



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2015 Hungarian Grand Prix Friday Press Conference Transcript 24.07.2015

TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Franz TOST (Toro Rosso), Yasuhisa ARAI (Honda), Paul HEMBERY (Pirelli), Toto WOLFF (Mercedes), Graeme LOWDON (Manor), Christian HORNER (Red Bull Racing)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Clearly a difficult weekend for Formula One as a whole, with the loss of Jules Bianchi, so directing the question to Graeme – as the man most closely associated with him – how have the team members dealt with the weekend so far?

Graeme LOWDON: Well it's been, as you say, a very difficult week. To be honest, it's been a very difficult nine months and this weekend, I won't lie, it has been more difficult than I thought, actually. But I have to say it has been made a lot easier by the F1 family. As you know Jules was universally liked in the paddock and the support of everybody to the team has been fantastic. I think the reason why everyone has found it so difficult is the sense of loss and looking around the cathedral on Tuesday there were just so many people there and they had all lost something in some way, whether it was a colleague, if it's a mechanic they've lost their driver, even in the media you've lost a person that you knew and that you interviewed, people had lost team-mates that they raced against. If you look at the teams – ART, Manor, Force India, Ferrari had lost a team member and it was just this overwhelming sense of loss really and I think what was very clear was that nobody had lost more than the Bianchi family. I have to say I drew enormous strength from Jules' family. For everyone that knows them, they are an incredibly close and loving family and Philippe and Christine have had to endure something that I can't really comprehend over the last nine months and my heart really does go out to them. I have to say that in everything we have done with the family, the warmth and compassion, just everything that they have done has been incredibly respectful and loving and it's been enormously helpful and I'm sure not just to me, we don't have a monopoly on feeling sad about what's happened. It's touched an awful lot of people and I think Jules' family have really carried themselves in an incredible way, really incredible, in a situation that I couldn't really comprehend. I think the danger, as ever, is that you focus on what you've lost and not what's been gained by knowing Jules over what's been an incredible time. And I know a lot of you have talked to drivers and have had their personal experiences of Jules as a person and he was somebody who in my view added so much to so many people's lives. I know he did with me. One of the things that struck me about Jules was the very first day he came into our garage in Formula One for a seat fit, in Barcelona. He came in as a Ferrari development driver and that already is a sign of all the hard work and skill he had put in and yet he came in with an eagerness in eyes – he could not wait to get into that Formula One car. And yet he displayed an emotion or a trait that you don't often see these days, sadly, and that was that he was incredibly grateful. He was grateful that he had the chance to be in Formula One and I think that reflected the fact that he was very, very good. He knew he was going to be good at driving the car and that to me was one of the defining points. But somebody did ask 'of your time with Jules, what do you remember the most' and I can honestly say, from my point

of view, what I remember the most is that from the minute he walked into that garage to the minute we said goodbye it was an absolute pleasure to work with him and I dearly miss him now that he's not here.

Thank you. So looking ahead, from the team's point of view, how have your plans evolved about this year and the next year – the chassis etc – where are you at at the moment?

GL: I was just saying to Christian on the way in: if the optimum way to run a Formula One team is to do it the way we've done it in the last seven months, everyone would be doing it and quite clearly they're not. We've had the strangest set of challenges that you can imagine, but I think what underlies everything is that we have got respect for this championship. We were ninth in the Formula One World Constructors' Championship last year, in no small part due to Jules' drive in Monaco, so we have a rightful place to be here but we have not had the benefit of being able to plan how we would correctly like to plan for the 2015 season. We think we're making the optimum decisions going forward. We haven't gone quite as well here today as we thought, but that's just looking at just short-term tactics. I think we're getting more established now, the team's getting more up to strength in terms of personnel, we're getting the premises, the new factory sorted out, so everything's moving in the right direction and I think once everyone draws breath after having a rest during the summer break, we'll push as hard as we can in the second half of this season but really have our eyes fixed on 2016.

OK, thank you for that. Paul, coming to you, another hot weekend, clearly. What did we learn from the way that the soft and medium tyres performed in the free practice sessions. Any thoughts on likely strategy for Sunday's grand prix?

Paul HEMBERY: Well, there was a couple of seconds of difference between the two compounds, slightly higher than what we had anticipated. Very little graining on the front left, which sometimes you have here when you're doing your first Friday runs. With that in mind we're probably looking at a two-stop race. It depends really on the data from the longer runs, which were slightly interrupted for most teams this afternoon. But with hot weather foreseen for Sunday we envisage, as I said, a two-stop race.

What progress are you making on finding ways to give the teams more variety in the choice of compounds next year?

PH: Yeah, we're having some pretty good ongoing discussions with the teams and the FIA and we seem to be homing in on a solution that gives the variety of choice they'd like to have and gives us an element of security that strange decisions aren't made, so we're hopeful that in the next few weeks we'll be able to convey that to everybody, so that we can start working towards next year.

Thank you. Christian, coming to you, obviously the headline is the blow-up, but beneath that some very positive signs from free practice two in particular, both on the single qualifying lap simulation and on the long runs as well. Where in the field do you think you'll be competing?

Christian HORNER: That's a very good question. Fridays are somewhat masked by fuel loads and engine modes and so on, so it's difficult to get a truly clear picture but our expectation coming into the weekend was that this would be a circuit that would hopefully present an opportunity for us and both drivers have been pretty happy with the car on short and long runs, so, yeah, so long as it all holds together then hopefully we should be in a reasonable position to hopefully challenge Williams and Ferrari ahead. I think obviously Mercedes are in a class of their own at the moment but hopefully those two teams ahead of us we should be able to take the challenge to.

You've been waiting for Renault power unit updates and that's now imminent now, I believe, at the next grand prix. What's the expected step from that and what's the plan for the rest of the season?

CH: I don't think there is anything scheduled now before Sochi. That probably is the earliest that we are going to see any form of development or use of the tokens, so the engines we've got at the moment are what we're having to live with for the time being. So engines four and five of what the

drivers have been using between Friday and Sunday racing, unfortunately Ricciardo has now lost engine four, so he's only got engine five, that came into service for the first time in Austria, to get him through the next few races, so only time will tell as to whether we can get to Sochi or not without incurring another penalty before introducing an upgraded unit.

Thanks for that. Franz, coming to you, you've obviously built a strong team now, strong infrastructure at Toro Rosso. How do you keep key personnel together when the big teams come calling?

Franz TOST: I don't let them go! No, the value of a team is always the quality of the employees and over the last three to five years we really pushed very hard to recruit high-quality people and James Key, our technical director, was the key person to do this and he surrounded himself with very, very good, high-skilled, capable people and of course all these top engineers have long-term fixed contracts and apart from this, at Toro Rosso, the infrastructure is getting better. Our new building will be finished at the end of this month. That means the working environment is also quite good, because all the engineers are under one roof and we expect better communication, better co-operation and at the end even better performance. Apart from this, Toro Rosso I'm convinced has a good future. We are on the financial side also quite healthy and I expect also some success in the future and therefore I don't see any reason why one of the top people should leave the team, especially after the hard period to build up everything, then of course the people want to see the results and want to be involved when hopefully we will have some success.

I'm curious, only seven points scored in the last five races, compared to rivals like Force India, who you're competing with, who have scored 28 in the same period. Are you getting a bit frustrated that you're not turning positive grid positions into points-scoring finishes more consistently?

FT: To score points you must see the chequered flag and our main problem is reliability. We have a really good chassis, we have two high-skilled, young but mature drivers but our reliability is horrible, because from 18 possibilities to see the end of the race we managed only to do it 10 times. That means eight non-finishes and with this high figure you cannot expect to finish in a position like is our goal – fifth position in the Constructors' Championship, yes, and I hope that in the second half of the season we will improve our reliability and I hope that we will come to the end of the races, because if we are in the race, most of the time, we were in the position to score points.

Q: Arai-san, you mentioned in a preview to this race that you would make available full ERS to the drivers for the first time this weekend. What impact has that made and what are the development plans from here for the rest of 2015? The drivers have spoken about 'dramatic upgrades' coming.

Yasuhisa ARAI: From the technical point of view the power unit will have a big upgrade targeted to improve the power output from Spa. But of course it is difficult to judge how it will work on the actual track. So, I want to get the answer in Spa.

Q: After Silverstone, the FIA confirmed that new manufacturers will be allocated an additional power unit without a penalty. Have you got an upgraded engine as a result of that? Are you happy about that?

YA: Yeah, of course. Honestly, I welcome that decision. But it also means Honda is not where we want to be in terms of the reliability. The FIA decision encourages all the new power unit suppliers to enter Formula One. So, I want to say that I appreciate all of the teams and the power unit suppliers to support that direction, which is good for the team and driver.

Q: Toto, coming to you. No team in Formula One championship history has ever got two cars on the podium for ten consecutive races. You could do it on Sunday. Does that say more about the car or about your driver pairing?

Toto WOLFF: First of all, we haven't done it yet and it's always dangerous... we had the discussions very often before and then you end up in a situation where it was nine and no record. Those

records don't mean a lot. What it shows is that you have put the team together which is functioning well and it's just not a question of whether it's the drivers or the engine or the chassis side. I think it's a joint effort from many people and certainly if we achieve that, that would be good.

Q: How have you felt about the token system this year, which has allowed you and your rivals to develop the engines during the season? Would it be a good thing for the sport if it were continued next year?

TW: Yeah, there is a plan in place to continue with the token system, although in a reduced form. It is a token... a token doesn't equal performance. Sometimes it's more complicated. Nevertheless, there are ongoing discussions about how to handle the situation going forwards. Certainly we acknowledge that Honda and Renault found themselves in a difficult position and this is a joint platform, so we are working with the FIA and with the commercial rights holder going forward, whether we adapt that system or not.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Péter Farkas – Autó Motor) It's just been announced they have just started negotiating with Bernie the contract of the Hungaroring until 2026 and a large revamp of the track is planned with the help of state funding. What would you most like to see changed at the Hungaroring if I may ask all of you please?

CH: The press room! It's the biggest thing that needs to change. I think the track, leave it alone, it's great. It's a fun circuit, it's a different type of circuit and I think it always produces, for whatever reason, good races here. So, I think all the drivers enjoy racing here, it's a great city, a fun city to come to and visit. So, it's good news if the race is extended 'til 2026 then yeah, I think it's a very positive thing for Formula One.

Paul?

PH: I agree with Christian actually. It's an interesting circuit, certainly from our point of view and from a tyre manufacturer's point of view. It's got a lot of character, the fans seem to love it, you can get in and out, which is a bonus. The city itself is very welcoming – so there isn't a lot really wrong. I think if it's carrying on, most people are going to be very happy.

Graeme?

GL: I agree with both those comments. I like the way that the track follows the natural undulations of the countryside here, which I think is good. I've never driven this track but I'm sure it's a fantastic track to drive around. If we can find some way to flatten it when we run around it at night, that would be useful. Aside from that, I wouldn't touch the circuit.

Arai-san – anything to add?

YA: No.

Franz?

FT: Maybe to increase the size of the garages because they're quite small but the track itself should stay like it is because it's a special track and the city of Budapest is fantastic, that means the infrastructure is very good. And I always like to come here.

Q: (Péter Vámosi – Vas Nép) Question to all team representatives. FIA first time retired a race number, 17, this year and in the whole history of Formula One. If we removed some numbers in the past, like 27, Gilles, 8, Elio, 2 Senna, 6 Peterson, fans are not united in that, that it was a good decision. What are your opinions?

GL: I think it's a difficult one because it's so personal to different people. I'm extremely biased on this subject. My view is, if it helps Jules' family in any way at all, then I'm in support of it. I think anything else is secondary. I know fans are very, very important and I understand the gist of the question but it's a difficult one for me to answer.

Toto?

TW: I think it was a particularly tragic incident and a very young boy and if that is the decision, I think that is fair enough.

Christian?

CH: I think the only thing you have to remember is that last year numbers were introduced as being allocated to drivers; drivers selected numbers that they race with for the career. So you can understand the FIA's decision, as this was a number that Jules obviously chose, that meant something to him. Retiring that number, perhaps in time if the Bianchi family want that number to reappear, it would be appropriate to ask them. Or if a driver wants to use that number, for that number to approach that family in future years to come.

Q: (Tomas Richtig – AMC/Sport 1) I would ask Christian, Toto and Paul maybe to comment, the race length is 305km, except Monaco of course, but the average speed is different, which leads to extremes, Monza race lasting for 1h20m, and Singapore race lasting for two hours – which sometimes might be difficult for our TV viewers. Did you consider or could be such consideration there to adjust the race length to the average speed of the circuit to make it more suitable, maybe for the younger generation of the TV viewers?

TW: Interesting one. I think we are seeing a phenomenon that the younger the viewer, the less patient. It looks like, at least, whatever you consume on your devices needs to be short, quick and easy – and Formula One is a long race. But this is also what makes it. So whether two hours is too much, or 1h20m or 1h10m is the right time, I think it's a question for the FIA and the commercial rights holder to sort it out. Obviously the longer the race, the more advertising you can sell, and that is good, income-wise and the question is interesting – but I didn't think about it yet.

Christian?

CH: Well I think if you look at other sports – for example playing tennis on clay is a longer game than playing tennis on grass – so it applies to other categories as well, but they don't shorten the games or the sets, so, a football match is 45 minutes each way and sometimes you get games that are really exciting from start to finish, sometimes games where one half is better than the other. I think Formula One, part of the challenge, and the historical challenge has been to cover that distance as quickly as you can around that type of circuit. A race like Monza is incredibly quick, just over an hour in length – but sometimes those races can be quite static whereas a race in Singapore can often go to two hours but can sometimes have an awful lot more action in it.

Paul?

PH: I pretty much concur with Christian there. There is a variety of race lengths and Singapore being so hot as well actually brings through some fatiguing aspects which everyone says we need to see a bit more of every now and again. I don't think there's too much wrong with it. There's a good variety.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Question specifically for Toto and Christian please but if Franz and Graeme would like to respond as well, that's great. The commercial rights holder has indicated that, if Renault returns as a full team owner, they could be in line for historic and premium payments. The money can come from one of two sources: either from the commercial rights holder's slice or from the teams' pot. Assuming that it comes from the teams' pot – because history tends to indicate the commercial rights holder holds onto everything he can – would you be prepared to go for redistribution of your income to accommodate Renault's historic payment?

CH: Well look, we have a deal with the commercial rights holder as does every other team. Any variant to that, that's down to him to manage and solve. I read the comments, and I think if you look carefully at the comments that were made, I think it was actually suggesting that, if Renault went on to achieve what other teams have achieved to put themselves into position, then those

payments would potentially be available – as they potentially would to any other team. It's not the responsibility of the teams sitting here to sort out Renault's re-involvement or re-engagement in Formula One or what their commercial terms are. That's with the shareholders and the promoters of the sport.

Toto?

TW: Yeah, it's similar to how it was a couple of years ago. The contracts were negotiated and discussed bi-laterally between the commercial rights holder and the respective team and this is certainly the case at the moment without any influence from the teams from outside.

Anything to add Franz?

FT: Nothing to add. It's a decision of the commercial rights holder. Distributes the money and there's rarely any influence from the teams.

Q: (Vladimir Rogovets – SB Belarus Today) My question is to everyone. Today we have Renault and a French driver but no French Grand Prix. We have Mercedes and the German drivers but this year we don't have a German Grand Prix. We have Ferrari, Toro Rosso and Pirelli and maybe in two years we will lose the Italian Grand Prix. What do you think? Should the teams help the organisers to promote their national Grands Prix, maybe with money, maybe with publicity or management or marketing?

FT: First of all the teams support the organisers wherever we can but the main thing is, do the organisers have the money to make a Grand Prix, yes or no? France doesn't have the money and therefore we don't have a Grand Prix there. We must go to countries which can afford Formula One, as simple as that. If they can't afford it, we don't go there. I don't care whether we race in Germany or in Italy or wherever. We have to race where the financial situation allows Formula One to go there.

PH: Well, Monza is ten kilometres from my office in Milan so I would obviously say that we would like to see continuity of the Monza race, but obviously it's got to work for the sport as well. We try and support it by bringing a lot of guests to the event. That can vary between 600 and a thousand people so we do try and support our local event as much as possible. Maybe I'm a little bit old fashioned but there are a few events that I've always looked at from my time when I started watching Formula One and Monza is one of them, identically Spa and Silverstone, for example, other events that I've always historically followed and looked out for. There are economic realities and the events have to work.

TW: My personal opinion is that those iconic and historic Grands Prix are important for the sport but then it's a very difficult balance which needs to be achieved and that is securing income for the sport and income for the teams so I guess it's not always very easy and straightforward in making those decisions. Certainly for us, the German Grand Prix is extremely important as is Monza and as is Spa, so from our perspective it would be good if we can keep those Grands Prix.

CH: As a case study, I think that if you look at Silverstone that doesn't have any State funding, any government backing but it put 120,000 people a day into the circuit there, fantastic crowd. OK, there's a British driver that's the current World Champion that's doing a good job but Silverstone demonstrated that it's possible to put on a good event without that support and produce a good crowd, so you can only deduce from that that German drivers are not very popular in Germany or maybe it's the team!

GL: Dieter's highlighted that there's a recognition in the commercial structure of the sport for teams that have added to the value, the history and the fabric and Toto's touched on that and I subscribe to that. I think not only have certain teams added to the value of Formula One but certain venues have as well. I don't think it's right to just dismiss a view as being romantic if you like. The fans like these venues so I wouldn't necessarily go to the extreme that Franz suggests. I think if anything it's more a reflection maybe on the fact that there needs to be some kind of rebalance in the whole structure, so in other words, if Monza is at threat and I don't know what goes on with all of these discussions but if any of these iconic venues are at threat, perhaps that's more a sign of something that could be done in a more optimum way somewhere else. If we do nothing but chase income,

then without any question, the sport will just eat itself up. There's no two ways about it, that's inevitable. It won't work because it will just spiral out of control eventually. So there is a balance, it's not easy, but there's a balance and hopefully the right balance would reflect a sport that still has the ability to have iconic teams and iconic venues as well.

YA: You know that we had a race in Suzuka in the eighties and the most famous drivers were Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost. We had over 200,000 people per day in Suzuka so it means that good drivers, good teams, good machines are very important. I don't care about the nationality... I want to get a Japanese driver but there isn't the talent. The fans are most important.

Q: (Luke Murphy – Formula Spy) Paul, one of the main headlines in FP1 was Lotus's late payments for the tyres for this weekend. My question is, regarding what people have said previously about the costs of Formula One and given that the prize money is given later on in the year, do you have any immediate concerns about other teams' payments?

PH: No.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Christian, you said earlier on – correct me if I misunderstood – you wouldn't have any upgrades at all on your engines until Sochi and that's actually the first time you would be able to track test the engine reliability and performance. Assuming it hasn't gone too well and let's be honest, there have been various stages along the way where you've been hopeful of getting an increase in performance, if there is no improvement, can you imagine yourself racing with Renault engines in 2016, and if not, what are your options? And is some form of a Mercedes engine an option for next year?

CH: Do you want to make that question any longer at all? Look, I think the situation with the Renault engine... you know Renault would be the first to admit that they're not at all happy with where performance or reliability has been with this engine. They are making progress, they are making strides. I think the problem with engines is it's - unlike the chassis – long lead-time items. Renault have got strategically some decisions to make over the coming weeks in terms of the direction they want to go along – not just for 2016 but for beyond that.

Regarding the second part of your question about the future, we have an agreement with Renault to the end of next year and of course as a partner, we're expecting them to enable us to run in a competitive manner and in order to do that, we need a competitive engine. Of course, Renault need that more than anybody as well for both of their customer teams.

Q: (Anthony Rowlinson – F1 Racing) To the four team principals: Michelin have announced that they're going to bid for the tyre contract from 2017 onwards but with quite a different approach to Pirelli's. They've said they'd like 18 inch tyres and a tyre that will do one stop per race. Pirelli have pretty much said that they will do anything Formula One wants, so my question is, what would the team principals prefer from the tyre manufacturer?

TW: I think first of all you need to honour your current partner and we've been going through various phases with Pirelli and they have a pretty difficult task to fulfil what's in vogue. We want to have more stops and a spectacular tyre which loses grip quickly; we've had that a couple of years ago, we didn't like it. Then of course, as a tyre manufacturer, safety is most important so you go more conservative; then it was not enough stops and because we are heading into another year with Pirelli, whatever happens afterwards, we need to concentrate on that partnership and try to resolve '16, produce and influence a tyre as good as we can in a mutual partnership and collaboration for 2016 and have the best possible product for the best possible show. What happens beyond that is out of our hands because it's between the FIA and the commercial rights holder to tender and to decide. Commercial terms are going to play a role and therefore I would rather keep concentrated on my current wife.

FT: Well first of all I must say that Pirelli is doing a really good job, because in the past we didn't have any problems with the tyres but nevertheless, from the commercial side, the more money you get from a tyre manufacturer the better it is for the teams.

GL: I agree with Franz. I think the commercial offering is extremely important in that same way that if you look at some of the questions that we've had today, they've related to... fundamentally

related to an underlying potential financial issue so if we end up with a new tyre deal that requires the teams to go and find more money, then we'll be chasing more money again. It's the old saying: turnover is vanity and profit is sanity. There needs to be a whole lot of sanity and I think a way to reach that is to ensure that we have the right commercial package in place. And equally I would like to reflect Toto's comment: I think it's very important to honour and respect our current partner at present.

CH: Well, I think what we're basically saying is that whoever pays the most cash will sit here and say we love and think they should be the right supplier for Formula One. But I think it does go a bit beyond that. An 18 inch rim and a one stop is going to do nothing for the spectacle of a Grand Prix and I think actually we need to be looking at doing the opposite: getting two- to three-stop races, controlled degradation, maybe more choice for the teams in terms of the tyres that they can take to Grands Prix, all the things that we're talking about. I think Pirelli have done a good job since they've been involved in the sport, they've been supportive of Formula One through hard times as well as the good times. And hopefully with the cars that are coming for 2017, that are going to be quite a bit different, quite a bit quicker, with tyres that are significantly different to what we have now as well, then that represents a great challenge and hopefully Pirelli will be successful with that.

Q: (Fredrik Af Petersens – Honorary) I would like to go back to the question of where we are going racing. On the calendar for next year is Azerbaijan, a new race, a country where there's no freedom of the press, opposition (members) are arrested, people are disappeared and still we go racing there. Do you think that is correct?

FT: Absolutely correct because Formula One is sport. We go there to entertain. We do not go there for any political reasons. It's the same issue we had a couple of years ago with Bahrain. We can't be involved in the political topics which, in those countries or in any country, which are on the list. The main target for Formula One as a sport is to go there, to entertain the people, to bring a good show and to have hopefully a good race. If we will be put into the corner to say, OK, we should not go into a country where maybe the press freedom is not at a certain level or any other issues, then I don't know where we go racing. Then we have problems with China, then we have problems with Russia, then maybe we have problems with Brazil, then any country, some negatives which you can bring up, we just go there, make our show, present our sport and that's it and therefore we should go. We should not be involved in any political discussions.

Q: (Fredrik Af Petersens – Honorary) I would just like to follow up that question. What Formula One is doing is supporting a dictatorship. We just had the so-called European games in Baku a couple of weeks ago where European journalists from England and Germany were not given visas to visit the country. How would you react if any of us here was denied a visa?

CH: It would make our press conferences a lot shorter anyway, so maybe not a bad thing!

FT: There must be a reason why the visa was denied. I don't know the background. To be honest, I don't care about this. So we go there, we race there and that's it. It's your problem how you get the visa.

Q: (Louis Dekker – NOS.NL) Franz, you talked about your big problem, reliability. Do you see a solution or is the solution called 2016?

FT: No, 2016 is too late. We want to have immediately solutions at Toro Rosso. We do not wait a long time. It's a short term topic and I hope that we get it under control with our partners and this we will see in the second half of the season. But I am not... or hopefully we are not in a position to wait for 2016 because that's too long.

Ends