



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

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

### **Canadian Grand Prix**

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

**08.06.2018**

**TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Claire WILLIAMS (Williams), Robert FERNLEY (Force India), Guenther STEINER (Haas)**

**Claire, there have been a number of changes in senior personnel at Williams in recent weeks and months, with the departure of Ed Wood and Dirk de Beer especially. Can you tell us what the impact has been on the team internally?**

**Claire WILLIAMS:** Yes, so obviously we've lost Dirk and Ed for personal reasons, so we wouldn't go into that in any greater detail. The impact on the team? We're obviously having quite a difficult start to our year but we have a really strong technical team in place back at Grove who are working really hard and really cohesively, and that's the most important thing, and everyone just has their heads down and is trying to get us out of the trouble we're in at the moment.

**This race marks the first third of the season coming to an end. There's still a long way to go. Do you feel you can turn it round within this year or do you have to look more long-term for changes?**

**CW:** That's whole purpose of our recovery plan. We've never said we're going to write this season off. In no way would we ever say that at Williams. As you said, we're only a third of the way through this year. There are a lot of races left to go. We haven't done what we wanted to do in the first third – scoring four points is not where we want to be. But the guys are doing a good job, as I said. But it does require a little bit of patience. It's not easy turning things around that fast. We've got a lot of work to do, particularly on the aerodynamics side of things, and that takes time. So we'll be bringing updates to forthcoming races, we'll have to see how they pan out. It's just a case of working hard and keeping everything crossed so that we deliver the performance that we need to do, so that by the end of the year we're back up to the front of the field, but that's going to be hard work for us.

**Thank you. Guenther, it's been a season of ups and downs for Haas in its third year of Formula 1 so far. It's probably fair to say that Monaco was one of the downs at this point. Can you just tell us what the issues were with the car in Monaco and have they been rectified for this weekend?**

**Guenther STEINER:** I think, yeah, one big down is Monaco, where our performance wasn't there. The other times the performance was there but we didn't get enough points out of the races. In Monaco, we knew going into it, we knew that on low speed our car is not very good and then we had a few issues in free practice – losing parts – and we decided not to use them. So we knew going into qualifying that we would be pretty slow, and we were obviously. Not surprising, it doesn't make us happy. I think we will be OK again here. We have got some upgrades here for this race and we are still evaluating how much they bring and it's too early to say anything yet.

**Romain has appeared to struggle a little bit more than Kevin this year, in terms of the points return anyway, but when you've had issues like Monaco and other races where you have missed opportunities, how do you review how your drivers are performing?**

**GS:** I think they're doing OK. With Romain I would say that actually he had two bad races and he knows about it, I don't need to tell him. I think he gets some credit from us because he was there from the beginning. He took a big chance in the beginning to join us, when we were unknown and we had no credit by anybody. I think they are doing OK, he will come back and be the Romain like he was before.

**Bob, recently Vijay Mallya stepped down as a director of the team but remains as team principal. Can you tell us what the impact is on the team?**

**Robert FERNLEY:** Well, it doesn't really have any impact on the team. The day-to-day operations continue on under the management, as they've always done over the years. Vijay's decision is purely a personal one, but from a Force India point of view it really is business as usual.

**Pre-season and at the start of the year we were seeing reports that there would be a name change or even a potential change of ownership change at Force India, but the team seems to be growing in competitiveness in the midfield. What does the team need to do to then take the next step to the front of the midfield and maybe even further?**

**RF:** I don't think it's about what we can do to take the next step. It's about what Formula 1 can do. Formula 1 has to come to us. We can't go from a 100 million budget to a 300 million budget. So somewhere down the line it has to come back to the midfield and then you have a more level playing field. So I think the onus is very much on Formula 1 delivering a more competitive package.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action & Speed Sport) To follow up on Bob's comments, in Bahrain you had a meeting with Liberty and I remember Claire, at this press conference in Bahrain, telling us how happy you were. You had another meeting in Monaco, maybe all three of you can update us on how you're feeling on the latest proposals?**

**Claire, maybe start with you, you were very excited after the Bahrain meeting.**

**CW:** Yeah, well I'm not on the champagne any more, that's for sure. More water. They're working hard, clearly, there's obviously a lot of work to do, we all know that, and we have to work together, which we are doing, in order to make sure that the proposals that we're going to have for 2021 work for all the teams as best they can – and that's not an easy piece of work. It's not exactly what we want, as a team, as Williams, but I think we're probably getting closer and hopefully if we can get the budget cap in place that brings us... I know they're reporting [\$]150[million] but if it was a bit higher then fine, we all have to compromise. I think they are very close to the power unit regulations, to get those locked down, which would be great because hopefully that would attract new OEMs into our sport. It's just a process, a continual process that everybody's working hard to make sure that we can get set in stone sooner rather than later.

**Guenter, your thoughts on the progress there.**

**GS:** I think the engine regulations need to be signed-off for '21 to start with and then a hard date when the next proposal comes from the general commercial contract – but I think FOM – Liberty – is working diligently to achieve this. We haven't got hard dates, not a complete proposal yet but I don't think it's an easy job to make all ten teams happy but I think they know what needs to be done and it's down to them to negotiate, or to take the sport where they want to take it.

**Bob, what are your thoughts on the movements on the movements since Bahrain to Monaco?**

**RF:** Well, I think I like the process that Formula One Group are bringing in where it's very much done by consensus, as opposed to individual teams pushing their own agendas, which is what it

used to be. So, I think they're going through a very constructive process in that manner. I agree with Guenther, and Claire, that we need to get the engine regs nailed, hopefully this month so that those can move forward. I'm less concerned about the chassis regs. I think we could wait a while for those because again, the sooner they come out, the bigger teams have got opportunities to put resources behind it – so it's not urgent that this happens as long as we keep moving on the path. We've made a change for 2019, which is a step towards the 2021 programme, which will give some very clear direction. They won't get it right for sure, but it will give good direction in terms of where we want to be for '21. We could be looking if there are elements for standardisation, or proscriptive elements. Those could start coming in quite early as they don't affect development. So, I think it needs to just have that cohesive process – and hopefully over the next few months we'll see that.

**Q: (François-David Rouleau – Le Journal de Montréal) Question for Claire. Could you please evaluate the work of your two drivers, especially Lance Stroll so far in the season?**

**CW:** Obviously, they haven't exactly got the best equipment this year in order to demonstrate their potential, of which I think both have a considerable amount. It's our responsibility to give them a car in which they can demonstrate that. Both have had quite considerable weight upon their shoulders. It's not easy when you're quite a young driver in Formula One, having to drive a car that they're having to drive, to go out in qualifying, to go out in the race, knowing that they're probably going to be at the back. Can't be easy for them psychologically, and I think they're doing a very good job in order to go out there and do what they're having to do. I think they're demonstrating quite a considerable sense of maturity coping with that. But they're also working really well as part of the team as a whole. They're spending a lot of time at the factory with our engineers, helping drive development forwards, and clearly that's going to be crucial to take us forward over the course of this season. I know that both want to just score points and be qualifying in Q3, in the top ten on Saturday and then getting into the points on Sunday – but it's really up to us to give them the machinery to do that. I have no complaints about either of our drivers on the races that we've had this year.

**Q: (Luke Smith – Crash.net) Question for all three of you, regarding the future calendars: the commercial rights holder has been quite open about its plans for the future, wants to get new events on the calendar but there was a report out earlier this week suggesting next year's calendar could start a week earlier and finish up in December. How close are we to saturation point, both in the length of the schedule and the number of events on there?**

**RF:** I think you have to look at the human logistics in a lot of this. Twenty races, we're very much on the edge of being able to maintain it with one crew, one travelling crew in particular. So once you start moving in beyond that, occasionally we can go to 21 and then we go back to 19 and we can cope with all of that, but once you get a sustained amount of races that are going well up into the twenties, we're going to have to bring in revolving crews and there's a huge cost to that and these are the things we've got to look at so there needs to be just a look at how are we going to do it logistically. It's quite capable from a show point of view but it will change how we, as teams, operate in my opinion.

**GS:** I would agree with Bob. I think it makes financial sense to do more races and if we can then do it, as suggested by Bob, with more people and rotating crews, it could be done but I think there is a second factor in there, which is the saturation of the public. How much do they want to see F1? If F1 is on every weekend, every year, every weekend, are we not on a downward spiral? I think Liberty Media is aware of this, I don't think there is a big plan in place to go to 25 or 24 races. I think it will always be between 20 and 22 and starting earlier and ending later maybe gives us a little bit more freedom not to have the back-to-back-to-back like we will have in a few weeks. I think they are well aware that there is a saturation factor for the human element and for what the customer actually wants so I don't think they will exaggerate.

**CW:** I would echo what Bob and Guenther have said, that from a human perspective it's a tough on our guys who are having to spend such a huge amount of time at (away from) home. Yes, maybe drawing the calendar out, starting earlier and finishing later gives more of a break but it actually then takes away time that we have to build our cars over the winter but also for the guys to spend good quality time at home with their families over the winter. I think, from a purely sporting fan

perspective, if it's from a saturated market, then great if we have more races if we can go to more markets, particularly within America, I think that would be crucial for our sport, but if we are to do that then it has to make financial sense and those races that come on the calendar have to come on because they are paying to do so. I don't see why teams should be expected to go to new races for nothing and then the prize fund pot dilutes down even further and it's just costing the teams more and more and that shouldn't be the case.

**Q: (Maxime Sarrasin – 98.5FM) Claire, one of our colleagues asked Lance yesterday about his contract situation, talking about a possible new contract and you didn't have information for us. You talked earlier that you were happy with how your pilots were performing without the fact that the machine is not going as well as you wanted, but what can you tell us about a possible new contract for Lance Stroll?**

**CW:** What did Lance say to you? Did he say no comment?

**Q: (Maxime Sarrasin – 98.5FM) He said he was not aware... but we wanted to ask you what your thoughts were, what you thought about giving him a new contract for next year?**

**CW:** I love Lance, I think he's a great guy, I think he's had a huge amount of pressure put on him. I think he's had - and I say this repeatedly so I apologise if I'm repeating myself - but he's had a huge amount of negativity thrown at him, a huge amount of criticism for a variety of reasons and I think he's handled it with an incredible sense of maturity and I think he should be given credit for that. As a team player, he's great and I think he's got a lot more to show if we could only give him the car to do that. I don't want to talk about 2019; as you would expect, we have many issues to deal with this year and I need everybody focused on 2018 to resolve the problems that we have and when we're in a position to talk about 2019 then we will do so.

**Q: (Mike Doodson – Auto Action) Bob, you talked about cohesive rules for the future – not even terribly sure I know what that means – but I'm always concerned that drivers have to suffer penalties for factors which are nothing to do with their side of the bargain as it were. We had this race in Monaco where Daniel Ricciardo drove what I thought was a heroic race and in the process he fried his electrical bits. I wonder if you are perhaps going to ask in future that the drivers are not punished so badly or so seriously? In Ricciardo's case, he's got to take at least one penalty in coming races which is going to ruin his chances, light as they are, of being World Champion this year.**

**RF:** I agree with you. I think Ross Brawn has got that right on the top of his agenda, as one of the things to get sorted out. Just remember that when those penalties were brought in, it was also partly to control the costs of power units and everything else and it probably hasn't quite ticked the boxes as it should have done, certainly from a sporting point of view, so I do agree. But we also have to keep the engine manufacturers in check as well, so there has to be balance with that, to make sure that we keep costs under control while also not damaging the sporting element from the drivers and I think Ross is really looking .... I think it's one of his top priorities to bring that in for the next regulations.

**Q: Is there an obvious solution in your mind to changing that rule?**

**RF:** Probably, but it's going to be more related to the constructors probably, than it is to the drivers. That's the way I would look at it, in terms of the fact that it hurts the constructors' side of it rather than the drivers' side of it but I think Ross has got some clear ideas on it and it will be interesting to see what he comes up with. You've got a wonderfully experienced person there; if anybody can do it, he can.

Ends