



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2018 FIA Formula One World Championship

Bahrain Grand Prix

Friday Press Conference Transcript 06.04.2018

TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Claire WILLIAMS (Williams), Zak BROWN (McLaren), Guenther STEINER (Haas)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Guenther, we'll start with you: that looked like an encouraging first session, with Romain up in sixth place. Does that help you move ahead from the disappointment of Australia and start to put it behind you?

Guenther STEINER: Yeah, absolutely, it will help. It keeps the morale up with the guys, from the disappointment of Australia. But then again, FP1 doesn't mean a lot. But it's better to be there than to be last. It helps the guys to keep going and I hope we keep going in FP2, FP3 and Qualifying. And then hopefully in the race we have a flawless race.

And how did you pick up the guys after Australia?

GS: I think we just regrouped and said 'these things can happen; they shouldn't happen, we all know that'. You don't have to beat anybody up; they all feel bad about it. Nobody does this intentionally. It was a series of things that went wrong and it just happened in one race and when we were in a good position. But you always have to take out the positives. We learn, it seems like we have a good car, we just have to keep pushing and we will be fine the rest of the year.

Thank you. Claire, Melbourne was quite a difficult weekend for Williams, certainly in the race. Was that race a fair reflection of where the team stands in the pecking order at the moment?

Claire WILLIAMS: Yeah, you're right – it wasn't our finest hour in Melbourne. I think we probably came into the season following testing knowing that we wanted to be. I think we would have hoped that we made some greater inroads into the performance delta to the frontrunners, however that didn't transpire in Melbourne. But I'm not necessarily convinced that Melbourne was particularly representative, I hope it wasn't. We know that there are three key areas of weakness that we need to focus on, which we're doing now. We certainly believe we have more performance to extract from the car and that's what the team are working on at the moment.

How do you move forward from here to improve the car in those areas?

CW: As I said, we know the three key areas of weakness and we just need to focus on those. The team needs to do a good job trackside to make sure that our race ops are where they need to be. The drivers need to ensure that they're doing what they need to do from the start of the weekend. And then we need to make sure that we're improving the performance of the car race to race. Probably it's the car that's our greatest weakness at the moment, so everybody at Grove is galvanised to make sure that we bring the upgrades that we need to bring and that we keep working on it. It's just about keeping our heads down and not getting too stressed out but the first result in Melbourne. I think that's really important – this is a long season and we need to look forward rather than back.

Thank you. Zak, coming to you, it's a home race of sorts for McLaren and you had a strong result on the first race weekend, but was the pace where you expected it to be at the start of the season?

Zak BROWN: Our pace was there or thereabouts. It was a good race for us. We wanted to get both cars home, reliably and in the points. It was a good weekend. The drivers did an exceptional job, the pit stops were good, we're in the rebuilding process, it's a long season, but that was a long season for us.

Yesterday, Fernando Alonso said that the next two months are crucial for McLaren. Is that a sentiment that you share?

ZB: I think the next two months are crucial for every Formula 1 team, with the pace of development. No one is sitting still. This race is important, the following race is important, every race is important, but we need to build on Australia, find some more speed, make sure we continue with the reliable and good team work, and I think we'll have a good season.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Kate Walker– New York Times) This week we saw the results of the gender pay gap figures published – I know Guenther your team was exempt – but what sort of efforts are you guys making to rectify any imbalances in pay in your workforce and to what extent are the existing imbalances down to people of different gender being in different roles, rather than any deliberate effort to underpay women?

CW: I can get on my soapbox now! Gender equality at Williams, and I'm talking on behalf of our team, is obviously an issue that we have been looking at and addressing for a number of years now. It's hugely important as part of a wider societal conversation that we're having and it's really important that we tackle and we address these issues. I do think the report that came out this week is misleading. I think the criteria by which we have to report has been particularly misleading. You look at the tables of teams that have had to report and Williams is pretty far down the bottom, but they are looking at the mean and the median. And actually the most important thing when you're looking at gender pay is that women are paid the same amount as their male counterparts for doing the same role. That's the most important thing. At Williams we tackled that issue a while ago, probably 12-18 months ago. We know, and I can sit here with total transparency, saying all women at Williams are paid for doing the identical roles that men are paid. I think that's the most important issue that we have to address. I think that these reports that have come out this week can be extremely misleading, because they are comparing situations where actually there are far fewer women in our roles in our teams, because this is a very male-dominated sport and always has been. However, we've done a huge amount of work to tackle that over the past 12 months and we continue to do so. I think at Williams we probably do more work than most of the teams in the paddock, and I'm really proud to say that, either through the initiatives we've set up over the past two years to address the situation, or through the work we do with external parties such as F1 in Schools and Dare to be Different. And we will keep plugging this conversation and keep doing this work to ensure that we have more females coming into our team and into motorsport as a whole. It's so important when we're looking at a shortage of engineers coming up. We have to be talking to all students, male and female, in secondary and tertiary education if we're to make sure that at the end of the day this sport survives. But it is also really important to say that we recruit on merit. Sport has to be done on a meritocracy, it's not just a box-ticking exercise for us to make sure that we have more women in. It's to make sure that we have quality people coming into our racing teams to work.

ZB: I echo Claire's comments, I think she laid that out very well. What I would say is that it is a very important issue for McLaren. It's something that we speak about frequently. It's something that we are doing something about, so we recognise its importance and there is definitely room for improvement.

GS: After Claire, what she said, I don't know what to say! It was so good. Even if we are exempt, we are equal, it's the job position, we don't look at gender. It's very transparent, we are very new, so we never had any history there. When we started it needed to be equal anyway. That is the position and that is the pay. It doesn't matter whoever it is that is what gets paid. So we are very fair on that one. Even if we don't have to report, we have no issues with that and we just keep it fair.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and Speed Sport) Liberty presented its broad outline for the future. It's going to require co-operation from the teams. You've all observed Formula 1 for a long time and you know that teams rarely agree unanimously on everything. What's different now than it has been in the past 30 or 40 years?

ZB: I can't really speak to the last 30 or 40 years because I haven't been around that long... but I have watched it. Yeah, I look like it! Thanks! I think we all recognise that the sport starts with the fan and that's what Liberty are focused on – putting on a better for the fan. And if the fan wins, we all win. The sponsors win, the m4edia wins, television ratings win. I think we all recognise that the sport is not where it needs to be today so it's in our collective interest to improve the show. That means we're all going to have make varying degrees of compromises but I think we'll ultimate get there at the end and I'm excited about the future of Formula 1.

CW: I was extremely positive about today's meeting, I have to say. I think we've all hoped for change under our new management and I think today they presented change. I think for a team like ours, based on what they presented, it was an extremely good day for us. I came back thinking let's crack open some champagne, because from our perspective if we can get these new regulations through, and if Liberty/FOM do everything they say they are going to do, that they presented this morning, then from our perspective I know that Williams' future is safe. That's not to say that we were on the brink, or anywhere close, but with today's sport and the way it is structured and with the financial disparity between teams then the likelihood of Williams' survival into the medium and long-term was looking pretty bleak. Everything they presented from revenue redistribution to cost caps is absolutely everything that we want to see from 2021 and beyond, so I'm personally delighted with the proposals that they laid down. I know that in the past you can have these conversations and they come out and not necessarily anything is ever done about it, but I'm not sure these discussions are negotiable. That's not the message I got anyway.

GS: I think I echo what Claire and Zak said. We are looking all positive after our meeting. But to answer Dan's question, there's a different owner of the sport in place so they will do things differently. We knew what was before, there was always the same tactics. With the new owner that is what you have got the chance to make it happen different this time. That's my opinion about it, to answer Dan's question straight. I think it was good today. The presentation went well. For sure, everybody goes away and comes back with questions but I think as Claire and Zak said we are at the point where we need to change something to attract people, to attract new fans to do what we need to do to make the sport the leading sport in the world.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – Associated Press) Just to follow up on that, is there anything – for all three of you – that you had any reservations about regarding the proposals? Any particular point?

ZB: I think we're going to avoid getting into specifics of what was discussed this morning. That was what was agreed amongst the teams, Chase and Ross. But, as Claire and Guenther have said, I would say overall the impression is very positive and I think the direction they're taking is the right direction. There's obviously a lot of details, questions – but we'll do that behind closed doors.

Guenther, anything to add?

GS: No. Nice try to get more information. But no, nothing more to add. The detailed discussions are behind closed doors, we all agreed on that one, and so we should keep it like in any other business and hopefully we bring back a better sport that is better for all of us.

Claire, you're very happy but I assume you're going to say the same?

CW: Yeah, the same. Thank you.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, Racefans.net) Sorry to continue along the same sort of line but referring to this morning's meeting, is it not... the presentation was more a Liberty wishlist rather than proposals for the future, given the fact that they aren't actually the regulatory body. So, do you actually see this as a blueprint for the future or a discussion point?

CW: I believe it was a proposal rather than a wishlist. It was presented as such and I think that everyone felt it was a blueprint for the future. There are obviously elements in that proposal are under FOM's control and others which fall under the FIA's control – but I believe that FOM and FIA are working together and, as I've always said, if we're going to protect the future of this sport then we need to work collaboratively. All three stakeholders.

Zak, did you see it like that?

ZB: Yep. I was in the same meeting.

Guenther?

GS: Yes – but there is something between a blueprint and a wishlist, which is called a proposal. That's what it was. It's not a blueprint but it's not 'oh, let's try to do this'. It's something in between but it's a good starting point. A very good one, actually.

Q: (Jonathan McEvoy - Daily Mail) To Zak. As you're chairman of McLaren and non-executive director at Motorsport Network, do you think it's right that one of your drivers advertises a link to the magazine and the website.

ZB: Yeah, it was a free offering. I think some other drivers are going to be doing it. So yeah, it's a free opportunity for consumers and hopefully more drivers will help share accordingly.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Just a quick one back on the topic of the meeting this morning. One of the things that was pointed out was a reiteration of the need for a cost cap. So, how much do you think is a sensible target for that and how do you think it would be employed?

ZB: I think that falls into the realm of items that we're not going to discuss. I think there's a lot of detail of what goes into a cost cap and what doesn't. I think at the end of the day we're trying to get the sporting field levelled so wherever we land on cost caps should be based around what makes a race car fast on the track – not necessarily some of the other items that go around a Formula One programme: marketing, things of that nature. What you see in the paddock – I think that's quite special and unique to Formula One.

Guenther, do you have a figure in mind that you think would be good?

GS: No. I think as Zak said, it's behind closed doors and we have to go back to that one because we agreed on it. It will come out when the deal is done. Or maybe it never will – but it needs to be reasonable that we can put a good show on, the technology still to showcase it, and what we put in and what we take out, we have to still obviously decide on it but again it will be done behind closed doors.

And Claire, if I could ask, if a figure was given, was it one that would actually affect many of the teams at the moment, or was it quite a high ceiling?

CW: I don't know whether to say it was behind closed doors or not – because that's what everyone else keeps saying. I think it's a balanced figure. I think obviously whenever you talk about cost caps there are going to be winners and losers, aren't there? And it's about compromise at the end of the day.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, Racefans.net) Question to Guenther – and I won't ask what you could do with a \$150million cost cap – but you've obviously played the listed parts regulation to the absolute limit and your performances and commercial performances to

date in your last two years prove that it's actually worked for you. Is this how you intend continuing going forward? To actually continue still getting all the listed parts from your favoured team supplier – or do you intend changing that model? And to the other two, do you believe that this is the way forward for Formula One? To basically be a semi-customer team acquiring as many parts as possible.

GS: We are doing it until 2020. We were waiting for this proposal and see where we get with the proposal with Liberty Media. And then we decide what we are going to do in the future. We haven't taken this decision yet, what we are going to do but, for sure, it seems to be working and I don't see any point to do it different at this moment in time. But it was this morning, the meeting, we have still have not the decision of what will be done with the sport for 2021. How the new contract looks. As soon as we have got that one, we will take a decision in the months after that one, how we continue there.

Zak, is this a future direction that you think Formula One should be exploring?

ZB: Yeah, I think it... Haas has done an outstanding job. Gene Haas is a very smart businessman, he obviously saw an opportunity to enter the sport and get competitive with less resources than a lot of the other teams out there and I think it does point to future regulations where you do talk about some standardisation of some parts that maybe aren't visible to the race fan – therefore it doesn't compromise the integrity of the sport, the customisation. So, I think it is something that they've done a very good job on and I think we need to look at some of that, or all of that, some of the basis on which we move forwards as we try to drive cost down.

Claire, your thoughts.

CW: Yeah, I think Haas have done a fantastic job. They've come into the sport and are now a hugely competitive. Obviously we are not very happy about that – but as a model I think certainly it is not one that Williams subscribes to. I think everybody knows our philosophy around being a constructor in our sport. For us, personally – I wouldn't criticise the way other people want to do it – but we want to retain our constructor position. So it's not something that I would want our team to subscribe to – to go and buy a whole load of another team's parts. For me, success for us is us designing, developing and building our race car, ourselves, in-house. And success has to come from us doing it our own way. But, as a philosophy for other teams, we totally accept that.

Q: (Arjan Schouten – Ad SportWorld) Zak, Formula Two is also starting this weekend. Last week, Nyck de Vries told on Dutch television that you said to him that he will definitely get a chance with McLaren in Formula One in 2019 when he wins the championship. Two questions: is that true and what does a chance mean?

ZB: That is not an accurate reflection of the conversation but Nyck's a very good driver. McLaren will always look to put the two best drivers that it can in the car and no one has any promises from McLaren verbally or contractually as to who is going to be in our car in 2019.

Q: Indistinct

ZB: We won't comment on our contracts but I can tell you that no one has a guarantee to be in our seat for 2019, regardless of any race results.

Q: (Louis Dekker – NOS) Do you think the Liberty plans secure the future of the ten teams? For instance, will it keep Ferrari on board?

GS: I cannot speak for Ferrari so I think we need to ask Dr Marchionne that one but I think there is... I've no idea. Mr Marchionne wasn't present and nobody committed this morning, nobody made any comment if they would join or not. I hope they stay on board, obviously, because Ferrari's a big part of Formula One. I hope everybody stays on board because I think they've got ten good teams at the moment and we should try to all work together to keep it going like this.

Q: Claire, you said you came out very happy from that meeting. Do you think every team came out very happy from it?

CW: I'm sure that some people aren't going to be very happy. If you hear the intricacies of that meeting then, as I said earlier, there are always going to be winners and losers in this situation and

sometimes it's about compromise if we're to protect the future health of this sport. Like Guenther says, I can't comment on Ferrari's feelings around the proposals that were laid out. All I can comment on is our team and if their proposal is blue-printed then it does protect the survival of Williams and at the end of the day that's all that matters to me. I want our team to be competing and hopefully winning in this sport for the next two, three, four decades.

ZB: No, nothing to add, I think we'll find out soon who's on board and who's not. Hopefully everyone will be on board, that's what's going to be best for the sport and I believe for all the teams as well.

Q: (Julien Billiotte – AutoHebdo) Claire, you mentioned key areas of your car that need progressing, improving. Can you be more specific? Is it a case of lack of downforce, issues with stability or something else? And regarding the updates, do you think you can have them ready perhaps for Baku or will you have to wait for the start of the European season?

CW: Yeah, we don't really like airing our dirty linen in public at Williams. It's not fair. We know the areas and that's half the battle, to make sure that you understand the weaker areas of your car. Clearly everyone always wants more downforce, that's certainly something that we need to work on. But it's across the whole car. We do believe that there is more performance to find, that we didn't manage to get it out in Melbourne and so that's the work moving forward. We do have some significant upgrades coming in the next few races and I'll be really looking forward to seeing how those perform on the track but as I said earlier, it's a long season but we have work to do. We're not happy finishing where we finished in Melbourne, we've got to make progress but unfortunately a lot of the other teams that we thought we'd be fighting with have made greater progress than us and really we haven't done a good enough job and we need to really dig deep if we're going to make progress this year. It's going to be a really tough year which is great for the fans, just not so great for us at Williams.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, RaceFans.net) Zak, the new regulations post-2020, whatever is in the public domain and other stuff that we've heard etc, would this incentivise McLaren to actually become a complete manufacturer and provide their own engines, because obviously the manufacturers will receive bonuses and with you sourcing an engine from a French production car company doesn't qualify you for that yet you are also a supercar manufacturer?

ZB: You know it's very early days, hours into understanding directionally which way this sport's going to go with engines, so it is something that we discuss from time to time but with all that we have to accomplish right now, our heads are focused a little bit more on tomorrow and Sunday. As things become clear, then we'll have that discussion.

Q: (Louis Dekker – NOS) We heard a lot about 2021, there's a couple of years to go. Isn't it frustrating that nothing much can be done to get more attractive races in the short term?

CW: Yeah, I think we're probably all slightly disappointed by the race in Melbourne, that it didn't bring the track action that we'd like to hope for. I think there are probably circuits coming up where we may see some more interesting racing. Melbourne's not necessarily an easy circuit to overtake on. I hope that improves. I know that the TWG have been talking about means by which to improve the racing, to overtaking, in the coming weeks, so I think we probably have to wait and see the outcomes that they discuss to hopefully effect change for the next couple of seasons, because probably we can't wait and our fans certainly can't wait until 2021 for us to improve things.

GS: I would go back to the comment that we didn't have a lot of interesting races; we've had one, one swallow doesn't make a summer. I think we should wait a little bit longer to see if it is interesting or not. As Claire said, Australia's not the easiest circuit to overtake on anyway. I would wait a few races before we jump to conclusions but in the meantime, again as Claire said, the TWG has started its own ideas to make overtaking better and to see what's coming out there. I stay calm. We didn't have three years of uninteresting races, we had one this year so give us a little bit of time.

ZB: I agree with Guenther, it's been one race. I they're also talking about some modifications of that particular circuit and then hopefully we can have discussions. We've got an upcoming strategy

group meeting where we will discuss things for 2019 so hopefully we don't have to wait until 2021 to impact some change but let's see what's necessary after a few more races.

Ends