



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2015 United States Grand Prix Friday Press Conference Transcript 23.10.2015

TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Matthew CARTER (Lotus), Vijay MALLYA (Force India), Franz TOST (Toro Rosso), Christian HORNER (Red Bull Racing), Eric BOULLIER (McLaren)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Christian, we'll begin with you. First of all, what's the... you're smiling?

Christian HORNER: I'm just very upset to hear Toto is ill and couldn't make it, that his helicopter couldn't fly unfortunately. Anyway, I wish him well and hope he's OK. I'm sure there will be no fine, obviously. It should be about 100 million, apparently.

Q: Daniel Ricciardo was here with us yesterday, talking about the update Renault engine. What's your final decision then on when and if you are going to use this updated version?

CH: I think the situation for the Renault engine, for the updated version, which they are referring to as the D-spec version, Renault have confirmed earlier today that the conditions for it to run in aren't quite right yet, so that has been postponed to Brazil, which for us makes more sense. We wouldn't want to be taken engines out of the car here or next weekend in Mexico.

Q: I'm sure it's been a very intense period for you, trying to find a way forward for next year and beyond on the engine front. Would it be accurate to say that some kind of deal with Renault or Honda looks likely now or would you rule out those two options?

CH: I think as we sit here there has been a great deal of speculation and interest in what the engine supply we are going to have next year is. As we sit here now, nothing is fixed. There is a lot of discussion going on in the background and hopefully there will be a resolution fairly soon.

Q: OK, coming to you then Eric on that, can you clarify the position from McLaren's point of view with respect to Honda and a secondary supply of engines. Is there an advantage to having another strong team helping to develop the power unit from your point of view?

Eric BOULLIER: It's difficult to comment, other than we are happy with our partnership with Honda and this is what we wanted to achieve, to be a works team with an OEM. I can't comment obviously on what Christian just said or whatever happens.

Q: From the little running you've been able to do today how much of a step forward is the updated engine that Fernando is running this weekend going to be?

EB: Well, I think we were one of the most active teams on track this morning. We did enough laps to confirm what said after Russia, which is clearly an improvement of the engine. I think all his engineers were happy with the numbers and the mapping they were running through this morning.

Q: Franz, coming to you, another team boss on the lookout for an engine. What are you going to be using next season?

Franz TOST: We will see. We are still negotiating. It is not decided yet. Hopefully it will be soon the case because otherwise the timeframe will become quite small but nevertheless we are still optimistic that we will do it.

Q: As you say, it's getting quite late in the design process. With your resources that you have in Faenza, how much of a challenge is it to build a car now without knowing what engine you're going to be using?

FT: It's a challenge because every day we lose will decrease our performance for next year, but we have an emergency plan for the design office and pay for the production and I'm still convinced we can do it in time.

Q: OK. Matthew, coming to you. Obviously we are aware that the process of being acquired by Renault is ongoing, but how much planning have you been able to do? For example, with the letter of intent were you also given a set of blueprints for a 2016 Renault engine that you can start designing around?

Matthew CARTER: Absolutely, yes. Again, it's difficult for us to talk in any great detail but we certainly have an idea of the route we are going to go down next year. We can't confirm anything at this stage but we certainly are heading down that route and things back at Enstone are taking shape.

Q: Now, Romain Grosjean has confirmed he is moving on, does the Renault takeover have to be completed before you make your selection on his replacement?

MC: No it doesn't. I think there will probably be an announcement at some point this weekend with regard to our second driver.

Q: Can you give us a little foretaste?

MC: I can't. The announcement will probably happen in the next hour or so but certainly after this press conference you will be aware of which direction we are heading in.

Q: Very good, thank you for that. Vijay, podium last time out in Sochi. In the last five races Sergio has scored 39 points to Nico Hulkenberg's 14, what's been going on there?

Vijay MALLYA: Well, I guess Nico hasn't had the best of luck. He hasn't finished as consistently as Sergio has but I think overall from a team perspective, since we launched the B-spec car in Silverstone we have shown we are a lot more competitive and I'm quite

pleased about that. But Nico is a top-class driver and I'm sure he will score points going forward.

Q: Now you and Sauber have made a formal complaint to the EU competition commission. Monisha Kaltenborn was in this press conference a couple of weeks ago in Sochi and spoke about this. Can you share your thought on it and what you believe the outcome will be?

VM: I can't predict the outcome. We have lodged a complaint basically saying that the distribution of Formula One income is disproportionate and disadvantageous to small teams and it's a process and we'll just see where it goes.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Seff Harding – Xiro Zone News) The question is for everyone. There is talk about returning to the V8 engine, which has been a fan favourite, and I wanted to get you guys' thoughts on it and would you be prepared to return to that powerplant for next season?

Christian?

CH: We might have to because we don't have an engine! If you look at the plus points of the V8s were, the sound was the obvious one for the fans. It was quite simple technology compared to what we have now, so the costs were significantly lower, but the machinery that we have now through the regulations we have, they are incredible bits of equipment and I think what we need to do is rather than look backwards, look forwards as to what should the engine develop to be for the future. And I think there are elements of what we have that are strong at the moment but I think it can be improved and I would certainly love to see the volume go back up and certainly the cost of development come down.

Eric?

EB: I think Christian said everything but as far as we are concerned, as McLaren-Honda, Honda joined the sport because of the challenge of the technology and obviously, yes, some may regret the engine noise of the V8 and some regret the cost as well but it's true that we have to look forward and as a piece of technology it's brilliant, once it works, in our case hopefully soon. It's a nice challenge to run these engines.

Anything to add from the back row, gentlemen? Matthew?

MC: I think I tend to agree with what Eric said and the relevance of the new engines to the road car and the benefit that the road cars can get from the technology means we are going down the right path at the moment?

Q: (Daniel Johnson – Daily Telegraph) A question for Eric. It emerged over the last week or so that Kevin Magnussen was fired by an email... OK, ended his contract with McLaren via an email from Ron's PA on his 23rd birthday. I just wondered what you thought of that as a piece of man management by Ron, you know, is that really fair to Kevin? Is he owed a bit of an apology from the team?

EB: So, first of all, he has not been fired, as you said. I want to tell you that his contract was ending this year, so there was an option to renew it or not and we decided to not renew it for several reasons. We as McLaren that Kevin obviously has a great talent and he has to be praised for that and he should get a drive in Formula One next year and his career should get

there. Anyway he will have a successful career I'm sure. As far as I am concerned by the process, I will not comment.

Q: (Daniel Johnson – Daily Telegraph) What does it say about the culture of McLaren?

EB: Next question.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Autosport) Question for Christian. Obviously hindsight's a wonderful thing but do you not now consider it a catastrophic business mistake to cancel your contract with Renault without having a replacement in place first of all.

CH: That's an interesting question. I think that, if you look at our relationship with Renault, it's been unconventional from the start. I remember asking Flavio Briatore for the supply of the engine back in 2006 and somehow we ended up sponsoring Queens Park Rangers and sponsoring the Billionaire club for a year before receiving the engine – and since then we really we've enjoyed huge success with Renault during the V8 era and the collaboration between the companies was very strong during that period of time. And during that time they obviously had their own team and then they sold their team. I think obviously what's happened with the regulations that came in for last year, the V6, the hybrid regulations, expectations were set and promises were made and inevitably in any relationship like the competitive environment that we have in Formula One, when promises aren't fulfilled then frustration sets in. It's not something that's bubbled up just over the last few months. It's been a progressive thing – probably on both sides in fairness. Despite the very best efforts of all the people involved, for whatever reason it hasn't worked, and so the decisions that have been made have been made for a reason – and in the interests of the team moving forward. Red Bull's goals and objectives in Formula One are to compete and to win. Unfortunately we haven't felt that those objectives have been mirrored over the last couple of years. So, therefore, decisions have been taken based on the philosophy of where the team wants to be. So the situation that we're in for next year is that we're looking to find a competitive solution to enable the team, first of all, to continue racing but racing competitively – and competitively for the foreseeable future.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Honorary) Eric, yesterday Fernando Alonso was telling us he's very confident the team can make up a big chunk of time for next year. What do your computers and analysis show? How much can you improve, engine and chassis-wise, next year?

EB: It's an easy question because defining targets are always easy on paper. We know where we want to be as McLaren-Honda and if we get there we can obviously get what Fernando said. I'm not saying we'll be there but we know we want to be there. We are definitely working on how to be there.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) To the back [MC, VM, FT] basically there are five teams that are disadvantaged under the Strategy Group and revenue structures, the way they stand at the moment, yet only two of those five have actually lodged the complaint with the EU. So the question to Matthew and to Franz, do your teams not feel disadvantaged by the structures – or why did you not join in the action? And Vijay, are you disappointed that only two teams of five have actually taken that step?

Matthew, let's start with you.

MC: I think we're in a unique situation in terms of where we are as a team. From my own personal opinion, would we have taken a different route if we weren't under the potential new owners, as we are, then possibly we would have done. However, as things stand at the moment, we are trying to plot a course through the turbulent times that we're in at the moment, the best way that we can. We've been advised and we have discussed at a fairly high level, the route that we're going to take and we've decided that we would not join the action.

Franz?

FT: We signed a contract a couple of years ago, we knew the contents and therefore there is no reason for us to claim against the commercial rights holder.

And Vijay, your feelings?

VM: First of all, even if one team complains, it is still a complaint. What we have sought is the intervention of the European Commission to determine whether the current distribution of income pattern is fair and equitable or not. I hear what Franz has said about contracts being signed. Yes, I can confirm that contracts have been signed but the disparity between the contracts was something that was unknown at the time those contracts were signed. And it's never too late to complain, is it?

Q: (Alan Baldwin – Reuters) Eric, Adrian Newey said the other day in an interview that he understood that McLaren had a veto on Honda supplying another team with an engine. Is that the case?

EB: I think it's better to not comment any more on this discussion because obviously as we said already there is a lot of discussion behind the scenes. McLaren and Honda are official partners and obviously there is a due respect of understanding from each party.

Q: (Graham Harris – Motorsport Monday) A follow-up for Christian. You say you're looking for a competitive engine for next year. Does that include Renault?

CH: Does that include Renault... obviously discussions have been going on with Renault to understand what their plans are for next year but I think until they commit to whether they're going to be in Formula One or not, it's difficult at this stage to take that any further.

Do you not have a contract with them officially for next year?

CH: We have an agreement with Renault that runs to the end of next year which there's obviously been a lot of speculation about and I'm sure there will be confirmation about that agreement in the coming days.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Question for Christian, considering the position which you are in now, maybe it would be better to consider the possibility to have a Ferrari spec, not the latest spec but a 2015 spec for next season, don't you agree?

CH: It may well be the case. I might agree with you. At the moment everything is open.

Q: (Christopher Joseph – Chicane) Question for Vijay and Matt. Vijay, you spoke about 'it's never too late to complain', a) why did it take you so long and, that's the business rationale behind the decision: what do you think is the sporting rationale and how will that play out for you in the future?

VM: I don't see what bearing the European Union complaint has on the sporting side of things. I remember last year here in Austin there was much speculation on whether three teams would be boycotting the races. We raced here in Austin, we raced in Brazil and Abu Dhabi, we completed the season. Here we are again a year later – but fundamentals remain fundamentals. You exhaust various options and avenues of dialogue and, if you still remain unsatisfied, then there is a Commission to go to, which is what has been done.

Matthew, anything to add?

MC: No.

Q: (Christian Menath- Motorsport Magazin) Christian, you said that the chance of running a Honda engine next year is 25 per cent as is the chance of running every other engine. That means that quitting F1 is no more an option for you.

CH: For me it's not an option, we have to find a solution and I'm working very hard to ensure that the team's on the grid and competitive for next year and beyond.

Q: (Alan Baldwin – Reuters) Christian, you said 'for me it's not an option'. Is it still an option for Mr Mateschitz?

CH: Well of course it is, it's his team at the end of the day. He recognises the commitment and the skill and determination that's within the team. Again, he wants to find a solution going forward. He's committed to helping that and behind the scenes is obviously involved in numerous discussions to try and facilitate that.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Autosport) Just following up again Christian, so what's changed behind the scenes then, that these discussions have now taken place, that you're not now going to quit F1, because that has been something that Dietrich has suggested could happen for quite some time now?

CH: That could still be his prerogative, that could still be his decision to do that. Indeed, if we don't have an engine then we can't race but my position, as team principal of the team feeling the responsibility for the in excess of 800 employees that we have, is to ensure that we're on the grid and we're racing and we're racing competitively next year so therefore I'm working hard to try and ensure that we have a solution.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) It appears as though Pirelli will get the contract from 2017 going forwards and I believe that one of the points that they insist upon was that there is some form of testing, both for the 2017 cars and beyond. How do you feel about a possible return to testing?

FT: We will increase the costs dramatically. Personally I am totally against this testing. We have some testing sessions at the beginning of the season and this should be enough. We have 20 races and if you look at the calendar, if you want to do some tests in between, you need to build up a test team which means we have to bring in another ten, fifteen mechanics, another five to seven engineers and at the end of the year, we have spent around ten million more and I'm just asking whether this is necessary. Absolutely not. I can give you the answer, because we have seen now the last years that without testing we can also achieve our goals. It's just wasting money.

EB: Well it's true that it's going to bring the costs up. This is not something that we're obviously in favour of. We also need to understand that Pirelli maybe needs some track

experience so all in one I guess if they can cover the cost or most of the cost of it so we can maybe find some agreement in the middle or in between, not having to necessarily bring back testing like in the old days but maybe a few days.

VM: I agree with what Franz said. I think it will be unnecessary and a huge increase in cost and we're only talking about cost control which also has not been implemented in spirit but now to go back to the old testing days will only once again drive costs out of control.

MC: There's probably a fine line between the old testing days and what Pirelli are suggesting. I think it needs to be looked at in more detail. I also think that if they're suggesting that they need to do this testing to prove the safety or to prove the reliability and ultimately that's going to increase the safety within the sport, then it's possibly a good thing.

CH: Well, I think if you take all the valid points that have been made, I think the other difficulty is that the tyres for 2017, the diameter and the width is significantly different so it's not as easy as just bolting those tyres onto a current car. The downforce levels are going to be significantly different in 2017 to '16 so therefore it's going to be very difficult to build a car that is going to simulate what Pirelli need for 2017 so they're going to have to rely a little bit like the rest of us on accurate simulation in order to make sure the product fits what it's required for or find another way, outside of Formula One, of testing those tyres.

Q: Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Eric, you seem to be against any form of increased testing yet Mr Dennis was recently quoted as saying that he favoured testing, he wanted a return to testing. Is that correct or not?

EB: I didn't say this. I didn't say we were against testing... I am against testing. Definitely this is not what I said, I think. I think we are in favour and as long as some of the costs can be covered. Talking about the Pirelli testing.

Q: (Will Buxton – NBC SN) Christian, when BMW pulled out of Formula One, Peter Sauber came to the rescue of his team. When Honda pulled out of Formula One, Ross Brawn took over his team. Sauber's now celebrating 400 races and the team over at Brackley has just taken a second championship. You've said that Mr Mateschitz's future might be whatever it is, maybe to pull out of Formula One. You've said that your intention is not to quit Formula One, not to have the team quit Formula One, to save the team. Is there a potential then, if Mr Mateschitz does want to pull his team out of Formula One, that you will take that responsibility on your own back, to save the team, potentially as Arden International as it's been so successful in junior formulae?

CH: Well, this weekend is actually our 200th Grand Prix and when you look at what Red Bull's achieved in that period of time, 25 per cent of those races have been won, more than 100 podiums, four drivers', four constructors' world championships. It's been a tremendously successful period for Red Bull. My objective is very clear: it's to keep the current status quo running for the foreseeable future. Ultimately the final decision lies with Dietrich but he is an utmost fan of the sport, otherwise he would never have committed the kind of funds that are required to be competitive in Formula One. He's been involved in Formula One, not just as a team owner for the last ten years but ten years prior to that as an investor in the Sauber team and prior to that as a sponsor. He's invested in a lot of young drivers that owe their careers to Red Bull and his vision, and I believe that discussions of other shareholding or change of shareholding... they're not applicable at the moment. The focus is purely on finding a solution to our engine predicament, that we can move forward for next year and the future.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Eric and Christian, if the European Commission finally shares the view of Force India and Sauber, what would that mean for your operation, how would it affect it and do you think then that the field would come closer together?

EB: No idea, no idea because you started your question with 'if'.

CH: Money is an important factor in Formula One. The promoter theoretically could take the view of if he chose to give all the prize money to the winning team. It's then down to the teams to decide whether they wish to enter or not. So it will be interesting to see how the EU rule on something like that, because does that mean that we could say that teams unwilling to supply engines, is that anti-competitive? So everything could therefore end up in the commission.

Q: (Alan Baldwin – Reuters) Christian, if I can come back to Ian's earlier question about how you got yourself into this pickle, I'm not sure you entirely answered it earlier on. There's been speculation that what's happened to Volkswagen with the emission scandal may have derailed your plans to some extent. Can you just comment on that? Is that the case?

CH: Well of course there was – as publicly known – there has been discussion with the VW Group which obviously... with their current issues probably Formula One is the last thing on their mind. There were other discussions that will become apparent no doubt in the future as well, other promises that were made. There's an awful lot of speculation and conjecture about our situation at the moment. Once everything is finalised I'm sure it will all become extremely clear.

I would just like to add Happy Birthday to Dieter. I know this isn't answering your question but I gather he's 87 today and he's looking great on it.

Ends