



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2018 FIA Formula One World Championship

Singapore Grand Prix

Friday Press Conference Transcript

14.09.2018

TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Maurizio ARRIVABENE (Ferrari), Frédéric VASSEUR (Sauber) Guenther STEINER (Haas), Gil DE FERRAN (McLaren)

Maurizio, please can we start with you? Welcome. There have been lots of announcements coming out of Ferrari this past week. Your 2019 driver line-up is sorted, with Charles Leclerc replacing Kimi Räikkönen. Talk us through how and why that change has taken place?

Maurizio ARRIVABENE: How and why? It's not clear? OK, I try to be clear. When you make some choices like this, that are related to the driver, you don't have to look only at the short-term commitment but also at the long-term commitment. A long-term commitment means it's not only for next year, it's for the future of the team – how you are going to grow a young talent, and what you want to expect from him for the future. That's very simple. It's not a decision taken by Mr Simpson; it's a decision taken by me, discuss it also with the top management, that is taking into consideration many, many factors. This has nothing to do with the respect that I have for Kimi, that is great, as a human being and a driver, but if you have to do a choice, thinking about the future of the team, I think we made the right choice, for us and for Kimi. And the way that we wrote the press release was absolutely intentional. We were using a different style, breaking a bit the rules of Ferrari, that is normally going to communicate this in one line, broke the rules, giving also tribute and respect to Kimi for what he has done with us and wishing him the best for the future, and the best for the future it's here.

Maurizio, just a second question on that: Charles Leclerc has had a huge impact on Formula 1 this year. Just tell me how excited you are by him, as a driver and what you think he can achieve in the sport?

MA: The first mistake is to put too much pressure on the shoulders of this guy. It could be, potentially, a huge mistake. I signed with Charles in November 2016 or November 2015 the first contract in the Ferrari Driver Academy. In that contract we already designed and committed and signed and wrote his future in Formula 1, as we have done with Giovinazzi, the same thing. And that means we change a bit also the way that we organise the Ferrari Drive Academy but also how we are going to develop the talent for the future. So Charles Leclerc is not a big surprise, he's one of the talented drivers that we have in Formula 1. Thank God, it's a guy that he grew up with us and I hope that he is going to continue his career with us, at least until 2022 for sure. Having said so, if you look at the overall situation in the paddock, it's an important sign that all the talent they are giving to Formula... look at Mercedes. They make a choice a couple of years ago with Bottas, a young driver, nearby a champion like Hamilton. This guy of McLaren for next year: they have Carlos Sainz with a guy that is considered a rookie. Next year Sauber have Kimi with Mr question mark and if you look at Red Bull they were brave enough to have Verstappen nearby Gasly. There is nothing strange in all of this but I think the good signal to Formula 1 is that we are striving to look for, to create the future champions.

Q: Thank you Maurizio. Gil, if we can turn to you, like Ferrari, as Maurizio said, you have opted for youth, particular in one of your cars. What is it about the performance of 18-year-old Lando Norris that made him a must-have for McLaren?

Gil de Ferran: Well, a lot of things, you know. I think, first of all, his racing record is impeccable. All the way from karting – he was the youngest world karting champion – throughout his career. And certainly what I have been able to observe every time he is in the car is... he's a natural. He adapts very, very quickly, even in very unfamiliar conditions, with an unfamiliar car. Many times he is immediately on the pace and I think he's also displayed a level of maturity during his Formula 2 performances this year that certainly I have been looking at more closely, that has been quite impressive and made us think that this is a talent for the future. I think we certainly believe he's got tremendous long-term potential and we decided to go with that.

Q: With Carlos Sainz new to the team as well, there is certain lack of continuity on the driver front. What sort of impact do you think that will have?

MB: Certainly every time you have two new drivers it's a more challenging situation, because you have to learn how they are, how they operate. Everybody operates in a slightly different way. Certainly as a team we aim to support the drivers the best we can, taking into account their differences. It certainly will take a little while for us to understand each other, how the team operates, how the drivers operate and tailor that support individually to Carlos and to Lando. Carlos is going into his fifth year of Formula 1 and although he is very young he is quite an experienced driver. Like I said before, he has shown quite well against different team-mates, so I think we're very confident we have a good pairing.

Q: Thank you Gil. Guenther, with Ferrari's line-up sorted for next year, where does that leave Haas with regard to your driver choice for 2019?

Guenther STEINER: I hope that we will announce our drivers in the next two to three weeks, so we will let you know when we are ready to announce it.

Q: Can you just give us your thoughts... I'm not asking for names but the performances of your current drivers?

GS: I think they're doing pretty good! What more do you want to know – yeah, the money, the names, everything! I think we are performing pretty good this year, car-wise and driver-wise. We a few hiccups with one of the drivers in the beginning of the year but lately I think we are performing where we should be performing. Our drivers, at the moment, for us, looking in the future, we are a young team so I don't think we are ready to develop any young drivers if you want to hear that.

Thank you for that.

GS: A pleasure!

Fréd, thank you for waiting. Yesterday in the press conference, Kimi wasn't that forthcoming when asked about his move to Sauber, so can you just put a little bit of flesh on the bone for us. How did you persuade Kimi to continue his career with your team?

Frédéric VASSEUR: I don't want to say, like my future driver, 'why not?' but I think for us coming from where we were last year... I had a look this morning on the FP1 of 2017, I think it is a huge opportunity to have in our car, in the Alfa Romeo Sauber, one of the three world champions who will race next year. It's a huge opportunity for the team, for the brand, for everybody. We know that we are quite a young team also and we need to have someone leading the team with a huge experience and I think Kimi will fulfill all the parts of this.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Andrew Benson – BBC Sport) Maurizio. How concerned are you by the errors being made by your lead driver in several races this year, and questionable race management decisions by the team – and what are you doing about them?

MA: Oh my God! Again! OK, I start from the second one and I want to be clear, once and forever. I mean, I would ask some of you, all of you, who is so crazy to give team order to a driver at the start of the race? I mean, we do our thing with the maximum professional effort. Before the race we are looking at the video of the start of the race, our team manager is giving instruction on the best line to follow to the driver. The only team order you can tell to the driver at the first corner is “guys, I would like to have both of the cars OK.” All the rest, I mean, it’s nonsense. I explain you the reason why. Kimi, in the case of Monza, was in pole position. Do we agree for once on this? He was in pole position right? Sebastian was 8m from him. How you think that Kimi can look on his side where Sebastian is? In your opinion, the order is “Kimi, please slow down when you start, and don’t worry if Hamilton and all the others, they are overtaking you.” What we are discussing about? That is the answer to your question. And then, team order, do you think the team orders, they were invented in Monza last weekend? I don’t think so. It’s 28 years that I’m in Formula One and I always heard team orders. There are many ways to give it to the team: before, during, after. That’s not important. The problem in Monza is that you have no time to give team order to anyone, because at the third corner it’s happened what has happened. So, this is the reality. I mean, don’t expect me to give team orders to the driver at the start of the race, looking forward to the first corner. It’s too dangerous and it’s crazy.

And your assessment of Vettel’s performances this year?

MA: You call it mistakes but if you look in Formula One everybody is making mistakes. Bigger or smaller. If we are a team, we fail and we win together so I don’t want to point my finger at Sebastian. I mean, nobody was happy after Monza but think about the rest of the team. If in Monza I was pointing my finger at Sebastian, think about a problem on aero, a problem on the pitstop, a problem on the engine. The guys, they are responsible for the different areas, they could think ‘OK, if he’s pointing the finger at Sebastian, next time it’s my turn.’ It’s not what I want. The only mistake you see in front of you is me. I’m responsible for the team. When the result is not coming, it’s my responsibility. Not the responsibility of Sebastian or the engineer or the responsibility of the mechanics. It’s my responsibility. If you want somebody to blame, he’s in front of you. The job was done already. I tell you, you don’t need to continue, but if you want, I’m still here! But something that is very important, I accept any criticism because in three and a half years I didn’t want anything, OK? So I accept the criticism from everybody, especially from the people who won before me – but in good faith not in bad faith. Because bad faith is not correct. I’m a correct person and I would like to hear comments that are in good faith, and then I’m accepting everything. As I said, I didn’t want anything.

Q: (Joe Saward – Auto week) Maurizio, now you’re feeling talkative, can you talk about Ferrari’s attitude to the budget cap? Who makes the decision and what is your thinking and has it changed recently?

MA: I mean, you talk in general about the budget cap. Of course the objective of everybody is to save money, to reduce costs. Then, the question is not the ‘what’, it’s based on the ‘how’. How do we want to do it? How do we want to maintain Formula One at the pinnacle of motorsport as it is? How do we want to continue to develop cars that are beautiful, also for the public. I mean, it’s not an easy equation. Everybody, they go sometimes their way but I think at the end we can find the solution. I was looking at the car presented a couple of days ago by Ross. It’s a good exercise, I was asking our engineers what they thought about this, they said it’s a bit underwhelming in their opinion and it looks like an old champ car. But, you know, it’s an exercise. Sometimes we go up here to have this kind of result. I think this is the game that everybody plays. Concerning the future, you mean the concorde agreement of course. Starting from the point, I spoke with our CEO and everybody, they want to save money, as I said at the beginning, to reduce the costs, not to save money, they are two different things. It depends how you do it. The decision, it is something that is not mine because it is going to be a strategic decision that is involving the overall group. I mean, if in

somehow accepting an agreement that is not taking into consideration where the Ferrari is in the market and the DNA of Ferrari, I repeat, it's a kind of strategic decision and it's not under my responsibility. Of course, I give all the information we discuss about this but he is the person that is going to talk with the appropriate people.

Q: (Gaeton Vigneron – RTBF) Sorry to not be original but another one for you Maurizio. Starting from the point that Giovinazzi could go to Sauber, Kvyat could go to Toro Rosso, you could lose your two simulator drivers. My question is, are you ready for that, have you got an idea to get another one to fulfil this role – and Stoffel Vandoorne could be a driver for that?

MA: We are always ready for everything. No concern. You will see about the future of Giovinazzi I think in the next few weeks, so I'm not concerned at all.

Q: (Cheng Jin – Car and Fan) There's a lot of rumours surrounding the future of Mick Schumacher because if he wins the F3 championship, he will get a super licence, so for Gunther and for Frederic, neither of your teams have announced their driver line-up for next year. Will you be interested in him? And for Maurizio and Gil, will you be considering putting him into your driver academy?

GS: I think there is quite a hype about Mick Schumacher and he's doing very well at the moment in Formula Three. We haven't looked at it, as I've said before. We, at the moment, as a young team, we prefer to go with drivers with experience, but I think there is a future for Mick Schumacher in Formula One so let's see what he's doing in the next years and what his plans are. Maybe he doesn't want to go straight to Formula One.

FV: Yes, so far I don't know if Mick has the 40 points for the super licence but honestly, I think there is a huge step between F3 and F1 and with the small number of test days we have during the winter, I think it's – I don't want to say impossible because we will see – but it's quite difficult to do the step and it will make sense probably for him to do Formula Two or something like this. But he could have a link with a Formula One team, he could do some FP1... There are many ways to prepare for F1.

Q: One of those ways could be as a simulator driver, Gil. Would McLaren consider him?

GdeF: Look, obviously he's doing very well in Formula Three and certainly he has a shot for the championship and the Formula Three championship is a very difficult one and I think a very good indication of how good you are so clearly he's very good. We have not had any contact with him but we say as McLaren we are always looking throughout the motor sport arena globally, in a way. I think I would second what Frederic said: in a way I wish we had more opportunities to be able to work with young talent, perhaps more testing and different things like this, to be able to establish a relationship and help in the development of drivers like Mick.

MA: Concerning Mick Schumacher, the most important thing is to let him grow without giving pressure. The recent results were very very good and I wish to him a great career. With a name like this, that wrote the historical pages of the Ferrari history, I think the door at Maranello is always open of course, but without burning the step, that is, a Schumacher family decision but let the guys have fun. I always repeat this, being focused, concentrated but at the same time have fun and to grow up slowly but certainly. Then we will see about the future. How can you say no, in Maranello, to a name like this?

Q: (Stuart Codling – Autosport) Fred, what do you expect Kimi to bring to your team next year that you haven't got already and can't get elsewhere?

FV: Clearly Kimi has huge experience in F1, I think he already told that yesterday. For the team, we are building up every single department and I think he will be very supportive in the process. I think from aero to design office to track engineering, tyre management, I think everybody in the team is more than welcome to have Kimi on board in the future. It's a step forward for us for sure. This is on the technical side and on the more marketing and commercial side, for sure it's a huge push and if

you have a look at what we had last week in terms of social media, so it was probably the first time in our lives that we have so many connections. On both sides, I think it will be supportive for us.

Q: Fred, are there still a lot of people at the team who can remember him from 2001?

FV: Some, yeah. For sure, I was not there but some guys came to my office saying 'ah, superb that Kimi's back.' But I don't want to consider the fact that Kimi's coming back that we have to think about the future, not about the past.

Q: (Joe Saward – Auto week) Fred, talking about Mr Question Mark, can you tell us how many possible Questions Marks there are? Is it just two drivers we're looking at or are there more drivers to be taken into account?

FV: Please, the last two weeks for me have been a bit in a rush on the driver market and if I can have some days off from this? After Singapore we will sit down with all the persons involved in the discussions and we will take a decision quite soon because I think it's also good for the team to have a clear answer but it will be soon.

Q: (Jake Michaels – ESPN) Maurizio, you said earlier that Kimi's move from Ferrari to Sauber next year is the best thing for Ferrari and for Kimi. Can you explain why that's the case and why the best thing for Kimi isn't to stay at Ferrari?

MA: It's quite simple. I also said that it's very important to look at the situation of the team in perspective, perspective meaning two or three years. So in my opinion, that is justifying enough our choice to have a young driver for next year, to grow up and that's it. It's not a decision that is look on the actual situation or only to next year. My job is to look forward to the future of the team. That was the justification of the choice.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – AP) Maurizio, just to follow up on that, Kimi said yesterday it wasn't his decision and wasn't his choice. Can you explain how he took the decision and did he try and persuade you to change your mind? How did he feel about it?

MA: I think Kimi was funny also yesterday during the press conference. I try to be funny too. What did you expect Kimi to tell you, that Homer Simpson took the decision? Of course I took the decision but I have to say that the relationship with Kimi is so good that he understands. It's not only a question of telling him this is the decision. If you do my job properly, it's to take him through the process, and I took him through the process of the decision and he didn't even try to say 'yeah, I would like you to change your mind' or something. He's a professional driver. Then I heard many other things like 'ah, you know, telling him in Monza was the wrong time.' Think about if I had told him in Belgium and Sebastian was winning the race? Kimi was in the same position and then it was wrong to tell him in Belgium. So the right time is not written on the paper, but what is written on the paper is that when we sign contracts with a driver, we sign a contract with professional drivers. I always talk with my two drivers as professional drivers and I'm expecting from him the maximum of professional effort and to use all their professional skills and Kimi is one of them. Kimi was so nervous and so unhappy that I told him on Thursday, if I'm not wrong, in Monza but he was so unhappy that he made pole position on Saturday. We're talking with professional drivers.

FV: I have to make him unhappy ever single weekend!

MA: Yeah, in fact that's what I was thinking afterwards, because when I read some criticism and I said I accept the criticism, I was thinking OK, if it's like this, I'm going to make him unhappy every weekend so he's going to give us the pole position. Guys. We are talking about professional drivers not kids that they are driving at the luna park.

Ends