



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

**2016 Grand Prix of Europe
Friday Press Conference Transcript
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TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Frédéric VASSEUR (Renault), Roberto BOCCAFOGLI (Pirelli), Eric BOULLIER (McLaren), Gene HAAS (Haas), Toto WOLFF (Mercedes), Claire WILLIAMS (Williams)

PRESS CONFERENCE

If I could start with you Eric: you had both cars in the points in Monaco a couple of races ago but it was a tougher race for you in Montreal. How do you reflect on the team's performance in Canada?

Eric BOULLIER: We know obviously that some track layouts are suiting are package, chassis, power unit, and some others are not. Clearly you have a long straight line in Montreal and downforce level obviously different from the other track layouts, so you have to specifically design your downforce levels there. Conditions were better for us on one lap on Friday and Saturday but the race was a bit difficult and we had also a slow stop due to a technical issue. But I think we are still on the move and proving every weekend that we are improving by bringing more updates and I think this is a positive.

Well, where do you go from here? IN terms of development, the drivers want you to keep pushing for 2016, but is the prudent thing to focus on 2017 now?

EB: I think you still have to mix both of them. We don't want to stop developing this year's car. Even if there is a strong change for next year into the technical regulations I think we can still carry over some of the development we are having now.

Thank you. Gene, if I could come to you: Esteban Gutierrez appears to be growing in confidence while Romain Grosjean has struggled a little bit more in recent races. How do you explain the shift in performance between your two drivers?

Gene HAAS: I think a lot of it is just the learning curve of trying to get the tyres to work. We've struggled with tyre temperatures. We've had issues when the Safety Car comes out that once the tyres come out of their optimum temperature we just lose pace rather quickly. So that's probably the biggest problem – trying to maintain the tyre temperatures, especially when you're in back of the pack where you're always going to be a few seconds off the

leaders and that differential makes a huge impact on how hard the tyres are worked and also their temperature.

You had an emphatic start to the season, but your last points finish was in Russia and after a strong start to the campaign do you feel that you are now starting to lose out in the development race?

GH: No, not really. Actually, I think the team is coalescing together quite well. There's no more scrambling to figure out why this didn't work or that didn't work. We had a lot of problems with the simple things like radio communications and electrical boxes and at the last few races we don't have those issues anymore. So they're starting to sort out how the cars work, what it takes to put them together. So I think I feel very, very comfortable with the progress the team is making.

Thank you. Frédéric, you've said on many occasions that this is a transitional year for Renault, but only the one points finish so far, so how do you assess the team's performance?

Frédéric VASSEUR: To be honest, even if I told you it is a transition year, we have to stay focused and don't give up the season. It's very important to keep everybody under pressure. For sure the last two races were a bit difficult and we had too many issues. But we are on a good improving curve and I'm sure we will be quite soon.

Those issues that you refer to in the last couple of races: both drivers had accidents, unfortunate, but how do you sum up the job that Kevin Magnussen and Jolyon Palmer are doing for you?

FV: You don't have to forget that Jo is a rookie and Kev didn't run last year and I think so far they did a good job. For sure we had some crashes over the last weekend but so far they did a good job. I think they are improving in terms of collaboration with the team and we are on a good direction.

Roberto, today the FIA has rubber-stamped Pirelli's new three-year deal with Formula One. What does that mean for both Pirelli and the sport?

Roberto BOCCAFOLGI: For Pirelli it means a big satisfaction of course. As we can imagine it is the final step of a very long path. We know already for quite a long time that we are remaining in Formula One for the next three years, but when it gets 'officialised' by the FIA it gets really true. Now it is. We found a very good agreement, a very good collaboration. Everybody knows that next season many new things will be happening in Formula One from the technical point of view and also many modifications are very strongly related to the new tyres for next year. We are ready to start our job, which is a very important job for next season.

Well, you gave us a glimpse of those tyres at the Monaco Grand Prix a few weeks back. What can you tell us about the testing programme that you are going to do with the 2017 tyres for the remainder of this season?

RB: With the 2017 tyres things are still to start. They are expected to start for possibly, for us, hopefully, in August, very shortly after the grand prix in Hockenheim. We have 25 days' testing with these wider tyres. As everybody knows we will start with three teams. Many details still need to be fixed but we know the three teams are Ferrari, Mercedes and Red

Bull. We should be starting very early in August and then we should be testing again immediately in September before going away from the long hauls to the east and to America and possibly a last testing session by the end of the championship. It is a very big job to be done.

Thank you. Claire if I could come on to you please. It was a frustrating start to the season in many ways fro Williams, so how much of a shot in the arm was Valtteri's podium last weekend in Canada?

Claire WILLIAMS: Yeah, it was great for everybody in the team to have that. It's been a long time coming. I wasn't there, so I was gutted. I did tell Valtteri not to dare get a podium in Canada if I wasn't there, but he did and it was great for the team to have that and I think we have come here really much more motivated. This hopefully will be a good race for us as well. We've got a string of races coming up where the circuits will all suit our car, so hopefully we'll have a positive few races in the next ones to come.

Q: Let's talk about third place in the Constructors' Championship. You currently lie fourth, 49 points behind Red Bull Racing. Do you feel you have to strike now, at these tracks that you've just mentioned if you're going to stand a chance of regaining that third place?

CW: Yeah, I think we absolutely have to capitalise on these races: this one here and then obviously the ones coming up in Austria, Silverstone, etcetera. They will suit our car and we have to make the most of it. But then that's not to say we haven't got to ensure we have a chassis that can compete competitively at all the circuits so that we can take the fight to Red Bull. Obviously all the work's still going on in the factory to make sure the car remains competitive – or as competitive as it can be for the remaining rounds. Because we do want to take the fight to Red Bull. We aren't happy lying in fourth. Unfortunately that gap's opened up a little bit but we have to work hard and make sure we can keep closing that gap and taking the fight to them.

Q: Toto, both of your cars were passed by Sebastian Vettel at the start of the Canadian Grand Prix. Can you just talk up through what went wrong and why with both of your cars?

Toto WOLFF: The purpose of the change in regulation last year was to make the starts more unpredictable and more variable – and this is exactly what's happening. You cannot see a pattern throughout the field that some teams always get it right or some teams always get it wrong. We have had some amazing starts before Montréal and in Montréal both of the cars didn't really have a good getaway. This is now the nature of the sport. Having said that, you still need to optimise – and there is room for optimisation in the clutches and its operation and the execution with the drivers, all needing to remember it's a tricky operation. But we're working on it.

Q: We've seen in the last few races a momentum swing from Nico Rosberg's side of the garage towards Lewis Hamilton. After Nico's strong start to the season, how do you feel he's coping with his current difficulties?

TW: We always have the discussion that if one wins and the other one doesn't, is there the change of momentum or has the balance swung? It didn't. As a matter of fact, both of them

are very close: Nico had a brilliant run, winning seven races in a row and it was clear that would eventually stop, and it did. And the balance has swung more towards the direction of Lewis and some of the other drivers and that's normal: it doesn't mean that he's going to fall into depression because it doesn't continue. These guys are very professional and they don't swing a lot emotionally or mentally – so I have no doubt it is not a big issue for him.

Q: Is there any evidence the current contract negotiations are weighing on Nico's mind?

TW: No, first of all he had a brilliant adviser who is pretty experienced in negotiating good contacts, and that was very clever because he took himself out of it and I don't think it affects him at all.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Chris Lines – AP) Question for Roberto. There were reports from some of the teams that the damage on the tyres today from the kerbs, getting cuts and that kind of damage on the tyre. Could you tell me, did you notice anything here in this circuit damage-wise that was different to what you would get in a normal practice session.

RB: We saw during the season some cuts which were, I just want to underline, cuts with no air loss. We told it to FIA as a normal procedure because we normally say, we normally tell FIA when we see something on our tyre which could mean something strange on the track. We simply told FIA. FIA made their checks, you know what was going on afterwards and... nothing strange.

Q: (Ben Edwards – Channel Four) Question for Toto and for Eric. Can we have a summary of today's running? It's the first time we've been to this Baku street track, so what kind of feedback are you getting from the drivers? Is it as we expected? How's it going to be in terms of setting the cars up for tomorrow and are we likely to see positions change quite a lot for tomorrow when we get into qualifying, do we think?

TW: For us it went pretty well. Immediately you realise when you put the car down and you just hit the sweet-spot or not. Today that was the case. The track has everything: it has that high-speed straight line, we've seen more than 350km/h, that's pretty exceptional, and then the very narrow part through the old city. It's still a matter of getting the tyre in the right window mechanically and aerodynamically – and that has functioned pretty well for us. I personally find the track very exciting: it's something new and certainly very challenging for the race, in terms of virtual safety cars and safety cars. Probably strategy's going to play quite a crucial role on Sunday.

Eric?

EB: Well first, the drivers didn't complain, so that means it must be good. And I agree with Toto: it looks a fantastic place. The general feedback from the paddock is very positive. I think you know with the tools we have at home now, the simulation tools, we can see the car was more or less set up for this track. We see there is huge track evolution: this is the first time we are running on this track, the tarmac is very slippery. Couple of glitches this morning obviously but this is normal when we hit a new venue. But I think globally it was a positive day. It is a track where over the weekend there will be huge track evolution, long straight lines so favouring the higher power PUs, so I think the show on Sunday will be good,

will be great. You could see a lot of cars went off in the runoff, so that means it is going to be a challenge as well for the race as well on Sunday.

Q: (Christian Nimmervoll – Motorsport Total.com) There is the long straight at the end of the circuit; is slipstreaming between teammates going to be an issue or Saturday, or something that you might consider?

FV: I think that will be difficult to manage, because you will disadvantage one of your two drivers so I don't think anybody will play this kind of game.

CW: Nothing to add.

GH: Well, I talked to the drivers a little bit. They really like the track, they like the high speed straightaways. I don't know so much about slipstreaming as much as it is getting your brakes to work, very very high speeds going into a left hand, right hand turn, you have to get that right and I think that's really where they're going to pull a lot of their times, getting the brakes to work.

TW: Since I have been in motor racing in the early nineties, I have never seen slipstreaming between two teammates work for both of them in any category so I don't see that really.

Q: (Silvia Arias – Parabras) Question to Claire; Claire I would love to know... you have been given a big honour just a few days ago, coming from the Queen. I would love to know how important that is for you and what it really means for you and if you ever expected anything like that?

CW: No, I'm still a bit speechless about it to be honest. I never expected it and it is a real honour to receive an award in the Queen's birthday honours. But from my perspective, it's a team effort, we always say that at Williams. I wouldn't have been able to have done what I've done without the support of all seven hundred people at Williams, so the honour is for everybody at Williams, not just for me.. I'm just the figurehead that gets to run it after their name but is an enormous privilege and I'm delighted that we have it.

Q: (Chris Lines – AP) Toto, do you have any diagnosis yet on what happened with Nico, why he had to pull over? He called it an engine and drive issue.

TW: We don't know yet. We have to look at it, what exactly it is so I can't really give you a comment on that at the moment but it's a Friday engine so whatever the outcome is, it's not dramatic.

Q: (Christof Becker – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) Question to follow up on some of the discussions on the situation of human rights here in Azerbaijan which was going on yesterday. You will have heard what Bernie Ecclestone has said. About the situation today that there were reports that an Azeri news agency did not get accredited although the situation here is being said or handled differently than before at other races of Formula One, there have not been any calls for boycotts. What are your thoughts on the situation here?

TW: Look, I think we are responsible for sport, for the sports and sporting side and sport should unite and not divide and I think if we can add our bit in bringing people together and putting on a good spectacle then this is all we can do. The federation and the commercial rights holder are fundamentally responsible for hosting the race. It's not that we are closing our eyes, on the contrary, but we need to know what we need to do and this is sports.

CW: As Toto said, we are not politicians, we run sports teams and we've come here to race. Bernie and Jean believe that it's right to race here and we go where the calendar asks us to go. And from our perspective, I think the organisers have done a fantastic job of putting on some great facilities for us to do that, but as Toto says again, sport is supposed to unite people and we just want to put on a good race on Sunday.

GH: ... it's a very controversial topic. I know in the US human rights are extremely important and the American people have a tendency to throw their weight around to make sure that people do get treated equally in the world. But I think, as Toto said, I think racing is a sport that brings people together to see that differences between people can be overcome. Sometimes when I go to races – like I was in Russia and I think the US has had a long history of rub-ins with Russian people but they are so friendly and it was so great to be there. So I really think that our sport can help smooth over some of those problems and hopefully when the politicians get to it, they can come to an agreeable solution.

Ends