possible standard, and that means that we push the budgets as hard as we can. If everybody's budget tomorrow was reduced by 50 percent, it wouldn't make any difference.

**Q: Can you see that ever happening?**

**RB:** No. But that's a fact. It wasn't so many years ago that we were able to come to every race at every track with reliable cars for half of what we are spending now. That's the nature of Formula One.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – RacingLines)** Gentlemen, customer cars have been a contentious issue recently. Given what you're just discussing about budgets and costs and whatever, there are constant rumours about teams going out of business or possibly going out of business. I believe that Formula One is possibly looking at three car teams, eight three car teams for a 24 car grid as opposed to five As and five Bs. How do you people feel about that, because it will affect you all differently?

**EB:** Well, obviously nobody has a crystal ball. I think everybody agrees that for the future, as ratio costs for the new costs or inverse revenue costs has to change, and it's true that customer cars was brought in to the discussion. I personally don't think it's the right path to go, it's against the DNA of F1 I think and it may create some other issues which to find the funds to run customer cars, to run modern or current cars, I think if F1 needs to go one path, it is to guarantee a number of cars on the grid and obviously a number of teams running three cars would be, for me, a better solution.

**JB:** I think I'm correct in saying that under current regulations if the numbers of cars on the grid falls below a certain number then certain teams are required to run three cars but as far as I know there's been no discussion about three car teams in the near future. Certainly I've not been part of the discussions and I assume it would need a big change in regulations to achieve that.

**Q: Is that something you would welcome, though, or not?**

**JB:** We're finding two cars tough enough without running three.

**CA:** Well, personally, I'm just like Eric and most of the teams, I believe. I'm not in favour of customer cars. Having said that, I think the situation we have is not necessarily sustainable. Clearly an analysis must be made regarding what to do and make sure that we anticipate that correctly and there is also a gliding path to whatever solution is retained, whether it's a budget cap, RRA. I take the point, of course. If we're all at fifty or one hundred million budget, the show will be no different at all so I think that we need to be sensible about that, make sure that we are doing the right thing. If a third car is one thing to do, why not, but in your example there were only eight teams so I would like to hope that we are not one of the three teams that will be out of the game.

**Q: And this will be the problem, Ross, if you have eight teams of three cars, then three teams would have to make way.**

**RB:** Well, I don't think it would be that way round. I think it would be if we had some teams drop out and the number of entrants, the number of cars entered dropped below a certain level, then we do have to support extra entries. We're not a supporter of customer cars, we think the identity of the teams is important, the fact that the teams design and build their own cars is important but however if Formula One faced a situation where we didn't have sufficient cars on the grid, then of course a three car team is a possibility, but only in those circumstances.

**SD:** I agree. First of all we need to see what we want for the future of Formula One. We are in a situation where for sure we are different in philosophies with the teams that are in the championship, there are different situations, so I think that solution, that situation can be driven really if some teams will not be there in the future. Because also now, when we discuss about cost-cutting measures, of course the goals that we have in mind are different and maybe with the goals that we have in mind, we don't expect... we don't even reach the half of what the expenditure of a

small team, so we really need to understand what is the future of Formula One, what are the objectives that can be discussed in a common way because otherwise you can cherry-pick different measures but you will not really have a clear focus on what should be the focus of Formula One and this is really a point of discussion that we have on the table since many many years. I'm sure that very soon this will be the most important topic of discussion.

**Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Eric, my question regards your potential investor, Mansoor Ijaz. A cursory Google-search of his background shows a few problematic business dealings including the use of value-less companies as collateral for loans. I was wondering what proof you've been given of the existence of his money and whether or not any due diligence had been done.**

**EB:** Fortunately we don't have to base our judgement only on Google, with all respect to Google for what they are doing. To answer the question, yes, we have very serious proof of funds and good compliance of what is Quantum Motorsport.

**Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Ross, given what you said, the fact that you could race on half the money and the show wouldn't change, if the FIA were ever to potentially look down the route of a budget cap again, is it something that potentially could be considered somewhere down the line, or has the RRA proven that it's something that could never ever work, given certain other teams' objections to the way teams work?**

**RB:** Well, I think the conclusions for me for the RRA is that there was a structure of a system that could work but quite clearly wasn't a system that could work with self-regulation from the teams themselves. It was a system that had to be policed, we believe by the FIA but it seemed that we couldn't get enough agreement within the teams that that should happen, so it failed on that basis. I don't think it failed because it wouldn't work, in my view it failed because we couldn't engage the governing body in policing the system. I think whatever system we have is going to affect the competitiveness of teams and therefore it has to be controlled by the sporting body. It can't be controlled by the teams themselves and I think any attempt to have self-regulation of something so important as budget and resource is futile, because of the nature of the teams. We're very competitive and will always be looking to push the boundaries. If you look at the technical regulations, we push the boundaries all the time, quite rightly, and then we have a governing body that taps us back into place, and also a governing body that we can get a reference from. If we have a query, we can go to them, we can ask them, we can argue and we can get an opinion on whether something is legal or not. Unless you have that process with the financial control, it can never succeed because one team's interpretation of a regulation will be different to another team's interpretation of a regulation so you have to have this process going on where you introduce a constraint, a control and then a mechanism to police it and a mechanism to answer queries and regulate queries and questions on the regulations to refine the regulations because no set of regulations will be a hundred percent perfect from day one, they need refining. We draw the analogy with the technical regulations; it works pretty well, we occasionally have a big blow up about something but most of the time it's good and if we had the same with the financial regulations, I think that would be the only way forward, because I can't see any other way. Attempts to change the technical regulations to reduce the costs have historically failed. They can push it back a bit for a while and then the teams find something else to spend the money on so the budgets never really change.

**Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week)** I wanted to refer back to Dieter's earlier question about the potential of three car teams, because it seemed to me that the three of you in the back row were aware of the concept whereas it was new to the two of you in the front row, I believe, I got from John's answer. Could you please tell me, John and Cyril, what level of communication you've had from the teams in the strategy commission and how much you are aware of the formal and informal discussions they've been having?

**CA:** I think we have had the same minutes as they have had.

**Q: So you have received the information?**

**CA:** We have received as much information as they have received after the meeting.

**Q: Same for you, John?**

**JB:** Yup.

**Q: So no complaints about that, then?**

**JB:** No, that's not wholly true. I think Cyril's statement is absolutely correct but to say that there is no complaints wouldn't be accurate.

**CA:** To be a bit more... to develop that just a bit, we have an F1 commission actually in a few days and we are also circulated the agenda of the next F1 strategy meeting so I wouldn't be concerned too much about that because ultimately we have a seat, we have a voice. Obviously we are outnumbered, we are one or two, just a couple but still, Formula One knows very well that it cannot really live without everyone, so maybe the process is a bit less inclusive than it's been in the past. There is also a meeting of the F1 strategy group so for me it's more the goodwill and the agenda in general of the F1 strategy group rather than who is sitting in it that will make a difference.

**Q: (Pablo Juanarena – Marca)** It's a question for Stefano but could be for Ross or Eric: today, Red Bull has used the 2014 tyres, one lap for Sebastian. It seems that they are always a step ahead. Do you think it's that way?

**SD:** What I can say is that they are in a situation that if they had crashed today nothing would have changed for them, so I think that they took... not a risk because that's maybe not the right word but they want to take some measurement in that condition. If they were happy to do it in that way I don't think it's a matter of being a step ahead. It's a matter of decision or a possibility considering the conditions that they have... they are in this specific weekend.

**Q: Was there a possibility that you would run a car on the slick tyres, even just for one lap this morning?**

**SD:** No.

**RB:** We always work on the principle that bad information is worse than no information. With all due respect, Red Bull may well have found something out that we don't anticipate but we couldn't understand what you could learn in those conditions, even though it looked like they were trying to take profiles of the tyres and so on, it was difficult to see how it could be useful and certainly our conclusion was there was no use for us with what we wanted to do to run the tyre this morning.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – RacingLines)** The two things one can never have enough of: power and sponsors yet if I have a look at your shirts, if I'd gone back a year, your shirts would look identical with the exception of one or two stickers or logos on your shirts. Formula One hasn't really attracted any major sponsors for the last three or four years. Is there a fundamental problem in Formula One, because other sports are certainly attracting them?



**EB:** We have attracted some blue chip brands, Microsoft and Burn, which is the Coca Cola group. But it's true that the biggest deals have been done with FOM recently which is quite an achievement. I think the question is that everybody knows the world economic situation is not as brilliant as ten years ago so I don't there is some big comparison or let's say some conclusion to be drawn today.

**SD:** From our side, I have to say that we have attracted a new sponsor, a big one like UPS for example this year. We have basically renewed with all our major sponsors, major partners so we have quite a solid base of partners that are really investing with us and of course they are with us because there is a win-win situation. So far, I would say that I don't see that directly because maybe Ferrari has different options to exploit with the partners for sure but I think that in general, in a situation where there is this economic crisis it is important not to devalue too much the sale of what you have, if you can, of course. Otherwise then when the economy will start again, it will be more difficult to keep the level of investment that is valid for the Formula One World Championship.

**JB:** I think there's been a trend in motor sport in general, particularly Formula One over the years that it's two or three years behind the world economy and the initial crash of the economy didn't seem to affect Formula One whereas three years later it is starting to bite. As the economy recovers, I'm sure we will be two or three years behind, picking up again. And maybe we should ask ourselves if we're offering the right exciting package to the viewers as well.

**CA:** On our side, we are quite lucky to have some nice brands associated to us because I think in general the Caterham project is something that is quite exciting and attractive for sponsors and investors, but I think now we have a duty to deliver because they have not let us down, we should not let them down so performance is what can buy interest in that sport so that's what we need to focus on. More generally on Formula One, I believe that it also goes back to the question of performance. We need to make sure that the grid in general is in the right window and that also the TV coverage which obviously focuses on people that perform, is distributed in not a fair manner because there must be a winner, there must be a loser and we are losers right now but we must make sure that we are part of the show and we've been missing to be part of the show because of the facts, so it's one thing to be getting back to the economic model and the regulation structured, we need to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to be in the show.

**RB:** Well, we've been quite fortunate; perhaps or our people have worked very well and the number of our partners have improved or we have improved our deals with them. Blackberry was new for us, we know Blackberry faces some challenges at the moment, but that's a major sponsor that came to the team this year. But no, we've seen some reasonable upsides with most of our partners but it is very tough and as John said, there is a lag in the system that is impacting motor sport and Formula One, but hopefully with the improved economic environment that some countries are experiencing we can pick it up and get it going again.

Ends