



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

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TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Frédéric VASSEUR (Renault), Yusuke HASEGAWA (Honda), Eric BOULLIER (McLaren), Maurizio ARRIVABENE (Ferrari), Toto WOLFF (Mercedes), Christian HORNER (Red Bull Racing)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Maybe we could start with a general question for everyone. Obviously in the next couple of weeks there have got to be some decisions made on the future shape of Formula One, the regulations for 2017 and engines for 2018, so Christian, maybe we could start with you and how things are shaping up on the chassis side and where you think the discussion are, what shape we're in and what we can look forward to?

Christian HORNER: Well, I believe that as far as the technical regulations are concerned, we're pretty close to a conclusion on that. They were basically agreed at the last strategy meeting, so I think it's just a formality to finalise those chassis regulations at the end of this month. I think most people are already tentatively looking towards next year based on those regulations anyway. As far as the engine regulations are concerned, again there have been some discussions recently, which again will go through the Strategy (Group) and subsequently onto the Formula One Commission but everything has to be fixed by the last day of this month for 2017, so I'm not expecting too many major surprises.

And are you comfortable with where everything is at the moment, the shape of those regulations?

CH: Well, they are the same for everybody at the end of the day. It represents a bigger change on the chassis side, so that inevitably is going to move things around a little. On the engine side there is obviously discussion still going on and that's probably the bigger topic for the future, but as far as the chassis is concerned I think they are interesting rules, they add an element of variance compared to what we currently have, so you'll see some different solutions no doubt from different teams, that you usually get from a regulations change such as that.

Toto is that a situation that suits you, that there might be some variation in how the regulations suit the teams?

Toto WOLFF: Well, every variance challenges your organisation and I think we are well position to take up the challenge. Definitely making the cars look different, putting emphasis on new bits or innovation is interesting. Whether those rules can provide more interesting racing is another question. In hindsight, because we've voted on these regs already, we will see next if it works out. But yeah, I'm looking forward.

Eric, what are your thoughts on this?

Eric BOULLIER: Pretty similar to be honest to Toto and Christian. It's exciting a little bit to have a new package. I guess the car will be faster and the drivers definitely will enjoy driving the car. So drivers happier, fans happier I guess. As far as we are concerned on the engine, we are seeking some stability, which would be the key to develop and have a better convergence in the future.

Maurizio, Eric mentioned the fans there. These regulations are largely predicated on making Formula One more appealing, how important is it that Formula One gets these regulations right, now, for the next generation of Formula One fans?

Maurizio ARRIVABENE: I think as my colleagues said, I think the regulations they are under discussion and nearly done, they are also especially to enhance the show in Formula One. Next year you are going to see a different car, tyres a bit larger and then if you want to make sure you do a good overtake you have to enlarge the track – no, I'm joking! I think it's all following the direction to enhance the show and to make Formula One more interesting.

Frédéric, Renault has come back into the sport this year as a constructor, how difficult does it make it for you, or does it make it easier for you that everything changes next year?

Frédéric VASSEUR: I don't know if it will be easier or more difficult, but I think at least it's new rules and it's important for us also to start with this kind of game. But I think it's not for sure much easier for us to start with a new regulation for next year, because we have to restructure the team and it's not for us the best moment to change the regulations. But it doesn't matter, it's not the target, the FIA is not there to play the game for one team or another one but we have to try to push for Formula One and to find the most exciting way for the fan. And I think if the car is more impressive it will be much more fun for the fan and spectators.

Hasegawa-san, welcome, your first time on this panel, and your second stint in Formula One. What's Honda's position on the engine regulations or the talks that are happening for 2018 in terms of power units for then? Are you satisfied with the progress that has been made there?

Yusuke HASEGAWA: As they mentioned still we need to have some further discussion but something like cost reduction and obligation. Yeah, from an engine manufacturer point of view, or as a member of Formula One society point of view, we have a kind of obligation to the fans and to this group, so Honda is happy to have that regulation, although we need to have some further discussion I understand.

Just to the other people who engine manufacturers, what about the guaranteed supply that is being talked about for 2018. Is that something that you are comfortable with; is it deliverable? Toto?

TW: It is a complex agreement. We have been given the task in coming up with solutions so that no team is left without an engine. I think all the engine manufacturers have acknowledged that, so we try to cover that. There is an aspect of price reduction, which is important to most of the teams, and we tried to cover that in the framework agreement. Obviously it's very difficult to make everybody happy. Christian isn't so happy. But I think we need to come up with a solution until the end of April. We need to ratify those regulations and at the moment everybody is working very hard to at least find the smallest common denominator.

Christian, Toto mentioned that you may not be very happy. It's obviously been an issue in the past. What's your position on that supply going forward?

CH: I think it's a complex situation, but fundamentally there were four criteria that were requested by the governing body to be met to ensure stability moving forward. Those four criteria were: a significant reduction in cost to €12 million, the availability of supply or the guarantee of supply, power convergence to within a relatively small bandwidth and to address the noise. As we sit here now we are not anywhere near having met any of those criteria and I think unfortunately what will happen, as is often the case with these things, time will run out at the end of the month and nothing will be achieved and nothing will change. There is one more attempt in the Strategy meeting and the Commission meeting at the end of the month to discuss and table the concerns and where we're at, but failing that regulations will inevitably stay as they are.

Q: Eric, Fernando back in the car today, maybe you could tell us what the process has been, how it worked with him today? And also maybe you could give us some insight into what Stoffel did at the last race and what he brought to the team.

EB: Well, happily everything is back to normal. Fernando back in the car today was fine. The FIA wanted obviously to have another check and another go after practice one which was an easy one because he ran through practice one without any issues. He felt ready anyway before the weekend and I think this is a matter that is closed now. For Stoffel, obviously as far as we are concerned he did a very good job in Bahrain. Never easy to jump into an F1 car for a race weekend. I think he impressed everybody by how quiet he was and obviously by the good job he delivered. I think it's a good driver for the future to have in our stable.

Q: Hasegawa-san, obviously the performance of McLaren has stepped up a little last year – what are your expectations for the rest of the season? Where do you see performance gains coming, when can you expect them to come?

YH: It is too soon to say the exact number or position but obviously we're not happy, we're not satisfied with the current position. We can improve definitely with a decent level of step-ups so we are happy about that. Of course it is coming from the chassis as well but we can contribute with the power unit. It is important to show that we can improve in the step-ups. This is our target so far.

Q: Maurizio, one and two this afternoon, so a fairly good afternoon's work. You've had two good results in Australia and Bahrain but a couple of technical issues as well. What's been the response to those back at base and do you feel that that's now been overcome?

MA: What's happened in Australia and Bahrain, we explained it very, very well and I think I don't need to give further explanation because what we said, it was absolutely true, like it or not. Concerning here, it was a good Friday, not a bad one but unfortunately not gaining position on the grid or points in the championship. So, it's a good short but the weekend is still long. Concerning the expectation of the season, I can say the Mercedes team of this year is the strongest one that I saw in the last ten years because it's quite a lot of years that I'm around and, I mean, to be able to win against them, you have to work and be better than them. So, we are doing all our best to have good results.

Q: Toto, the best team in ten years! And Nico is performing very well at the moment. How have you seen him change over, not just the winter but if you look back to him in 2014-2015, do you think he came into the season with a different attitude? Is he a different driver?

TW: Before answering the question I'd like to give the flowers back – they are pushing us very hard and you have seen today that it is raw performance and we have seen the performance in the last couple of races. Ferrari haven't been able to pull it together because they made a big step from '15 to '16, similar to the step of '14 to '15 and in order to have the package rolled properly deliver and be reliable, that isn't an easy task but in terms of sheer performance, they are really pushing us. And that is good; this is how the competition should be. In terms of Nico, he's in a great place. I don't see him oscillating a lot. People keep asking when Lewis had his winning streak last year, 'is that going to knock Nico down?' and then when he started winning after the championship was decided, 'is it going to pull him up?' Those guys perform on a very high level and it doesn't particularly effect them whether they've had a good weekend or not. They've been in the job – or in motor racing – for 20 years or more, so the Nico I see today is developing as a personality, developing as a racing driver and learning – but also it's not very much different to how I've known him the last couple of years.

Q: Frédéric, you're coming back to the grid as a constructor as we mentioned, you've had a couple of months now to assess where things are: what have you identified, or what did you identify as the things that needed immediate attention – and how is that progressing?

FV: Nothing special and on every single matter because as we all know, we took over the company very late. The first challenge was to be on track for Barcelona and I think we did it but now, for sure, it's a long term project and we have to improve on each area. There is no one, single matter to work on. We have to push on every single project and every single department of the company – but we know that it's a long way and we are more than motivated and I hope that we will do it.

Q: Christian, these two gentlemen along side you, they're a little bit ahead but two fourth places in a row in Australia and Bahrain. Does that give you encouragement about the steps that have been made over the winter, not just on the chassis, on power unit as well. Where do you see it taking you this year?

CH: Well we're hoping to join their love-in. Sometimes two's company, three's a crowd... we've made good progress over the winter and I think at the last couple of races we've had arguably the third-fastest car. It's a very tight pack fighting over that third place and the jump then to where these two teams are is quite a significant one. We're hoping with further development on the power unit, that we expect around Montreal, to make good

progress, certainly in the second half of the year and at certain circuits hopefully, try and get onto their shirt tails – but it's quite a big gap that is inevitably going to take more than a season to close down.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Ben Edwards – Channel 4 TV) Frederic, about today, and about the tyre problem we saw on Kevin's car and the decision not to run the car this afternoon; can you just explain that a little bit?

FV: We investigated the problem at the end of FP1, that the problem came from the suspension and we had a lot of damage on the car and it was much better for us to stay in the garage for FP2 but we will be ready for tomorrow morning.

Q: (Haoran Zhou – Top Driver) Question to everyone: during the last round of big regulation changes we heard that people like Ross Brawn were quoting downforce figures in the meeting to guide everyone how we should set these chassis rules. Presumably that sort of the discussion is present again in the strategy group; can you give us a rough range how much more downforce would next year's car have on the chassis side? Is it one third or 20 points or something?

TW: Interesting one! Around 80 per cent! No, the numbers vary of course and they vary because of different interests so it goes from teams saying that it's not a lot more than it is today until 30-35%.. So it could have quite a big effect on downforce which is in one sense good, because the cars will be more difficult to drive, will deploy much more G on the driver like in the past. But equally G isn't visible for the spectator and the risk might be that overtaking could be more difficult and it will put an additional stress on the tyres. And all this is still in debate, but we have chosen the way forward and to come back to your question, that is the bit of the bandwidth I would say between zero and thirty percent.

EB: It's a little bit... yes, the debate was based as well on the tyres because we wanted to have more mechanical grip, let's say, so there is a different tyre size, different compound and philosophy and all the discussion has been steered more about an improvement in lap time and on that point, I did agree with Toto. I think having a car with more downforce makes the drivers a little bit more confident to let's say outbrake each other and obviously if you change the philosophy of the aero, less driven by the front wing, you improve the overtaking so I think it should be good.

Q: (Joe van Burik – De Telegraaf) Mr Boullier, Stoffel Vandoorne received much praise for his performance in Bahrain; what more does he have to do to prove himself worthy of a fulltime racing seat or is that merely a matter of time?

EB: Well, at this stage I don't think he has to prove anything anymore, it's just a question of having an opportunity.

Q: (Haoran Zhou – Top Driver) Again, to presumably everyone: with the bigger tyre size for next year, presumably adding some weight, starting weight of the cars in race trim would be something like 820 kilograms and with Pirelli's tyres being designed to degrade faster, that would significantly put a burden on how much the driver can push at the start of a race, which at the moment, at the start of the race, a Formula One car is not going that much faster than a GP2 car. Is there any way you can address that problem? And how

much the drivers can push cannot really be solved by adding more aero to the cars in race trim.

CH: First of all, I hope the cars aren't 820 kilos. They've got a lot heavier with the new technology that's been introduced over the last couple of years and compared to ten years ago, they're more than a hundred kilos heavier than they were, almost approaching sports car weight, and that of course adds to the characteristic of making the car a little lazier than a lighter car but I disagree with you that by adding downforce and load back onto the car you're going to give the driver a harder time. You're going to give him much more of a workout. The drivers have been crying out for cars that are more challenging to drive. The cars that we have at the moment... it's been discussed whether they are too easy to drive and I think that by making the cars edgier, by making them quicker you will get a bigger variance of drivers, the teams will get better value for money out of their drivers and they'll have to start going to the gym again. So I think it's a positive thing that we've got a regulation change but yes, the cars are a little bit on the heavy side. It would be nice to somehow get a hundred kilos out of them.

FV: I think that Pirelli will adapt the tyres to the new regulations. It's not a matter of downforce or degradation; it's just the combination between the tyre regulations and degradation.

Ends