



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2015 Canadian Grand Prix Grand Prix Friday Press Conference Transcript 05.06.2015

TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Matt MORRIS (McLaren), Matthew CARTER (Lotus), Graeme LOWDON (Manor), Rob SMEDLEY (Williams), Paddy LOWE (Mercedes), James ALLISON (Ferrari),

PRESS CONFERENCE

James, if we could start with you. Obviously you're using development engines this weekend, for the first time in quite a few years, the first time we've seen it in Formula One. What are you hoping the engine this weekend is going to bring and what did you think of your race pace in particular this afternoon in the dry?

James ALLISON: I hope, like all of the fellows at this table, that what we put on the car this weekend will make us competitive and strong in the qualifying and in the race. The engine is a part of that, the chassis is another part of that. It's just another thing to make the car go quicker. So I hope it will be strong and reliable all weekend and for the weekends that follow, Race pace? It's hard to know what to make of today. Normally these free practice sessions have a sort of pattern and a rhythm to them; we all do more or less the same programmes week after week and we get to have a feel for where we stand based on that. But on a day like today when the weather mucks things up and you can see the rain coming but you're not quite sure when it's going to come people tend to work on slightly different programmes and it makes it a little bit harder to judge. We think we went quite well today but I also think these chaps [Mercedes] are probably hiding their light under a bushel a little, so we'll see.

Sebastian Vettel said yesterday that Ferrari is definitely getting the best out of him. It's the first time that you have worked with Vettel, what do you think of what he said? And what are you doing to help Kimi Räikkönen to deliver the qualifying performances that your team principal has called for.

JA: I hope that driver, team, all of us work well together all the time and we try to get the best out of each other. I know that sounds trite but it's true nevertheless. Sebastian and Kimi are both very fast guys and therefore always good to work with from a team's point of view. It's nice that Sebastian's enjoying his opening stint with us and I hope that we keep it that way. With Kimi... very small things can distract a driver in qualifying and they need absolute focus in those very important laps and we just try to make sure that we remove any tiny operational defect on our side to give him a clear path to focus on getting a good lap and that's all we can do.

Coming to you Matt. We talked there with James there about development engines, Honda has brought a development power unit here using up some of its available tokens, so what are the targets, then, for here?

Matt MORRIS: Like you say, we've used a couple of tokens, or Honda have used a couple of tokens this weekend to increase the efficiency of the power unit in general. It all seemed to work well

today. The target is to keep improving, which is what we've been doing since the start of the season, so just more steady improvement.

You scored your first points in Monaco but clearly the objectives of McLaren's are higher than that. After a third of the season, can you say now what success would look like at the end of 2015?

MM: It's nice to score some points. We also realise we have still got a lot of progress to make and some circuits will be better to us than others. Monaco is one of the ones that has been good to us. In terms of what success would look like? Yeah, wouldn't it be great to get on the podium but I think that's a long way off. We've got a plan of both chassis upgrades and more power unit upgrades throughout the year so we'll just have to see.

Matthew, coming to you. Obviously both cars in the top 10 today, but quite a frustrating series of differing issues, meaning that you're not always getting both cars to the chequered flag on Sunday and picking up the points. Have you identified why this has been happening?

Matthew CARTER: No we haven't. I think that there has been a lot of bad luck and yeah, I think we can put it down to bad luck. There have been a few driver issues, a few reliability issues and some bad luck. We're hoping to turn that round and to try to consistently get both cars in the points.

There's obviously been a lot of speculation in recent weeks about the possibility of the owners selling the Lotus team. Can you set the record straight? What is the position?

MC: I continue to say the same thing. The shareholders have told me that the company isn't for sale. I think I've said in the press before that everything is sale for a certain price. That's as much as I can say. I continue to reiterate that we signed a long-term contract with Mercedes Benz and as far as we're concerned we just continue down that route. That last information I heard was that we were going to be sold by the end of May but we're still here and we're still the same team.

Thank you very much for that. Graeme, coming to you, obviously announcements this week of some significant new hirings in the technical department and a new reserve and test driver. Can you tell us the strategy behind your team building at the moment and whether Leimer will get a race?

Graeme LOWDON: Your right, we're in a position where we're rebuilding the team really. The start of this season for us has obviously been very unusual and it's not the sort of start anybody would plan by design but it's what we've had to deal with. In terms of the technical structure of the team, we were lucky enough to have a number of people rejoin the team really very quickly, who had been with us in the past. I think we had a very efficient and effective technical team who were on a path to deliver a very neat car and package for 2015. Obviously that progress was interrupted and we're now in a phase that is quite unusual – having to rebuild things whilst also looking at the bigger picture and the bigger strategy. We don't want to get too focused on the day-to-day problems of getting back up to pace if you like. So obviously with Bob coming on board, a very, very experienced guy with a focus very much on the big picture, strategy going forward. Luca [Furbatto] is a guy with a huge amount of experience, so that's going to strengthen the design side of the business. And Gianluca [Pisanello] as well. Bob and Luca only started on Tuesday of this week, Gianluca has been with us for a few races but is already contributing to the trackside operation really well. So we're in a very rapid period of rebuilding. We've just got to get this period done as quickly as we possibly can. As far as Fabio is concerned, I don't know when he'll be in for his first FP1 – that'll be down to John, it's a driver call. But I'm very, very happy to have him on board. I think he's shown in junior formulae that he's got the right credentials to be here in Formula One and again, it's just part of building the team back up to the strength we want it to be.

Is it too for the new technical people to have any input on your 2015, quote-unquote, car? Are you thinking of delaying that so that they can?

GL: That's a very fair question and it's a balancing act the whole time. We've got to do what's right for the team and there are an awful lot of variables that have to be considered by the people whose

responsibility it is going forward. There's no point having a dog and barking yourself. The people who are joining the team now will have an input into those decisions. It's an ever-changing feast at the moment.

Paddy, coming to you. Well, we have to start with your afternoon. Fastest for Lewis Hamilton, but then a big jump over the kerbs half way through the session and he ended it nose first in the barriers in what looked like an aquaplaning incident. Could you tell us a bit about the afternoon, why he went out and how much damage there is?

Paddy LOWE: Yeah, it didn't quite end the way we wanted it to. The simple reason is we went out to do some practice race starts. That's a normal part of our P2 programme. Because the programme was very condensed in the short window of dry weather that we had, we chose not to do those practice starts in the dry period but then to go out before it became very, very wet indeed and try and get two or three race starts done. Unfortunately the conditions worsened quicker than we had anticipated and the conditions caught Lewis out in an unfortunate manner. But we'll get it sorted for tomorrow, it should be all fine.

Q: Going back to the last grand prix, have you had to change anything in terms of the protocols, the procedures from the pitwall and the decision-making processes in light of what happened at the end of the Monaco Grand Prix?

PL: Yeah. There was a mistake made and we always look at all errors and decide what to learn from them and how that carries across to other aspects of what we do. So, there were some problems with the software so we've fixed some bugs that were in that, changed some of our communications and freed up some of the people involved so they have a bit more capacity. So there are changes. While I have the opportunity, I want to point out, there's been a bit of a story that I thought this wasn't really a big deal. Of course it was a big deal. I think the point I was trying to make was that it was a single error, a small error which had, of course, a big consequence – but I really need to stand up for my team of guys who've made very few errors over the last couple of years, and just to put that in context. Formula One is a complex business, a lot of things to get right and most of the time we do that.

Q: Coming to you Rob, more than twice the points at this stage compared to last year – but the feeling perhaps is one of not having been as competitive in terms of battling at the front and fighting for the podiums. Last year, from more or less this point onwards you put on a very strong run and obviously had a lot of podiums. Does this need to be a turning-point race then for Williams this year to try and achieve the same?

Rob SMEDLEY: No, I don't think it needs to be a turning point. I think we need to carry on the trajectory that we're on. We're always looking forward. We've got Ferrari and Mercedes in front of us. We're always looking forward and trying to narrow that gap, and at the same time paying heed to the incredibly strong competition we've got behind us with Red Bull. Great organisation, won a lot in the recent past and just giving them the maximum respect and ensuring that we're always trying to increase that gap we've got back to fourth. At the same time, trying to eradicate some of the gap we've got in front of us with Ferrari and then Mercedes. So yeah, I don't think we need to... it's not a change of trajectory or any kind of strategic changes we need or any step change. That would be a wonderful thing and everybody sitting around this table would like a step change at some point in the near future but I think we just need to keep doing what we're doing.

Q: So, given that, will you just persist in chasing what you're doing at the moment? Continuous growth is what you're saying rather than any kind of gamble. Presumably you've had an internal debate about it. Is that the resolution?

RS: I think we're considering very carefully all the aspects of strategy development of the business, if you like. Primarily, if I want to concentrate on the car performance, of course if we carry on just doing what we're doing and we don't change anything, making ourselves either more robust or having slightly different approaches to certain elements of the car performance, then it will be very difficult to close the gap in front. So what we're considering now is strategic decisions, if you like,

and also slightly different approaches technically as well as to how we want to develop the car, how we're going to develop the aerodynamics of the car, how we go about understanding and improving tyre science, the mechanical car in general. So I think we're always evaluating and, as a group of people, the senior technical people, we do understand that there is a certain requirement that we will have to take, at some point in the future, some... not risky decisions but there will have to be some risk management involved for us to close the gap.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Graeme, you were recently quoted by Autosport as saying the Strategy Group doesn't have a strategy – or words to that effect. Matthew, your team was in the Strategy Group and no longer is. And recently the commercial rights holder has come out and said that possibly the Strategy Group should be disbanded. Do the two of you agree with that – and if so how would you replace it?

GL: Well, I guess the point I was trying to make is strategy is very important for any business and any industry, and any group of businesses as well. The other point I was trying to make is strategy: setting goals, setting objectives, coming up with strategies, evaluating them and then coming out with a strategy plan, that can then be articulated is not an easy task. Very large companies do nothing but spend their time analysing and evaluating strategies. So, one of the points I was making is it's not something that can just be achieved in a one hour meeting somewhere. Or even a one day meeting or something like that. It's difficult. It's a difficult job, a difficult task if it's all done correctly. The idea of having a group to help with that process is actually a good idea but – and this isn't a criticism, it's an observation – there does not seem to be a strategy that's come out of the Strategy Group and therefore it's not working. The simplest thing in the world is to ask anybody in the group, 'what's the strategy?' If they can't answer then it would suggest... y'know, if they can't answer it, it would be pretty difficult to articulate it or follow it. So, I'm not suggesting there should be no strategy, or no Strategy Group or anything. In fact, actually the reverse, pointing out it's a very, very difficult task but I think it's incredibly important because it could set the blueprint for this industry and the sport that we all love, to grow. I personally think that's a task that's worth engaging with.

Matthew?

MC: Obviously we sat on the Strategy Group, we were one of the six teams who sat on the Strategy Group last year and I attended a number of those meetings. I agree with everything that Graeme says. There needs to be some form of Strategy Group, there needs to be some form of strategy for the sport in general. However, my personal opinion is that the composition and the way that the Strategy Group is set up doesn't work. There's six teams there that each have a vote and there's six teams there that have completely different agendas. And therefore to get anything through that forum is almost impossible. And I sat there for hours and hours listening to debates and nothing coming to the end of it. I think that's been generally accepted by the people that sit on the group as well as the people that govern the sport. What the answer is, I genuinely don't know. I think there needs to be some form of governance and there needs to be a strategy. How they go forward with that I don't know.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Autosport) Question for Paddy, just getting back to Lewis' incident. It was noticeable that the car was swinging around quite considerably when it was on the crane, on the end of the crane. Was there any concerns as you were watching that, and was there any additional damage sustained by that?

PL: Yeah, I've only just come from the garage so... we were worried watching that actually. I think there's some minor damage to the rear end which came from the crane handling but nothing serious.

Q: (Collin Hunt – formulaspy.com) Rob, Valtteri appeared to struggle with grip at various times this morning, spinning at Turn Six and running wide at the final chicane. What challenges does

Williams face in solving this grip issue and what's the performance ceiling on Sunday with that in mind?

RS: I think the challenge Williams faces in solving its grip issues is the same as all the other teams have in solving their grip issues. However much grip you've got, you want more. Without wanting to defend Valtteri, this morning I don't think he was the only one who spun. It was very low grip, the track, certainly for us. And watching down at Turn Eight where there was a tailwind, Turn Eight, Turn 10, there was a lot of cars either going straight on or spinning when they were getting on the power. We'll just go through the normal process of work that we always go through with both drivers, as a team, and just amalgamate all the issues we've faced in terms of performance over the day. We'll analyse them, we'll go through the telemetry, we'll look at what we can do here – you have to be pragmatic in your decisions when you're at the track – and hopefully get the cars set up to be at least well balanced for tomorrow. I think both drivers come out of P2 fairly happy with the balance of the car. They both had slightly different balances, and yes, we can also always improve. But I think both of them were reasonably happy by the time they'd run in P2 on the Option tyre.

Q: (Jeff Pappone - Globe and Mail) I'm just wondering if the rain is going to make you take a step back and start over again tomorrow or have to go back to a specific step through your programmes today because the track's going to change completely with the rain?

JA: It makes the weekend a little bit harder because none of us have got the sort of tyre information that we would normally get in P2. Normally we would have a good idea of how far and how hard you can push the tyres. Tomorrow morning in FP3, it's a shorter session, you want to be starting to get ready for qualifying and not dicking around with tyres or long runs on tyres. It just makes the weekend a bit more murky in terms of guessing how the race will unfold. But I think very few of us will just reset the clock and try and start the weekend afresh tomorrow. We have to concentrate on making sure the car's going to qualify well.

MM: I think that's fair. It's not really put us back. It's a shame that we didn't get our long runs on the tyres today but we did some longish runs because we knew the rain was coming so I don't think it's put us too far back. Obviously the track will be a bit green tomorrow with the rain but here's a circuit that evolves a lot and again, it's the same for everybody. I don't see any particular issue.

Q: (Craig Scarborough – Scarbs F1) Question for Paddy, Matt and James: we're looking at a new tyre manufacturer to come into the sport within a couple of years. There seems to be a general consensus to go to much larger diameter wheels. How soon are you going to need to know about that design decision and whether you can fill the larger wheels with bigger brakes or bigger ducts?

PL: There is a new tyre contract out for 2017 onwards and the subject of bigger wheels has actually been raised over the last five or eight years, but actually I would correct you, I think the broad consensus is that going to bigger wheels is not a good direction. Certainly from a grip point of view it's not positive. Like for like, such tyres will have a lower grip and the weight will go up considerably so it's not an attractive direction performance-wise, so I think generally we would intend to stick with the 13 inch wheels.

MM: It is a big change like Paddy said. It's not just the tyre size, it's all the other parts that change with that, all the brake internals and what have you. From our side, we relish change as any engineer does so yeah, if that is going to change, we have a great knack of finding the best way around it and then potentially it's an area where if you do a good job you can be competitive, so we're happy if that was to go ahead.

JA: Scarbs, maybe you were thinking of the width of the wheel rather than the rim? OK, as Paddy said, the rim diameter is going to stay where it is but the width of the tyre is probably still up for grabs. We're discussing what that ought to be along with all the other aspects of the rules for around about that time. I would say that sooner the better would be good for things like that. Tyres are maybe the most complicated bit of the car and the bit of the car that we have the least data about because we're not allowed, by regulation, to test them, either on the track or off the track, so we have the data provided by the tyre manufacturer but that's all and you want that information good and early when you're designing a car, not just for the vehicle dynamics part of the car but

also tyres are one of the biggest aerodynamic components on the car and so having in your wind tunnel tyres of the appropriate shape, size and squashiness is a big deal. So sooner the better from our point of view but there's still time from where we are today. So as long as we get on with it from here it will be fine.

Q: (Kate Walker – motorsport.com) I've got a question for any of you gentlemen who might be interested in answering it but particularly Graeme because I know you've spoken widely about fan engagement before. In recent weeks, we've seen the GPDA launch a fan survey; already responses have come in from over 200,000 people from nearly 200 countries. I was wondering if there have been any discussions within any of your teams about how we can mobilise this global support in a time when Formula One access is becoming increasingly complicated and expensive, to ensure the long term health and do you have any interest in the data therein?

GL: Definitely interested in the data. I've said it before, the biggest asset Formula One has is its fan base; it's global and it's massive and if you don't take care of it and treat it carefully – I'm talking as if it's an individual person but there's millions and millions of fans and it's the root of this entire sport. Everything channels from that, so it's very very important to understand what fans want, not just now but in the future and how they would like to integrate and engage with the sport. I don't want to bang on about strategy but in formulating a strategy, understanding what your ultimate customer wants is pretty fundamental in any business and therefore I think in ensuring that understanding what fans want is increasingly important. If there are fan surveys, the design of those surveys is really quite critical. I saw some data earlier today where there was a statistic that said fans were keen to see refuelling return. I was quite surprised by that, because if you asked the question in a different way which could be 'would you like to see half the number of overtakes happen on the track?' you would probably get a very different answer – you would get a very different answer. So understanding what fans want is really really important and it's the root of everything else, so yes, extremely interested in understanding all the views from fans and fan groups and especially if it's possible to get that level of detail across such a wide geographical range as well.

PL: What's great about Formula One is the spectrum of spectator we have from the casual viewer through to the enthusiast who has a great hunger to understand all the technicalities and I think that's what makes the sport extremely rich and why it's been popular for so long. I think the thing we've got to make sure of is that we keep giving the information to those people who want to understand the technicalities so they can feel involved, certainly something we can work harder on.

MC: It sounds a fairly callous thing to say but the more spectators we have the more funds we have and the more sponsors that we attract to the sport and that's how we fund our businesses in this sport. It's a fundamental part of the sport and it's self-perpetuating, that the more funds you get, the more sponsors you get, the more sponsors you get the more money that's generated within the sport so it's easy to under-estimate but it's an integral part of the sport.

Ends