



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2015 Bahrain Grand Prix Grand Prix Friday Press Conference Transcript 17.04.2015

TEAM REPRESENTATIVES - John BOOTH (Manor), Rob WHITE (Renault Sport F1), Eric BOULLIER (McLaren), Maurizio ARRIVABENE (Ferrari), Monisha KALTENBORN (Sauber), Toto WOLFF (Mercedes)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Toto, we'll start with you. Great race here obviously 12 months ago between your two drivers. This year, though, it seems you've got Ferrari breathing down your neck. How much of a restriction is that on your freedom to let your drivers do the race they want to do?

Toto WOLFF: First of all, it's true, we have great memories of the race last year. But this year the equation changed, because clearly looking at the first three races Ferrari's back and they they looked very strong this afternoon in the long runs. We will still follow the principle of letting Lewis and Nico race but there could be a situation where you just need to be aware that there is a new competitor, it's not as easy, we don't have the gap anymore like last year and this needs to be considered.

Can you just drill down a little bit more into what we saw today? You mentioned, obviously you were quickest with the two cars in Free Practice 2, but looking at the long runs, at times it even looked, if anything, that the Ferrari was a shade faster.

TW: Yeah. The Ferrari looked the quickest car out there in Free Practice 2. Very stable quick tyres, lap times. That was a Freudian [slip], tyres. We just need to get our act together and analyse it. This is Friday, Sunday's going to be the important time.

Thank you. Rob, if I can come to you: what's the state of play this weekend with engines for your four drivers that are using your engine this weekend?

Rob WHITE: Clearly we had a bad day at the office in China and the consequences of that bear very heavily, individually and collectively, on everybody at Viry. It's never good to cause trouble for the teams or the drivers. So the state of play is that we've put a huge amount of energy into understanding where we were after China. That was a big logistical battle. Just the mucky detail of it is that the only legal way to get the engines out of China was for them to travel with the freight to Bahrain as expected. To get them to France to be stripped down and inspected would have been Wednesday or Thursday. So we didn't do that. We had a welcoming committee. We had some specialists from France who made the trip in the other direction. We dismantled the engines in the garage during the week so that we could put a finger on exactly what went wrong in China. The situation is that we understand what happened to the two engines that failed during the race. One of the incidents, the one that happened to Kvyat, was an incident that we know about, which we were aware of a vulnerability for, and for which we have what we believe is a good counter-measure. We don't expect to be vulnerable to that going forward. Unfortunately the failure that ended Max's race was not of that type. We were absolutely not expecting such a thing at such a low mileage, so a real shame to end the race for him in that way. The time is such that the best we have for this week is engines of a similar spec, that we must look after during the Friday, Saturday and of course Sunday running, but we are vulnerable to that failure still. Looking forward of course the

task back at the factory is to create a solution to that for the races ahead. We're not out of the woods yet on that one.

You've obviously pushed very hard on development, to try to close the gap. Have you pushed too hard and come unstuck or is it more complicated than that?

RW: It's true to say that we are paying the price for a late change of tack, a late arrival of the spec for the start of the season, taking account of some of the things in the environment that moved on - we all know the story about tokens that moved on just before Christmas. That's part of it, not the whole story. We must keep our head down and deliver the solutions to the issues that were encountered earlier on but honestly a lot of the direct consequence is to do with the lateness of the arrival of the spec. We're still on track delivering the solutions to the earlier problems. We'll continue those. Obviously in Australia the big word was driveability and I think we've eliminated that from our vocabulary and now we're hoping to be in a proper situation for Monaco, where of course it's very important. We've got performance improvements in the pipeline for delivery later in the season, again taking into account the token situation. And the game now is to fold into the plan the consequences of the failures, which clearly puts the whole supply chain under a lot of pressure. So that's the way the land lies going forward.

Thank you very much. John, coming to you: double finish last time out in Shanghai. What are the steps along the pathway now and when do you get your 2015 car?

John BOOTH: That's the big question Ted.

James

JB: You both look alike! Yes, a double finish last time out in China. That was a major step forward for us. That was a major step forward for us. We ran every session on plan. Operationally we're working as we were last year. So that step has been achieved. As for the 2015 car, our aim has always been for the August break, as with arriving in Australia it is a very aggressive target and will take a lot of achieving. But when we get back from these first four flyaway races we just really need to sit down and see if we can bring all the areas together that need bringing together to achieve that in that time frame.

Well you're here and you're racing. What are the prospects for attracting fresh investment?

JB: I'm sure there are prospects but we have a commercial plan that we're comfortable is sustainable for our model and we're confident in the investors we have now or the owner we have now to take us forward over the next few years.

Thank you for that. Same question to you in a way Monisha, what does riding high in fourth place in the Constructors' Championship, as you are at this stage, what does that mean for the prospect of attracting new income, new investors to the team?

Monisha KALTENBORN: Well, it's definitely a better position than we were in last year! But we've seen that... let's say like in 2012, that even if you have good performance it does not automatically mean that you have sponsors lining up after the race weekend. So it's important that we keep this up as well as we can, that we make the most of the opportunities we get, try to develop according to what's possible for us and just make sure that we have the stability in the team.

Well, as we said, you're riding high at the moment in fourth. You finished behind Marussia last year and this year you're ahead, at this stage, of Red Bull and McLaren. Have you had to revise your targets of where you want to finish at the end of this year?

MK: I think we're very mindful of the situation. We're at the start of the season, there are a lot more races to go. We know it's going to be very tough. We don't dream about positions at the moment. For us it's important that we stick to the plan we have, the development plan, and make sure that we just make the most of it.

Eric, coming to you. Obviously from the outside it looks like a rather demoralizing start to the season but from the inside do you, as the leader, see the team channeling together, getting behind everybody and pushing in the same direction? Do you see all the positive signs you want to see?

Eric BOULLIER: Yeah, I think obviously for the outside world, it's a bit frustrating to be where we are, definitely where we don't want to be. But from the inside we know what we are doing, we know what we want to achieve and we also know what's coming along. There is some process to go through and I think, as you can see from the outside, the team itself, the atmosphere is good, everybody is working, everybody is concentrating and focused on what they have to do and we will get there eventually.

And do you still maintain your view that you had before the season started that you will be competitive by the end of the season?

EB: Yeah, I think so. Still. Obviously before the summer or from the European [season] onwards you will see a lot of development coming, both chassis and engine, so we may expect to be more competitive definitely by the end of the season.

Q: Maurizio, coming to you, do you feel that you are breathing down Mercedes' neck right now?

Maurizio ARRIVABENE: If I'm going to tell you that we are going to win the championship, you think that I am out of mind, like a terrace in the house. We are happy, of course, we are coming back, we are following our programme but I think that Mercedes is still a super-strong team.

Q: You've been around the Ferrari team in various different capacities for a very long time. What do you think that Sebastian Vettel is bringing to the culture of the team?

MA: It's the enthusiasm and the passion, like all the other guys. A driver that is so committed to Ferrari is making our job easy, I have to say. And on top, he's said many, many times that since he was a kid, he was dreaming about Ferrari and he always liked it. Of course, last year it was impossible for him to say so, but now he's liberated and he's telling the truth. And then, as a driver, it's very, very strong, very precise. Many, many journalists, they were asking about him and Michael. I said the things they have in common is the culture but then they are two different drivers with two different characters. But somehow, when you recognize that, there is something in common. I think this is based... this is a cultural base. It has nothing to do with the personality of the two.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Oubay Zakkar - Autosport Middle East) My question is for Maurizio. One of the main issues for Ferrari in the last few years was the lack of correlation between data from the wind tunnel and the numbers from the track. Has this issue been solved? Is the car working as expected?

MA: Yeah, now the car is working as expected. I think we have... last year technical staff, they were in charge of developing the car in the wind tunnel, they were doing a lot of work to make sure everything was going well, and now the correspondence between the data we have on the track and the wind tunnel is fine. We are happy.

Q: (Dieter Rencken - Racing Lines) Question to the five team principals. Last week former FIA President Max Mosley came out and said that he thought, in order to prevent Formula One from imploding, the existing contracts should be torn up and the money should be distributed more equally. How do you feel about the implications of his statement?

MK: Well obviously I can just speak for the contract we have at Sauber, and not being one of the teams that are considered to be, let's say, privileged financially, I wouldn't mind if that contract is torn.

JB: Obviously we support any steps in that direction. I don't think it'll ever be quite that radical - but we would definitely support any steps in that direction.

EB: The more you go through the grid, the more reluctance you will find, I guess, to tear apart the contract. But, I think it's a comment from Max, it's maybe out of context, so I think maybe F1 needs a bigger discussion, or a bigger picture to be discussed rather than just tearing apart the contract.

TW: It's an unrealistic scenario. The contract's in place, you can be happy or unhappy but the contract is there. If you want to do it better, next time around.

MA: I agree with Toto, the contract is there. But if Max has an idea to break the contract I want to tell him what he's going to do without a team like Mercedes or Ferrari. Then he can organize a funny championship and then he can distribute the money.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire - AP) Question to Toto. You just said "we don't have the gap as last year and this has to be considered," is this because perhaps you're slightly worried that in particular Nico may be getting too sidetracked by the competition with Lewis, as was shown by his comments last week? And perhaps maybe he should be concentrating a bit more on the threat from Ferrari?

TW: No. That has no correlation. The point is that when you have a gap like we had last year, it is easy to compromise on race strategy sometimes because you want to assure you are keeping as neutral to the two of them, as neutral as possible. And sometimes that is not the quickest race. So there needs to be a situation... you have seen the situation in Malaysia where the two cars have been stuck up behind each other on the pitstop because we wanted to mirror the race strategy. It could be that we simply split the strategies, if needed, just to make sure that, if you are wrong with one of the strategies, at least the other car is able to achieve a good finish, or win the race.

Q: (Kate Walker - motorsport.com) I have a question for the five team principals. In Formula One talk of succession planning usually focused on a post-Bernie world. I was wondering, the extent to which you think continuity is important for success - and whether or not you each have succession plans in place for your own eventual departures for the team or the sport?

Maurizio, you've only just started, have you got a succession plan?

MA: Regarding me? I've just arrived. C'mon! First of all I have to apologise. Before I said a Championship without Ferrari, Mercedes - but of course I mean all the historical constructors, with all respect for everybody here. Answering your question, in all the company, that they are called Company with a capital C, it's normal that you have a succession plan. This is not anything new, it's something that is part of the commitment that anyone, or everyone, who has an important position, must respect. For me, succession plan is part of the job that you have to do. Not for me yet, I hope.

Monisha, do you have someone in mind?

MK: Maybe Peter Sauber? No, I have not... I've had enough other issues to handle than looking at this. Maybe it's a question more for Peter indeed. But coming back to what you said about continuity. I think that's a very important point for Formula One itself. I think it's what many teams have been saying, particularly on the technical side. If you can have a certain continuity and stability, it allows you to foresee the future better, to maybe also stabilize situations in teams better.

Toto?

TW: The trouble is others do your succession plan. I hope there is no succession plan in place for me yet.

John?

JB: I'm very happy and very proud to hold this position but time marches on and I'm sure eventually whoever makes the decisions will have the plan in place.

Eric?

EB: Well, McLaren is a big organization so I'm sure there is somebody, somewhere in McLaren who could step up and take my job, yeah.

Q: (Luigi Perna - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Question for Arrivabene: yesterday Kimi Raikkonen was asked about his future in Formula One and the possibility to go on with

Ferrari, and he answered that it was up to Ferrari to decide in the end. Can you say something about that?

MA: You see, it's only Italians who are calling me Arrivabene. Everybody they are calling me Maurizio. The Italians call me Arrivabene, very formal. It's early to talk... you want to know what I said to Kimi? He was telling me about the contract and I said to him, it depends on your performance. And Kimi, he's the kind of person that he appreciates when you're talking with him in a very transparent way and straight to his face. Kimi knows, now it's early to talk about this at the moment. I'm happy about the performance of Kimi but he needs to push and he knows that.

Q: (Ted Kravitz - Spy Sports) Maurizio - or Mr Arrivabene - we saw you being part of a football human wall in front of Sebastian's car at the end of the session. Is this Ferrari's idea of being more open and accessible to fans and TV viewers?

MA: When you have passion for something, you are screaming like a football supporter, it's normal. If I understand the question well.

Q: You were shielding the front of the car after Sebastian broke his front wing so the TV audience couldn't see what you were doing.

MA: Normally, when some parts of the car are quite sensitive, we try to do our best to make sure that you don't have 10,000 cameras as we had. They try to find out what's going on. The real surprise that sometimes it's tactical this thing. We were put in the wall but there's nothing to see. I was there because I was curious.

Q: (Ted Kravitz - Spy Sports) Can I just follow that up? That was my point. Obviously you're not so naive to think that every other team doesn't have very detailed photos of every part of your car anyway, so really, ultimately, aren't you just blocking the cameras from seeing?

MA: Yeah, you're right. The cameramen are there to do their job, of course, but sometimes there are too many and sometimes they are turning around the box and taking video but not with the intention to share something with another team. They do it like this. Occasionally we have a problem, a real problem on the brakes and the guys naturally, they start to cover. Maybe it's a bad habit but I was there to be with them but to look at Seb's brakes and to understand. I'm not naive, I'm new, I need to learn.

Q: (Luke Murphy - Formula Spy) Maurizio, we heard Sebastian say at the end of the session that he was struggling to decelerate the car and this was after the incident with Sergio Perez. Have you had a chance to look into that at all, or is there any issue identified?

MA: No, we were looking at the telemetry and we saw something wrong with the brakes. This was the reason why we were looking and the guys they took away the carbon fibre shape to understand it better. This is what we learned from the telemetry but they are still looking now.

Q: (Dieter Rencken - Racing Lines) To Toto, Maurizio and Rob in particular, but Eric if you'd like to comment as well. I'm talking about the fifth engines that were discussed in Malaysia. Toto, you said last week that a proposal had been submitted to the FIA regarding this. What sort of progress has there been, and Rob, could it get to a stage where you've gone through four engines already, you've taken a penalty for the fifth before the regulation is introduced?

TW: We've submitted the proposal to the FIA, the proposal is with the FIA and I guess it's going to be discussed the next time around in a strategy meeting.

RW: For the time being, we know what the sporting regulations say, that it's four engines. It's obvious that we're over-using engines and to some extent then the way to deal with that is one step at a time, one race at a time and the penalty regime is what it is. If the regulations change along the way, then we will adapt our planning to take account of that. It will be the same for everybody the day that it happens if it happens. I understand from what Toto just said, that there is a proposal to be discussed. I can't imagine it will be very complicated. I guess there's one place in the rules where we would have to put five instead of four, and so how we would deal with that I think will become clear as time goes by.

EB: I've not see the proposal so I don't know. It has to be discussed in the strategy group, I guess we have to wait for the strategy group and see what comes out. I guess and I hope

it's sensible, even if Honda is new this year in F1, we are maybe struggling with reliability but maybe less than my colleague here, but I think it would be welcome and cheaper solution to run a fifth engine because I think all the engine manufacturers have realised that going into strong reliability performance actually costs a lot of money.

MA: As Toto said, the power unit engineers get together, they're talking about that proposal and that proposal is going to be discussed in the strategy group on the 14th of May.

MK: As a customer team on engines, we of course follow what our engine supplier says, but for us, the rules are given. We suffered that much last year, also with the engine we had. Some engine manufacturers do the job better, others don't and it's just different every season. So we say if there has to be an additional engine, as the smaller teams look primarily at the cost of it, and under what conditions it will be introduced, and what it's meant to be doing.

JB: We're perfectly happy with the four engine rule but sometimes rules have to be changed for the good of the sport and this may be one of those but I'm sure it will get discussed at the strategy group.

Q: (Nahed Sayouh -Autosport Middle East) Do you believe that refuelling should come back into F1 in order to make a new challenge for the designers and revive the spectacle, and make a difference in the race strategies?

RW: It's been a while since we've had refuelling. I think the reasons that it went away were appropriate at the time. The current set of technical and sporting regulations has been constructed without refuelling, so I think it's a difficult thing to consider in isolation but I personally feel that the current regulations are very easy to understand. It's obvious that there would be an immediate improvement in the show as a result of refuelling, but all of the things we know about about refuelling would remain the case. There's a lot of kit involved, there's a lot more people involved at a pit stop and so on and so forth. So I'm pretty neutral from an engine provider perspective. From a fan perspective, I don't personally particularly yearn for the idea.

MA: It depends, because it's not a personal... it's going to be easy to say refuelling or no refuelling. You have to think about what's going on, about the issue whether you should do the refuelling. That means that you change a lot of the regulations that are related to the engine. Of course it involves the chassis of the car, so it's something that is more complicated to discuss. It's not just a question of in or out. Of course, if you ask somebody who would like to see the cars being refuelled they are going to say no, but I don't think it's a question of refuelling yes, or refuelling no. It's a question of what we are going to do in the future and this is a matter that is going to be discussed at the strategy group.

Ends