



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

**2018 FIA Formula One World Championship  
Austrian Grand Prix  
Friday Press Conference Transcript  
29.06.2018**

**TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Christian HORNER (Red Bull Racing), Toto WOLFF (Mercedes), Toyoharu TANABE (Honda), Franz TOST (Toro Rosso)**

**Tanabe-san, we'll start with you. Your sitting between your current team partner and you future partner. Just tell us, why Red Bull from next season?**

**Toyoharu TANABE:** I'm not involved very much in contractual discussions, so I'm not sure how many options we had for our future PU supply. But in reality we will be in a good position, because Toro Rosso and Red Bull are already linked, centralised in Red Bull Technology. That works very well for us, I believe, because we don't need to discuss Team A or Team B individually. So we centralize our discussion into the Red Bull group. I hope it will help our task for next year.

**You say it's a good position for Honda, but Red Bull has been winning races this year, so isn't it a lot of pressure on Honda next year. ?**

**TT:** Yes, it is. But we already have a lot of pressure and stress supplying PUs in the Formula 1 series. We are working very closely with Toro Rosso and of course we have pressure. Then, Red Bull and I respect their success in the Formula 1 series so we have another pressure but we supply same spec of course, that is the regulation, and I would like to work very efficiently with these teams.

**Thank you. Christian, it's a lot of pressure on Honda but is it also pressure on Red Bull, returning to a works partnership deal?**

**Christian HORNER:** It's a positive. We had the option to change or the option to stay where we were and having looked at the progress that Honda have been making over recent months, having had the benefit of looking at the progress of Toro Rosso and how Toro Rosso have worked with Honda. It's been really very, very encouraging and for us we see it as extremely low risk and of course the upside is what we're interested in, in terms of what is the potential and I think the commitment, the resource, the facilities that Honda have available to them is really exciting for us. And to be the focal point of attention with the two teams is a fantastic position for Red Bull to be in. We're certainly very excited about what the future holds and very much looking forward to working with our colleagues from Honda.

**We saw you last week in the press conference, just after the news had been announced, but what's next? What's part of the immediate process of working with Honda?**

**CH:** Well, as has been explained we've got this construction where we have Red Bull Technology, which is the engineering centre effectively and which will have a large amount of interface with Honda. Red Bull Technology already supplies transmission components to Toro Rosso. It's at an embryonic stage. Obviously discussions are already starting to focus on 2019, but we have been extremely encouraged and impressed by the collaborative nature that we're finding. That's certainly refreshing and we're looking forward to a new era for Red Bull Racing. We've had 12 years with our current partner and we've enjoyed an awful lot of success. We've had highs and lows but the time was right to make this move. I think it's an exciting time for the team and for Red Bull.

**Thank you very much. Franz, you've had works status this year with Toro Rosso and Honda. Is the news of the Red Bull partnership for next year good news or bad news for your team?**

**Franz TOST:** Fantastic news. We are very much looking forward about this. I think a company like Honda, which is so well know overall, has to win races and with Toro Rosso that's difficult as we don't have the infrastructure for winning races in Formula 1 and therefore Red Bull Racing is absolutely the correct partner. Toro Rosso will profit out of this because the synergies between Red Bull Technology will increase. We will have next year the complete rear end from Red Bull Technology. Therefore, I am convinced about this, we will also improve our performance. Currently we are very much involved in all the bench tests and everything. Although we are very low, limited with resources and so on, it's really a lot of work on our side and in future this is being done by Red Bull Technology, which means we have resources for other performance differentiators, which is quite important for Toro Rosso. In the end I think all three partners will get the most out of it and will profit from this co-operation.

**Toro Rosso have enjoyed really some strong races this season – namely in Bahrain and Monaco – but you've also has some tricky races at times too, so what are your expectations for this weekend's race here in Austria?**

**FT:** After some races, which were not so good, especially the last ones where we were involved in crashes and so on, I hope that here in Austria we are coming back to the successful part and I am positive about here in Austria and the next few race. We brought some new upgrades on the aerodynamic side. As it looks it works quite well and as we know Honda brought the new upgrade already in Canada and therefore I think that we have quite a competitive package. And looking to FP1 I think that we are able to be at least with one car in Qualifying 3.

**Thank you. Toto, a similar question to you. Mercedes has really dominated at this circuit in the V6 era. A strong start in FP1 as well, with first and second. Is that form you are expecting to see continue for the rest of the weekend?**

**Toto WOLFF:** The Friday has been giving little indication as to how the weekend goes in the last few races. It is more a learning process. Team have introduced either new upgrades on the power unit or upgrades on the chassis side and therefore it's about mileage and understanding and working on various set-ups. I'm happy how it went. Austria was a kind track on us in the past. Lots of power up the hill. But you can see that the new reality is there are three teams capable of putting the car on the front and winning races and just a few hundredths or tenths between us and I have no doubt that tomorrow in qualifying that story will continue.

**Both of your drivers were praising your power unit that you introduced a week ago in the battle among those top three teams and Lewis said yesterday there was an upgrade on the chassis side as well. Can you just explain, aerodynamically, what work you have been doing on the car?**

**TW:** Yes, we were supposed to introduce the new power unit in Montréal and we weren't quite sure whether it matched our reliability standards and you could see that once everybody introduced their upgrade we fell behind. A track that suited us, suddenly we weren't good enough anymore. Then we brought the next step to Le Castellet and directly the drivers felt the difference between an engine that was in there for seven races and a brand new one. The same applies now to the chassis side. We have tried to compress what we had in terms of aero development and bring it at once, so the whole concept... there is this little change in concept in our aero development and so far the drivers seem to be happy with it. It is a necessary step. Red Bull and Ferrari are not going to rest on their laurels. We keep pushing each other from race to race, from upgrade to upgrade and even if you can put on another 50 milliseconds for the race you will do it, because that might be the difference between pole position and P3.

## QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

**Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Toto, based on what you have seen from Honda's recovery from their time with McLaren and the prospect of what they could bring to Formula 1 as a race-winning engine manufacturer, what are your thoughts on that, and how important is it for Formula 1?**

**TW:** First of all, as a Formula 1 fan, we all remember the glorious years of Honda in the sport and I have no doubt that they can come back to that situation. For us, as Mercedes, it is extremely important that we have top brands in Formula 1, be it OEMs that have joined the sport as engine suppliers or be it multinational and global brands such as Red Bull, and the more we can attract the better for all of us and the better for the sport. I have also no doubt that they will be competitive. Franz mentioned it before, the collaboration will make another step between Toro Rosso, Honda and Red Bull for next year. And with Red Bull's technical capabilities and resource they will certainly be of great assistance to make the power unit progress. This is certainly the right step forward, looking from the outside, for all parties. It was important for Red Bull to have a works status. Long term probably the best chance to win a championship. Maybe short term, more work to do. But long terms, from where I sit, absolutely the right decision. Looking forward to tougher fights and tougher battles with Red Bull Honda.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, Racefans.net) Christian, I believe internally the conundrum at the moment is SOS – Spielberg or Silverstone. When do you Danny's contract extension? What are the chances here and what are the chances in Silverstone?**

**CH:** Well, things are progressing well with Daniel. I expect things to be concluded prior to the summer break. But our priority had been firstly to get the engine situation sorted and now things are progressing with Daniel. Our intention is to retain both drivers and I'm sure during the next couple of weeks we'll be entering into the finishing straight to get things concluded prior to the summer break.

**Q: (Ralf Woodall - l'Equipe) Question for all of you. We're in the middle of a triple-header. I'd like to know how challenging it is for you to have these three grands prix back-to-back and how are you organising yourselves?**

**FT:** That's a real big challenge, because going from the South of France to Austria and then to England is a big challenge, especially from the logistics side, because as we know, we are now in holiday time. That means there is a lot of traffic out there and we have a lot of problems on the borders because of the checks which they make over there. I hope they will not lose too much time, the trucks over there, and I am worried about coming in time to England. I was not worried from France to Austria because here we have everything under control – but once it's going to Belgium, to England, then it's a little bit difficult. If, for example a truck strike or something like this. I think this is at the absolute limit and I hope this will not be the case any more in the future because people are really working day and night in this three weeks.

**Christian, your thoughts on the triple-header.**

**CH:** It's certainly expensive, for moving cars, parts, people in such short succession. You'll see here we have a different hospitality facility. The usual Energy Station just simply wouldn't have been possible for it to complete the triple headers, so, of course, there's cost associated with that. There's a drain on resource because obviously an awful lot of components going backwards and forwards to the UK. We're fortunate that the final race of the triple header for us is where the team is obviously based. Obviously harder for teams not based in the UK – but it's certainly tough. On the upside, it's three home races in three weeks. Our engine had its home race last weekend, it's obviously the team's home race this weekend and obviously next weekend it's our local race up the road in Silverstone. So, yeah, it's pretty insane how busy it is.

**Toto, something you agree with as well? Very difficult for Mercedes?**

**TW:** Yeah, similar for us. Obviously, it's our home race here as Austrians, then a home race in Silverstone, then a home race in Hockenheim thereafter. If you a hundred years back, then another

one! But you have to understand where Liberty comes from. We have the football world championships that happens at the moment, then obviously when that goes towards the semi-finals and the finals it's becoming more and more difficult so this year needs to be compressed. It's not something I guess they particularly enjoy to do and for us, like my colleagues said, it puts stress on the organisation. Many of us won't be seeing the families a lot in these three weeks. It's not perfect – but it is what it is.

**And Tanabe-san, what's it's like from a power unit manufacturer point of view?**

**TT:** Yes, so we have a lot of those things between the race and the race. We need to maintain the PU ready. So we removed the PU from the chassis and maintain some of the parts and then ready to go for the next race. So logistics, and then also the workload, is tight. Then, the distance between the races in one week is similar but some difficulty with three races in a row.

**Q: (Peter Vamosi – Racingline.hu) Toto, last week Susie was promoted to team principal of Venturi team in Formula E. Can you give some advice for her how to make a successful team. And if you both will have a race weekend together somewhere in the world, who will take care of the kid?**

**TW:** You're laughing – but it's a serious problem to figure out the logistics since she has been involved in Venturi we cross each other at home. Obviously, I try to be as modern a dad as I can be in supporting her – but it's a great challenge for her. She's found a very good partner to join up with Gildo [Pallanca Pastor] and she always had the aspiration of doing something entrepreneurial after her racing career, and here she goes. Now, when I'm at home talking about Formula E I have to close the door, so she is not able to listen. But it's good fun, we enjoy the banter between us and... we'll see how it works, family-wise.

**Q: (Julien Billiotte – AutoHebdo) Question to Christian. There have been some reliability issues with the latest spec of the Honda engine. Is this a source of Red Bull moving forward – or are you using Toro Rosso as a sort of a test bed and pushing for performance?**

**CH:** I think reliability has improved enormously over the last... certainly this season with Honda. We're not exactly sitting comfortably in our own situation with our current supplier. So, of course, performance and reliability are both things that have to go hand-in-hand with the regulations that we have. I'm sure it's an area where that Honda are working together very hard on, together with their performance. We're confident that things are very much moving in the right direction.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, Racefans.net) To the three team principals. In political terms, they normally give an incoming president one hundred days before they start commenting. Liberty has now had 500 days since they completed the purchase of Formula One's commercial rights. How would you summarise their first 500 days as owners of the commercial rights?**

**Toto, why don't you take that one first?**

**TW:** That's very kind of you. Obviously with every new change of regime, the style changes, and we have all been used to Bernie's way of doing things and lots of credit to him for having built-up the sport. We all wouldn't be sitting here if he wouldn't have been as visionary and powerful in the past in building Formula One. Now, with the new ownership, it's not one person any more than makes the decision but a broader group of people and the transparency that has kicked-in is refreshing and makes things easier to deal with. And then obviously we, as a sport, face tremendously challenging times. Like any other sport, the way sports are being broadcast has changed, and will continue to change and we are all having the challenges of seeking additional income, and that has been equally difficult for Liberty. But they have been trying things: some good, some bad... or some less good but I think overall we're all in the same boat. We want to see the sport grow, we want to see revenue grow and, bottom line, we can all understand that there is a financial reality that needs to be respected. The top teams are spending too much and we need to get that under control. In so far, summarising, I would say it was positive.

### **Christian, your 500-day summary.**

**CH:** Yeah, I think there have been some very good things. I think Liberty are very much focussed, so things like access to content for opening up digital media, social media. I think the engagement with fans, creating a better experience trackside. I think the promoters, certainly the teams, have found that there's a different approach, a different attitude regarding that side of the business. I think what's by far Liberty's biggest challenge is how to address the future, how to address 2021. I think the problem, and the risks that I see, is if the FIA and the promoter aren't fully aligned, we end up with compromises and vanilla-type regulations. I think there needs to be a real clarity going forward as to what the sport is going to be, what are the regulations going to be, that both parties ultimately have to buy into? Liberty have paid \$8 billion for this sport. They've got to turn it into something that's even more attractive. That's fantastic racing, obviously there are cost issues, there's revenue issues that need dealing with. The FIA, obviously as the governing body, they've got to be fully-aligned with that, and what concerns us is discussions of where things are going with engines, where things are going with chassis regulations. Everything seems to be getting watered down somewhat from what the initial concept is. So, I think the next 500 days are going to be very telling for life, post-2020.

### **Franz, your thoughts on Liberty so far?**

**FT:** I can only see positive aspects from them, and I'm also convinced that they are going in the right direction for the future of the sport, because it's important that Formula One will be changed, from the cost side and what they want to do is absolutely the right thing, to come down with the costs. Whether it's a cost cap or whether it's regulated by the sporting and technical regulations is another question. Then, to distribute the money in a fair way, not that some teams get everything and others nearly nothing. They will come up with a new technical regulation for the chassis as well of from the engine side – I think from the engine side should be finished soon, and they will also change the sporting regulation and, so far, all the topics which are being discussed are going in the right direction. They brought in a new attitude for the media, they're concentrating on the social medias are being preferred more and I think all of these aspects together are important, that Formula One will go in the right direction. Because what we need is not a two-class society like we have now: three teams and the rest of the world. No, it needs ten teams that are close together. Or at least four or five teams are fighting for the championship, fighting for race wins, and this must be the goal, otherwise Formula One is not interesting in the future. I think Liberty Media understood this and they are going in the right direction. I can only support them.

**Q: (Luke Smith – Crash.net) Christian, with your engine plans sorted and your driver line-up for next year nearing completion, will the next goal to be resolved be Carlos Sainz Jr's future? And can you see him staying in the Red Bull fold if there isn't a seat available at the top team?**

**CH:** Well, all of these things are obviously interlinked in some way, shape or form. I think the whole driver market is waiting for Toto's driver to kick that off. I'm hoping... at Silverstone are you finally going to get your finger out, sign a contract? He's worth it. Come on, he's worth every penny. So as soon as Toto signs his contract, yeah, two contracts, that then will cascade throughout and Carlos Sainz will just be a mechanism within that so it's all down to Toto really.

**Q: Part of the question there was can you see Carlos staying within the Red Bull family if Daniel stays with you?**

**CH:** I thought I'd successfully managed to swerve that question! Look, Renault have a desire to keep Carlos. It really depends whether we have a requirement for him or not. Our intention is to retain both drivers so once that's clear then we will sit down with Carlos.

**Q: (Ian Parkes – New York Times) Toto, your car seems to be more subject to the vagaries of any given circuit this season than perhaps potentially in the past. Do you fear that continuing this season and potentially undermining your title challenges or do you feel that at this stage**

**of the season you have a better understanding of it and you will be able to limit the losses at certain tracks where you are generally weaker, shall we say?**

**TW:** You're right. We've seen in the past oscillations with all of the teams but ours were pretty obvious and visible. The fast tracks were the ones that suited us more and then once we came to Budapest or Singapore or Monaco these were our weak ones and I think we've made some progress, we've addressed the problem and we've identified the issues but obviously every car has a certain DNA and has evolved over the years and you don't want to undo the positives of the car, just to optimise the car in the slow speed. And insofar as we are looking at things, Monaco was a good step in the right direction. We didn't fall off the cliff like we last year and now we have... the next proof is going to be Budapest, pretty soon, to see how we go but definitely it has become more of a challenge, because Red Bull traditionally was on the other side of the curve but they have progressed tremendously on the fast tracks and are now a competitor pretty much everywhere and the same for Ferrari.

**Q: (Daniel Horvath – Motorspormania.hu ) Christian, did you have any sleepless nights before making the decision to switch to Honda or was it an easy decision to make, considering their recent gains?**

**CH:** I think, in the end, obviously we were waiting to see the outcome of the second round of engines which were introduced in Montreal and in the end it was a very straightforward and logical decision for us and one that was very much driven by engineering and certainly there was unanimity within our senior technical group, that this is absolutely the right way to go.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, Racefans.net) Toto, can you allow Porsche to hold the outright record at the Nordschleife or could you imagine yourselves building a Formula One car to challenge that?**

**TW:** Funny that you say that, I thought about that this morning when I saw the time. It's obviously incredible, what they have achieved, 5m 19s is almost a minute faster than Bellof did in a sport car, one and a half minutes faster than what I thought of doing and it ended up in tears. I've spoken with the guys this morning and they've said it's just unbelievable, it's like flying a spaceship around the track. It would be interesting to put a Formula One car on the Nordschleife and see what it does but it's pretty more my spin than a realistic idea that somebody's going to finance.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, Racefans.net) Can't afford it?**

**TW:** No.

**Q: (Maria Reyer – Motorsport-Total.com) To Christian and Toto, there won't be a German race next year, and Austria still has a contract to 2020 I think. What are your views on the future of these particular two races and do you think Austria is maybe the more important than Germany?**

**CH:** I think Austria is naturally far more important than Germany and very good that we have a Grand Prix here for years to come. It's always been surprising, the last few years, that there hasn't been more support at the German Grand Prix, especially with German world champions, German teams and hopefully at Hockenheim this year there will be a good turnout. I remember going there in the Schumacher time when the places were packed. Hopefully the fans get behind the racing, we have a great crowd. If the stadium is full in Hockenheim it's one of the biggest atmospheres that Formula One can produce. Yeah, it's a shame that it's not on the calendar but what's encouraging is there's so much competition for races on the calendar these days that races like Germany are struggling to have a continued presence.

**TW:** Well obviously from an Austrian standpoint I'm very proud that Red Bull or Mr Mateschitz have created such a fantastic infrastructure around Spielberg. It's not only on the track, you look can look at everything: the hotels are first class, the options for entertainment are really great and the variability is what makes Formula One and I think if you look at this race and these three races now, the back-to-backs: we've been in the south of France in Le Castellet, now we are in the mountainous area in Austria and we go to traditional classic Silverstone and that is great for Formula One. To your question on Hockenheim, obviously for us it's not an easy situation because

we would like to have a German race for our fans in Germany and all the Mercedes staff but you need to draw a line between operating a team and getting involved in race promotion, as far as it comes back to Mercedes as a team and this is what we've done. And the reason why we have a little bit of a hangover in Germany is maybe because the Germans have been so successful. We had seven years of Schumacher dominance and pretty soon thereafter four years of Sebastian winning it all and maybe you have to go through a bit of a dip to recover.

**CH:** Like the football!

**TW:** Like the football.

**Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Toto, just going back to what Christian was saying about the 2021 rules. Do you share his concerns that if the FIA and F1 don't completely agree on things it could be watered down or vanilla and if there is anything missing, what more would you like to see from them?**

**TW:** Traditionally, if you look at the objectives, Christian and mine are maybe a little bit different. We would like to have a little bit more emphasis on the power unit and Christian on the chassis but that maybe changes, but I think transparency and a clear path is important. We need to know what's happening in 2021, what the regs look like on the power unit side and on the chassis side in order to get things moving and avoid a cost escalation, a cost rush last minute. That is important. I hope that with next week's meeting, we have a little bit more understanding and input and then we see where it ends up.

Ends