



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

## **2018 FIA Formula One World Championship**

### **Chinese Grand Prix**

#### **Friday Press Conference Transcript 13.04.2018**

**TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Maurizio ARRIVABENE (Ferrari), Robert FERNLEY (Force India), Franz TOST (Toro Rosso)**

#### **PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Franz, can we start by looking back at the Bahrain Grand Prix. How satisfying was Pierre's fourth place and can you give us some idea of the emotion within the team and at Honda after the race?**

**Franz TOST:** Well, it was a very emotional race result of course, because the fourth place we didn't expect. We expected to show quite a good performance and realistically I expected a place between eight and ten. At the end it was the fourth place. It was a big positive surprise and I'm very happy, especially for Honda after the difficulties they had in the past, and also for Toro Rosso of course, and for Pierre. Pierre drove a fantastic race, without any mistakes. He deserved this fourth position and I hope that we can continue in a similar way. Not always in the fourth position of course, because we must not forget that three cars in front of us did not finish. They were faster, like Kimi Räikkönen, then Verstappen and also Ricciardo. But nevertheless, it was a good performance.

**One of your most satisfying results in Formula 1? You, personally?**

**FT:** Of course one of the most satisfying results, especially thinking about Honda, because we last year, in December, we had many meetings in Tokyo and I promised the president that we would have a successful season and a successful future, and this was the first step. Therefore, I was quite satisfied to have this good result.

**You've already said that Pierre drove a fantastic race, but Brendon had a more difficult weekend. What can we expect from him this weekend and going forward as well?**

**FT:** Brendon was also quite good in the qualifying. He missed Q3 just by one tenth. The race went a little bit in another direction because he had a collision with Pérez and he got the 10-second penalty and after this penalty he was not anymore in a position to score points, although I think if the race had gone for another three to five laps maybe he could have finished in 10<sup>th</sup> position. He drove a good race. Brendon is doing a good job, because you must not forget that most of the tracks, he doesn't know. Also here, he is the first time with a Formula 1 car, he was here in LMP1. It's not so easy to get everything together with these real strong midfield competitors and I am quite convinced that Brendon is on a good way and he will quite soon be close to Gasly.

**Thank you. Bob, turning to you, a point for Esteban in Bahrain demonstrated progress for Force India, but it hasn't been the easiest of starts. How do you assess the opening couple of races, and the winter as well?**

**Robert FERNLEY:** Well, I think actually it's probably misleading. As a team, we have actually improved race-on-race, both for Australia and for Bahrain, by quite a significant amount. In terms of the opposition, they have improved even more, and the reliability is there. Last year we probably flattered a little bit to deceive getting the points early in the season, while we were very strong towards the end of the season. And I think it's probably the same now. We had a good baseline programme for Bahrain in FP1 and FP2, which paid off, and you could see the difference in qualifying. We didn't have a particularly good race: Checo had his incident on lap one, which basically took him out, and Esteban had a bad re-start, and we got betwixt and between a strategy

that really didn't pay off for us. I think hopefully we're getting back on track again and the team under Andrew Green will do a great job of bringing the car forward.

**You made a reference there to the midfield closing up. Can you give some feeling of how difficult the task ahead is? Not only for Force India but for everyone in that midfield? What's the secret for your guys to finish fourth this year?**

**RF:** I think it's, well, like all times it's down to reliability and being able to maintain the pace all the time. If you look at Bahrain, and looking at two or three teams, if you look at the Haas programme, one was in Q3, one dropped out in Q1. If you look at the McLarens, they just got the set-up slightly wrong and didn't have the pace to get to Q3. It's literally a tenth or two and that's the difference in making Q3 and not.

**Can you remember a time when the midfield was as tight as this?**

**RF:** Not in recent years, no. I think it's tremendous. The battle for that fourth place in the championship is going to be extremely interesting through the year.

**Thank you. Maurizio, two races, two victories for the team, it's been a tremendous start. But first, and most importantly, how is Francesco Cigarini, the mechanic who was injured in Bahrain last weekend?**

**Maurizio ARRIVABENE:** Francesco is fine. He went back to Italy yesterday, so it's all under control.

**And how is he? Is he in good spirits? Have you had the chance to catch up with him?**

**MA:** Of course, as team principal I was talking with him every day. He's at home, it's all OK.

**Fantastic news. As I say, two victories so far and Sebastian is sitting pretty at the top of the championship. He seemed happier with his car in Bahrain last weekend than he was in Melbourne. Can we expect further progress on that front here in China as well.**

**MA:** We are at the early stage of the season. The performance of the car is changing and it is really related to the track. So track versus other track, they are changing the performance. They have different characteristics. So I think at this early stage we are happy for the results that we have. But in the meantime we know that the season will be long. Here, for example, in China we will see Mercedes and Red Bull quite strong, but we are not here to surrender.

**Maurizio, can we have a quick word from you about the performance of Kimi Räikkönen this year? He seems to have hit the ground running, he's performing well.**

**MA:** Yeah, I'm quite happy about the performance of Kimi. He is in good physical form, which for him is very, very important, because, if you remember, a couple of years ago he has a problem with his back but now he is recovering well, he's really fit, and focused on his job.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Maurizio, can you explain why Kimi was given the green light to leave in the pit stop in Bahrain and what has changed in the procedure for this weekend?**

**MA:** Just to make it clear, once, forever. First of all, the team was hurt. We have a person who was injured, so it was in our interest to review the overall procedure. We done our review, together with the FI, I have to say, as they are caring about safety, as we are caring about safety. We went through all the procedure. We have a procedure to ensure that the pit stops during the race are done in the most safe mode. In this case we have three factor – one involves human control, the other involves mechanical, the other involves electronic device. What's happening there is we have a mishandling of the rear left. It was not perfectly read by the electronic device that gives the green light. We went through all the procedure together with the FIA, making sure that this thing doesn't happen again, and it's in our interest, because we care about our people, before anything else.

**Q: (Michael Butterworth – Xinhua News Agency) This is to Franz. We talked just now about your fourth place last time out in Bahrain and we know that the McLaren-Honda partnership wasn't that successful over the last three years or so. Do you think it's a case that Honda is a better fit for a team like Toro Rosso than it was with a team like McLaren, for example?**

**FT:** I don't know the circumstances which happened at McLaren and I do not want to comment on this because this is past tense and I was not involved – therefore I cannot come up with any conclusions. The fact is Toro Rosso has a fantastic relationship with Honda. We work very closely together, we worked quite hard during the winter months to sort out all the problems which maybe

occurred in the past and Honda worked very hard to come up with a reliable and competitive engine. The last two races they proved that this is the case and I am really optimistic for the future.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, Racefans.net) To all three of you but particularly to Maurizio. Your comments please about the Liberty presentation last Friday and whether Maurizio, Ferrari is satisfied with what was proposed in terms of either bonus structure, financial structure etcetera. And the impact on your team of the necessary reduction in headcount.**

**MA:** First of all Dieter, I was not commenting on the meeting that we have. We were listening to the presentation and any kind of decision related to our further strategy or decision, they are related to our CEO. That is the one that has the responsibility to take this kind of decision.

**Bob, anything further to add?**

**RF:** Not really. I think we have to remember this is work in progress. It's not something that really is for discussion at this point. It's something that's presented to us. It will go another few rounds yet before something becomes more concrete. I think it's too presumptuous to start thinking that we've got the process in place yet. I think it's too early.

**Franz, anything from you on that?**

**FT:** I support all the points which Liberty Media presented and I hope that they will realise it.

**Q: (Andrea Cremonese - La Gazzetta dello Sport) A question for Maurizio about the matter of the meeting. It's difficult to comment but I would just like to know if Ferrari refuse totally the budget cap or if there is a door open to discuss something like this – maybe with different figures. And, about the new distribution of money, if it's something that you don't want to discuss at all with Liberty or there is some chance to speak about it.**

**MA:** I have to point out that it's not difficult to make a comment. It's simply not my job. It's the responsibility of my chairman.

**Q: (Steve Wade – AP) Forgive me, I came in late. Can you explain again the condition of your mechanic and if you've been to see him, been in contact with him.**

**MA:** The first comment is that he's back in Italy, he's at home and he's OK.

**Are you in contact with him?**

**MA:** Of course. As the team principal I'm in contact with him. His name is Francesco but he's not St Francesco. Blessing the hurt who doesn't need hero. This is Bertolt Brecht, it's not Maurizio.

**Q: (Edd Straw – Autosport) Question for Maurizio. Although it's not your job to discuss the proposals, it would be your role to implement any changes to Ferrari as a result of the proposals. Toto Wolff has said a budget cap of \$150million is not achievable. Could such a thing be achievable for Ferrari?**

**MA:** I mean we are reading the overall document. We are discussing and, I mean, we will see in the future if it's achievable or not.

**Q: (Gaëtan Vigneron – RTBF) Question for Franz. There is always a technical aspect in a relationship but there is also a human one. What did you try to do to build a respectful relationship with Honda with the kind of harmony that was maybe a little bit missing in the past years with another team?**

**FT:** The Toro Rosso team from its nature is a very friendly team with Italian mentality. I must say that we never had any frictions from the very beginning onwards we had a good cooperation. In addition to this, we organised some workshops for our engineers and employees who are working together with the Honda people, to understand the culture, to understand the way of thinking, because the cultures between Europe and Japan are different. I must say that they found a really good way of working together without any problems and I am also convinced that this will continue in this way. From the technical side, as I mentioned before, we had a couple of technical meetings in December where we discussed different topics and where both sides started immediately to work on this and we are still quite close, cooperating together because we want to develop the car as well as the power unit also during the season. From this point of view I must say Toro Rosso is in the best situation we have ever been – because we are now much more involved in the complete design process, regarding the car and how to fit in the power unit, how to design the cooling system, the exhaust system, where to put the electric boxes and so on. I think, especially for next year, this will be a big advantage from the complete car design point of view.

**Franz, are there Honda engineers based in Faenza?**

**FT:** No, the Honda engineers are based... some of them are based in Milton Keynes, because Honda has there as well an R&D department, but most of them are in Sakura and our engineers are flying to Sakura, to Japan when there is a special programme on the dyno or wherever because we are now much more involved also in the dyno runnings. We started already in November/December with the gearbox, and engine and gearbox tests and gearshifts and all this kind of stuff and we also are currently running a programme in Sakura.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, RaceFans.net) Bob, you said earlier on that this is a work in progress, this Liberty presentation. To all three of you, what is the deadline needed before it's really firmed up and proposals are made and accepted and regulations, because we only have two and a half years left before the current agreements expire?**

**BF:** I am hoping that most of it will be done this year, perhaps the financials will take a bit longer but I would have thought that the engine regulations would have to be out reasonably quickly. It's more to do with the engine manufacturers than it is us. We're a customer team so we're not really involved in that, Dieter, but I'm sure those would have to be done this year to give everybody the right opportunity and I would have thought that early next year – this time – we should be looking at chassis regs and anything else that's surrounding that; cost controls or whatever, should be in place as well.

**MA:** They give us a deadline for the end of May, I think. I hope that this deadline is going to be respected. It's a bit early somehow but it's far if you're looking at the situation from another point of view, a technical point of view. Concerning the engine, we, Mercedes, Renault and Honda sent a letter a month ago explaining in detail our position. Now, it's quite clear.

**FT:** I think the power unit regulation has to be finalised soon, May, June, otherwise I don't think it's possible for new manufacturers to come into Formula One because time is running away, '21 is tomorrow and I think that Liberty Media is aware of this and the rest we will see.

**Q: (Julien Billiotte – AutoHebdo) I'll try my luck with a question to Maurizio: Maurizio how would Ferrari react if you were to lose your historic right to veto any regulation change under Liberty Media's new governance plans?**

**MA:** We'll let you know as soon as we go deeper into the conversations. You can see a smile on our face or not.

**BF:** Veto the question.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, RaceFans.net) Maurizio, Bob has said that he would like to see the engine regulations firmed up this year then the chassis in a year's time and the money thereafter. From a Ferrari perspective, can one actually split it, given that to Ferrari all three are very very important elements which would be basically decide your way forward?**

**MA:** All the elements are important because they are somehow linked together so soon we will find an agreement if any, related to the various topics that are into the proposals and then we can go.

**BF:** Just to clarify Dieter, it would be nice to have everything done in one go but I'm giving you the timelines that might be realistic rather than (those that) are absolutely necessary.

**Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Maurizio, about the sporting situation now, I would like to ask you what makes you more proud about this season?**

**MA:** As I said at the beginning, we have only had two races now. The season is very very long so as I said before, the car behaviour changes from one track to another. I can see here, for example, Mercedes and Red Bull are quite strong but we are not here, as I said before, to surrender. You came later, I suppose. You were not here.

**Q: (Yang Guang – China Radio International) My question is about the circuit; there were a few slides in the morning practice, so how would you assess the condition of the Shanghai Circuit and what are your strategies for the following sessions in terms of the weather conditions?**

**MA:** Talking about the strategy, can you ask this question to Horner and Toto and then you let me know? Talking about the track, yeah, it's a fantastic track, it's very different versus Australia and Bahrain where we competed. I think it's great to be here because we feel that Chinese people really support Formula One and I think that in the future and I hope that in the near future they are supporting further because the infrastructure here is great.

**Q: And Bob, your strategy going forward for the rest of the sessions?**

**BF:** If you could control the wind, that would be the strategy! I think that it's a wind related issue today, it's very strong and gusting so it's causing a few issues for the drivers but the track is fantastic and it's a great facility. We just look forward to being able to optimise the set-ups.

**FT:** There's not much to add. Yeah, it's a fantastic infrastructure here, it's a really nice racetrack, we always like to come here. Unfortunately the weather is not as beautiful as it could be because it's a little bit cold and the wind is blowing a lot which has a big impact on the behaviour and the balance of the car and the strategy is to do as many laps as possible because our drivers need to learn the track and they will do some long runs today in the afternoon and then we will see.

**MA:** I would like to say something concerning Bahrain. I would like to thank our doctor, our team doctor, the medical staff of the FIA and also the authorities in Bahrain, they immediately granted to us the best doctors in Bahrain to do the surgery and they were assisting us 24 hours (a day) literally, so thanks to all of them.

Ends