



Press Information

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TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Mattia BINOTTO (Ferrari), Frédéric VASSEUR (Alfa Romeo Racing), Guenther STEINER (Haas), Franz TOST (Toro Rosso), Mario ISOLA (Pirelli)

Q: Guenther, a promising start for the Haas team here in FP1 but it's been another difficult start to the season for Romain Grosjean. Are we seeing a repeat of last year or is it a different set of problems for him?

Guenther STEINER: I hope that he hasn't got the same problems here as he had last year. I think a lot of people would not enjoy that. I think we've struggled as everyone has seen. In Australia we were performance-wise not too bad but we had the pit stop issue. In the races afterwards... I shouldn't say it because I've got Mario beside me, but we had some issues, we couldn't get the tyres to work, which he will disagree with heavily, I forewarn you. But here it seems to be working. But it's too early to say, it's FP1, you know. We at least have to go through FP2 to get to some conclusions. This morning was a good session; it was enjoyable again. Let's hope we can repeat it for the rest of the weekend and we don't do any damage in the race.

Q: But from Romain's point of view are you seeing more consistency from him this year than at the same stage last year?

GS: Absolutely. He's very calm. He cannot do anything about it. He stays very calm, he stays focused, and I've all the confidence that he doesn't repeat what happened last year.

Q: Now, you've already touched on tyres. You were quite outspoken about them after the race in Baku two weeks ago. Just tell us what the issues were?

GS: Mario knows better than me. He's the expert on tyres, not me you know. We have got issues, we cannot get them to work, we cannot get the heat into them on certain kinds of tracks and that is our problem. I said in Baku that we would be struggling, beforehand. Here I was more confident, not completely, but we should get them to work here and we get them to work here. But we have an issue that we cannot get the tyres to work at each track, so that is our issue.

Q: Thank you and good luck this weekend. Mario, perhaps we could get your reaction to some of the comments Guenther came out with in Baku?

Mario ISOLA: Yeah, I believe that Baku is quite a unique circuit, where you have an asphalt that is very smooth and so is not going to generate energy into the tyre, you have a long straight, cold weather conditions, the tyres are losing a lot of temperature and we know from the past the characteristics of the circuit. Last year, when we developed the current product, we were required to have a product without blistering – you remember last year we had some race with blistering – and to reduce overheating. That was a clear request from the drivers. So basically, our tyres have been developed with this in mind. Also, the working ranges are probably a bit higher than last year. But we didn't experience any issue here in Barcelona in the pre-season test. We had good weather, but it was February, March, and the same in Melbourne. In Bahrain, OK, I had a chat with Guenther, I know their situation, and I hope they find a solution to that but I cannot say that it is a common problem to everybody. In Baku, because of the circuit characteristics it was a bit more difficult to keep the front and rear tyres in the right operating window. The operating windows cannot be narrower than last year because don't forget that we have two compounds, that we call C3 and C4, that are the same compounds as we had last year, so at least with these two compounds we have the same operating window, and this is the analysis I can do now.

Q: Apart from the two compounds that are the same as last year, have the new compounds become harder to work with for the teams?

MI: I don't think so, because the C1 and C2 are slightly softer than last year and with the C5, which is equivalent to what we called the hypersoft in 2018, the main issue was the graining and the new compound has a better mechanical stability with the same or wider operating window. Obviously we have to discover that in the next few races, where we are going to use this compound. They tested this compound in Abu Dhabi, they tested it in Barcelona, because it was a free choice of all the five compounds, and I believe that the new compounds are not more difficult to manage.

Q: Looking a little bit further ahead, you announced yesterday that Formula 2 will use 18-inch tyres in 2020. What can you tell us about your testing programme ahead of Formula 1 making the same changes in 2021? Have you decided how that's going to work yet?

MI: Yeah, for Formula 2 we obviously have a very packed test programme because we have to develop the tyres in six or seven months. We already agreed a test schedule with the promoter and with the FIA. For Formula 1 the intention is to have three sessions – September, October and November – and three teams are going to supply the mule car, and they are Mercedes, McLaren and Renault. And we are going to offer the opportunity to provide a mule car for 2020 again to all the teams, it's their choice if they want to do that or not. So it's the same system and the same procedure that we have used in the last few years. We offer to everybody, teams can accept or not and then we make a plan according to the number of teams that accept it. We have 25 days of testing for next year, as it was in the last few years, so we have a short development plan for 2020 in the first half of the season and then we switch on 18-inch tyres from September onwards.

Q: Thanks. Franz, perhaps we could move on to you. We heard from Guenther an overview of Haas' start to the season, perhaps you could give us your thoughts after the opening four races from Toro Rosso's point of view?

Franz TOST: Toro Rosso has a competitive package. We have a car that works well, we have a powerful engine from Honda, and two drivers that are also competing quite good. We scored points in all the races apart from Baku but I think Daniil could have finished there in the ninth or tenth position but unfortunately he was involved in a collision with Ricciardo. I'm quite positive that we can also be here within the first ten. Generally speaking I think we are in the position to come with at least one car in qualifying three and to score points.

Q: OK. A word about Alex Albon as well. He was something of an unknown quantity coming into this season. Has he surprised you with how quickly he has adapted to Formula 1?

FT: Yes, it was a positive surprise, because as you know, if a young inexperienced driver is coming into Formula 1 there is always a question mark, but I said already during the test sessions here in Barcelona in February that Alex could become the driver surprise of the year and so far he has done really a very good job, with good technical feedback on the mechanical side and the aero side, but also regarding the tyres he understands how to use the tyres in the best possible and we are really very happy to have him in the team.

Q: Thank you, Franz. Fréd, coming to you, we saw some compliance issues with the front wing of Kimi Räikkönen's car in Baku a couple of weeks ago. How have you resolved that for this race? Have you reverted to an older spec or have you updated the Baku wing?

Frédéric VASSEUR: Just to clarify, that I think first we were out of the spec, we did a mistake, and perhaps you could consider that the decision was a bit harsh, but it's like this, we have to clean in front of our door first and I think the mistake was on our side and for sure that we are not coming in Barcelona with the same wing.

Q: It's been a strong start for Alfa Romeo this year, particular on Kimi Räikkönen's side of the garage. But we saw progress from, Antonio in Baku. How confident are you that he's made a breakthrough and that he can progress and challenge Kimi for the rest of the season?

FV: I think if you look at the first four races I think he was into the pace but I think we made on his side too many mistakes. He had some reliability issues. He got the penalty in China first, he didn't do the quali and then in Baku... OK it's far too much, we have to give him a clean sheet one week and to do a

proper job, but I think he is improving. He was in front of Kimi in Baku, and he did a very strong quali also in Melbourne. No, I'm quite confident that he is very focused and motivated and the results will come and will help.

Q: OK, thanks Frédéric, good luck with that. Mattia, we're back Barcelona, where two months ago Sebastian in particular was singing the praises of your car. The driveability then seemed to drop away when we went racing. After FP1 today can you tell us, are you back where you were in March?

Mattia BINOTTO: I think we never dropped away. I think that certainly we had a strong winter testing, but I think that our main competitors were as strong as we were at the time, and on the last day of winter testing they scored the same lap time as us. As a matter of fact, I think we already mentioned that they would have been very strong as well. I think that since then we are both developing our car. The car developed, so coming here it's certainly not any more the same car we had at the time, the weather conditions are completely different, the heat is certainly a different factor. So, are you exactly, let me say, on the same page? I don't think you can compare. I think more important that it's a relative competition so it's more important that we are focusing on the weekend and trying to optimize the car and the package, and we are doing our best.

Q: You've bought a host of upgrades to this race. A lot has been made of the power unit upgrade that is a couple of races early. Can you just tell us what's been going on in Maranello to bring these updates forward? Are people working even harder than normal?

MB: Obviously when you are planning such a change on your schedule you need to do it a few weeks ago. It's not something we decided within that week. Having started the season in Melbourne we recognized that somehow we may have been late on our let me say performance compared with our competitors and we tried simply to push on all the main items where we were already planning developments. We were simply looking for opportunities in anticipating some of the programmes. We did it already with an aero package in Baku which was somehow introduced earlier compared to our initial programme. We did it here as well for the power unit. You simply achieve that by trying maybe sometime to shortcut or intensify the activity. I have to say that the people back at Maranello have worked very hard, we intensified our activities, and we are working still very hard, as it seems that's what we need to do at the moment.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Question to all of you: has the success of the Netflix series helped you to have an agreement with them for the Season Two?

Franz, have you signed something with them for the second season?

FT: No, not that I'm aware of.

Will you sign with them?

FT: We will see.

Do any of you just want to give us your thoughts on the success of the Netflix series, and what you think it's done?

GS: I didn't see it – but everyone tells me. I don't know how successful it is because there were no ratings, so I'm told and Netflix never gives them, but I think everybody was positive about it, so I guess it helps. It should help to bring people in who don't normally watch the races, who see this. There are more people watching Netflix than F1, I would say. If the people watch it and then get interested in F1, that should help us. That should help us all, and it's a good thing in my opinion.

And Guenther, to follow up on Fred's question, would you be willing to help Netflix with a Series Two.

GS: Yes!

Mattia, will we see Ferrari involved?

MB: I think that, as Guenther said, it's certainly an interesting programme. We were not participating last season as Ferrari. We are considering it at the moment. We have not taken our final decision, so it's something we will do in the next few weeks.

Q: (Sam Collins – Racecar Engineering) Looking to the future, in 2021 to 2024, we're going to have single make brakes and wheels. I'm a little bit interested to know how that's going to affect your teams and, in terms of Pirelli, how it's going to affect your company, both commercially and technically. That's to everybody.

MI: On our side, having a standard rim is obviously... you know that at the moment each team is designing his own rim and that could make things a bit complicated for us. Sometimes it's difficult to fit a tyre. And heat exchange with the rim is also an item we are able to consider so, for sure, it's a standardisation that could help on our side. The brakes as well.

GS: Standardisation. First of all, I think it hasn't been decided how much we do standardisation so I think we're getting ahead of ourselves here to say that it's been decided for '21. I don't know if anyone signed an agreement that it will be standardised. A lot of parties looked into it because the tenders went out – but it could go both ways, y'know? Sometimes you get some parts which just work, and sometimes you get parts that everybody's got the same and some people get them to work with their car. The worst bit for me, we need to make sure that Formula One keeps its DNA. And the DNA of F1 for me, it's developing... it's the only motorsport that is free for technology. Once you start standardisation, it can be a slippery slope in my opinion. We need to be careful not going down that slope and all of a sudden ending up with all the same cars. A lot of people are interested in our technology and that is why they're watching F1. I don't know. First of all, we need to see what is happening with standardisation before I make a final comment how I think about it.

Mattia, what's your view?

MB: Very much aligned with Guenther. So, first it's not decided yet, yes, true there are some tenders and discussions are on-going. As Ferrari, we always relay that we are against the standardisation principle – but we know as well that we need to control the costs and expenses – and obviously there is a budget cap so we need to find the right balance. Standardisation only makes sense if you may save money, which has to be proved first. And as well we need to take care of the DNA of F1, as Guenther said. For example, if we take the rims, all the cars with exactly the same rims – I think that, in terms of aesthetics, is not good for F1 from the outside, because you're not differentiating any more the cars from one car to the other, maybe just the paint. But it's not something we should look at. We are going through an entire process, together with the FIA tenders. I think first we should look at the result of the tenders and then to a proper evaluation and make it carefully.

Fred?

FV: F1 was able to do it on the ECU 15 years ago. I think that we can manage a situation on the brakes or the rims. The only issue, for me, would be the timeline. We need to be aware quite soon, and we need to have more details quite soon about the technical aspects. If we are in a rush then everything is more and more expensive.

And Franz?

FT: First of all we have to wait, what the regulation at the end will say. Standardisation of parts, there are two reasons: first to come down with the costs; the second also to bring the performance together of the different teams. I don't agree to say the DNA of Formula One is just to develop, we have to find a way to come down with the costs and no-one takes care which brakes we have in the car, or which rims they have. The people want to see some interesting races, some overtaking manoeuvres. They don't care about the form of the rims or about the brakes. They just want to see interesting races. And we have to come down with the costs. Therefore I am in agreement with as many standardised parts as possible.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Mattia, you talked about the upgrades and the earlier upgrades and rejigging the schedule. I just wanted to check what the longer-term consequences of that will be this season – because obviously it's a long season. Does this, by bringing it at race five, does that lock you into probably a fourth engine at the end of the year – and could you introduce an additional spec at the end of the season?

MB: No, that's not the plan. The early introduction doesn't mean that we cannot still use PU1 in some races. Maybe that can be an option – but certainly we are not hoping to have four engines per season per driver plan.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines / racefans.net) Mario, given all the talk about the tyres etc., obviously when you came into the season, you had some form of objective list, your target letter etcetera. Are you quite comfortable that you've achieved all of those in terms of compounds, of degradation etcetera – and at which stage do you phase-out of developing 13-inch tyres and concentrate purely on 18-inch?

MI: I would say, as I've said before, one of the targets was to eliminate the blistering that we had last year. And the other one was to reduce the overheating to give the opportunity for drivers to push more. I believe we are in the right direction. Last year we started the development of the new produce with some other ideas – and we want to conclude this phase for 2020. That's why we have decided to keep the development of 13-inch tyre in the first part of the season for next year, so the plan is also to find new compounds with a wider working range, that is what they are asking for. And to upgrade another step in the construction. Then obviously we will focus on 18-inches, that is a big challenge.

Q: (Ian Parkes – New York Times) Question to all four team principals. Given your respective starts to the season, could you give us an idea as to whether it has been worse, or better than expected, and the reasons behind that. And what your expectations are for the rest of the season, now you have a decent idea as to where you are performance-wise.

FT: From Toro Rosso's side, I must say we had a reasonably good start into the season. As I mentioned beforehand, we scored points and we have a competitive package. From the different race tracks, I must say Australia was really a big success. Many people were there, it was also not so bad in Bahrain and Baku. From the race entertainment itself, I must say it was not so exciting because we have two cars in front which are winning race after race and that's not, I think the best for Formula One because it starts to become boring as far as friends of mine say to me: don't watch F1 any more because always the same are winning. This I think is not good.

Alfa Romeo's perspective?

FV: For Alfa Romeo racing, probably a good start to the season that we score points on every single event and it's so tight in the midfield that you can – as Franz said before – that from one session to another one, or one race to another one, you can move from P4 to P10 and it's very difficult to make any prediction. But I think at least at this stage of the grid it's exciting, and when you arrive in Barcelona, you never know if you will be P7 or P20. I think that the fun is there and everybody is pushing like hell to bring updates and to push and get results on the next one. I think I'm quite happy with the job done so far – and for Alfa Romeo Racing it was a good one.

Mattia?

MB: Difficult answer. Certainly we are not happy for the points we've scored so far. I think we have missed a great opportunity in Bahrain where we certainly could have done a fantastic result compared to the one we did. I think as well in Baku we could have done a better race and certainly a better quali – so if you make the sum at the end, we are missing points, we are missing points compared to where we believe is our potential. Our objective certainly is not to be where we are in terms of – again – points and classification, so we cannot be happy on the start of the season. But assessing that from the performance overall, it's not a drama at all. I think we have got still a good car. The competition is very, very strong and that, I think, was known and it's not a surprise but I think we are still in the battle and we could to every single racing with the willing to do well – and we can do it.

GS: I think we clearly underperformed from Australia onwards, because of our issues which we cannot get a grip of, and we need to do a better job going forward on that one. I think, as Fred said, the competition in the midfield is very tight which makes it interesting for F1 but I think, if you ask, maybe we should have more points but we don't. The good thing is, it's very close together. Nobody in the midfield went away with 30 or 40 points so you can make up a lot in one race. As long as we don't keep on doing what we did up until now, we should be OK – but I would say, I'm happy on one side – the car is very competitive – but we didn't get the maximum out of it. We just need to do a better job as a team altogether.

Q: (Alan Baldwin – Reuters) Mattia, you mentioned earlier about Netflix. Another area that Ferrari have not been involved and I'm sure it's well down your list of priorities is e-sports. I just wondered if you'd made the decision whether you were going to be competing in it and what are the pros and cons for a team like Ferrari of getting involved?

MB: I think e-sports and Netflix – both of them are certainly great programmes. E-sport is increasing in terms of interest and certainly as Ferrari we are looking seriously into it. We are not yet fully committed to the programme but it's something where the discussions are ongoing and we will very soon make our own decision.

Q: (Joe van Burik – Racing News 365) It seems very likely, a year from now, we will be racing in Zandvoort for the Dutch Grand Prix. What are your personal experiences with that track and what do you expect of that event?

MI: I don't have a lot of experience in Zandvoort. We go there with GT racing but to be honest, I don't know the circuit very well.

GS: I have been once in Zandvoort with DTM, a long time ago and I think it's a great place to go racing. It's a race track near cities, for sure there will be a lot of Dutch fans there and I think it's always exciting to go to new places. I know Zandvoort is not new but it's new again for Formula One. I think it's exciting because we reach out to more people who are sometimes in areas where they cannot go to other races and it's interesting, new things to learn, new things to see and I actually look forward to it.

MB: It's new for me as well, I have never been in Zandvoort so it will be the very first time. Quite interested and exciting to be there. I think it's good to have another race in Europe and the Netherlands, as Guenther said, a lot of Dutch fans so I'm pretty sure it will be a good race so I'm looking forward (to it).

FV: Yeah, I went a couple of times to Zandvoort for the F3 and DTM and it was always a great and exciting event with a lot of fans. I think it's a good place.

FT: We did a lot of races in Zandvoort in Formula Ford, Formula Three. It was very positive, I must say I like it there, it's close to the sea, it's close to Amsterdam. They have, I think a fantastic infrastructure, interesting track and I expect many many spectators will come there and it will become a very exciting race for Formula One, therefore I hope that we go there.

Q: (Christian Menath – Motorsportmagazin.com) First part of the question for you, Mario: can you talk us through the process, how you chose the three teams for the 18 inch tyre tests this year and how many teams offered the possibility? And for the team principals: what are your feelings about that, you were probably not chosen or you didn't offer your cars? Do you think this could be a disadvantage, especially for Mattia? Your main competitor, Mercedes, is delivering a car. Could this be a disadvantage for you?

MI: OK, the process is the one I described before. We offered the opportunity to test to all the teams and three teams replied in a positive way and obviously everybody knows that the development is not just in these three sessions in 2019, so as I said, all the team can decide to participate in 2020. The three teams that replied positively have been chosen and we are planning three sessions so it's quite easy to give one session each.

MB: Yeah. Obviously we have been offered. It has been our own choice not to participate. Been short on time and the resources for the programme so as Ferrari we decided simply not to take part in this test in '19 but we are preparing ourselves to do it obviously in 2020. I'm pretty sure that we will have the opportunity to do it. Will that be a disadvantage? Certainly you cannot do everything and you need to make your own priorities as some stage and that again has been our own choice but there is still a process put in place where Pirelli anyway are sharing the data with all the teams, of the output and the results of the new tyre testing so we are certainly counting on that one for actually the very first test.

FT: Everybody could decide. We from Toro Rosso can not afford to do this test because we simply don't have the manpower and also not the financial resources and therefore three teams decided to do it and that's fair.

FV: If Mattia is short of resources to do the test, you can imagine that for us it's not easy.

GS: We are working hard to figure out the '19 tyres so we have no time for the '21 tyres.

Q: (Sergio Rodriguez - Formula Rapida) Yesterday we saw that Pirelli will use F2 as a way to develop the 18 inch tyres. Do you think that F2 can be used as a development platform for the new revolutions

coming in 2021? Not only that but in the future as well? Do you think F2 can be used as a platform test?

FT: Of course. First tests with F2 makes sense. Pirelli can get a lot of information, data about it and in parallel to this, anyway test with the three Formula One teams and I think the way they are doing it is the right one.

FV: Yeah, they will get live experience with Formula Two. I think it's also good for young drivers in F2 to be used to drive with the 18 inch tyres and then I think each team will try to build up a collaboration with GP2(F2) teams and to have a look.

MB: The question has been asked of the four team principals but for me Pirelli is the best person to reply, whether that is useful or not as a platform. The cars are quite different, the level of performance is certainly quite different. The level of downforce and loads on the tyres are different but those are things that Pirelli is obviously aware of but at least it's a good starting point. They can get some experience on a different platform, a different formula and whatever they can do there will be of help for Formula One, but I'm pretty sure that they are pretty aware that on the F1, the exercise will be much more difficult.

GS: I think there are no negatives to test them in F2 but the technicalities... I will leave that one to Mario to explain because as Mattia said, the loads and the forces, I think they are different, unless Mario disagrees with me!

MI: No, no. I never disagree with you. He's right. The forces, especially after 2017 when Formula One decided to move on to the wider size and the cars are faster and faster, it's a good opportunity to get some experience from our side but we cannot compare the F2 tyre with a Formula One tyre. We will develop the Formula One tyre with the new cars, with a representative performance and otherwise we make a mistake for sure. We have to develop a bespoke tyre for Formula One but the effect we are anticipating with Formula Two is helpful because we can have some experience with single-seaters on 18 inches but don't forget we are supplying a lot of other championships with 18 inch tyres, like GT and touring cars and so on, but the stress and the energy that is going into the tyre on a Formula One car is not comparable.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, racefans.net) Mattia, the way that I understand it, the veto that Ferrari has is a contractual right, not a lifetime right. How important is it to Ferrari to retain this veto right after 2020, in other words from 2021 onwards? Is it a sticking point in your negotiations or are you happy to forfeit it?

MB: No, certainly the veto right is something important for Ferrari but I believe it's something important for F1 overall as well because somehow it's not only protecting us but it's protecting all the teams maybe against some decisions which could be against the spirit or the interest of the teams themselves, something that we are starting discussing with both the FIA and F1. I think we are doing well in that respect and hopefully we can keep the same rights.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Fred, just wanted to clarify what you said at the beginning about the front wing hereafter what happened in Baku. So is it correct to say you haven't had to change the specification, it's just that you've had to replace it with one of the other front wings that you had?

FV: No, we changed the hook and the fixation.

Ends