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Press Information

2013 Indian Grand Prix Friday Press Conference Transcript

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TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Stefano DOMENICALI (Ferrari), Christian HORNER (Red Bull Racing), Ross BRAWN (Mercedes), Vijay MALLYA (Force India), Monisha KALTENBORN (Sauber), Eric BOULLIER (Lotus)

PRESS CONFERENCE

I think as you have pride of place, front and centre, Monisha, I think we should start with you, in what I'm sure is a happier time at Sauber at the moment. The last few races have seen good points-scoring finishes. Has that been a relief to you, something you always thought was on the cars or has it caught you by surprise?

Monisha KALTENBORN: It didn't really catch us by surprise that we improved our performance. We did always believe in it and we had reason to believe in it. But it does make it a lot easier and credible for the team if you can really show that result in points. Because we could see that upward trend from Hungary on but the points were not coming in so it's good if they can be shown like this to the outside.

What's been the change? What's made the big difference?

MK: Well the big difference has been the package, the aerodynamic package we brought in in Hungary. That was a big step for us and we could see that this was really going into the right direction. It counts for more than 50 per cent of this improvement. We then, of course, got a better understanding of the car, which allowed us to operate it differently, to use different set-ups we hadn't been using before. And then, I think to be fair about it, the change in the tyres was – unlike last year – not against us this time, but we benefited maybe more than others from it. So all of this together, and of course a great performance by the team, the drivers, adds to it.

Thank you for that. To your right, Dr Vijay Mallya, it's Force India's home grand prix and if Sauber have benefited from the tyres, has that been to Force India's detriment, and a difficult period of the season since Silverstone for you?

Vijay MALLYA: Absolutely. The change in the tyres for Silverstone has been more than just detrimental to us. Within the mechanical design of the car it's proving very difficult for us to get optimum tyre performance. We've dedicated all our R&D tools to the 2014 car, so we are handicapped in a sense. But having said that I think we are understanding tyres and the constraints under which we are operating slightly better. We are pleased with today's free practice performance. We've certainly fared better today than we did in Japan or Korea and I think we'll attempt to even improve on this before the last remaining races. The lady on my left has certainly woken us up. We are now wide awake and hopefully we will hang on to our current sixth

position in the Constructors' Championship, though she is getting dangerously close. But having said that, the tyres have not been the best for us in the second half of the season but hopefully whatever we suffer this year will be a good investment for next year's car.

You mentioned the lady to your left getting dangerously close. Are you looking nervously over your shoulder or do you think that the performances can improve and you can hold on to that place?

VM: As I said, I was quite pleased with the free practice performance today. It's certainly a step ahead from Japan and Korea, so that gives me confidence we are heading in the right direction. I also realise the constraints under which we are operating, because the window available to us mechanically is quite a short one. But having said that, I think the results will speak for themselves going forward.

Let me turn to Eric next. In terms of results, Lotus continue to go forward, involved in a three-way battle for second place in the Constructors' Championship. What are your targets for the remaining four races of the season?

Eric BOULLIER: Well the target is obviously to chase podium finishes and those kind of fights every race. I think this is the prize to chase, to get the chance to be in the second place, or on the podium of the Constructors' Championship.

Romain Grosjean has scored back-to-back podiums in the last two races for the first time in his career. Can you tell us a bit about his form at the moment? Is he a man that could lead your team for next season?

EB: We are definitely pleased with his performance, since Germany actually. Clearly, something switched on and he is working better. I mean the same tyre story as well, the latest spec of tyres suit a little bit more his driving style than Kimi's one. But yes, we are pleased that he is stepping up. We don't have a policy of driver number one and number two but we needed him obviously to step up, yes.

Enough to suggest to yourself that you're looking for one more driver for next season or not?

EB: Yes, definitely. Normally we compete with two cars!

But Romain definitely in for next year?

EB: Romain has a contract signed anyway for next year. It's just, say, a matter of confirmation. We are being prudent after last obviously. But I think it's on its way to be confirmed soon.

Let me turn to Stefano next, if I can. This morning, for Fernando Alonso, not the best start to the weekend with a gearbox problem. Can you explain a bit more about what happened?

Stefano DOMENICALI: Yeah, it's true. Unfortunately we couldn't do the programme we were expecting to do. We had a problem on a little spring inside the gearbox, so at the end of the day we were able change it and to keep the gearbox for the session.

This was a race gearbox?

SD: No.

So it will be fine for the rest of the weekend?

SD: I hope so.

You'll need it and you'll need a good performance from Fernando and Felipe, because as Eric was touching on, that battle for second place in the Constructors' Championship is mathematically out of your reach this weekend, could go right down to the wire?

SD: For sure, the fight is very strong. We know that around us there is Mercedes and Lotus, who are very competitive and we cannot be complacent. We have second but if we want to beat the opposition we need to perform well with both drivers and with the team of course. It will be for us a very intense end of the season. We know that everyone wants to reach that; we are the same, with the others. It will not be easy because in the last couple of grand prix we saw that Mercedes and Lotus have increased their performance but we will fight up to the end, that's for sure.

Q: ...and on the subject, Ross, of that intense battle between now and the end of the season, is that something you welcome at Mercedes, or causing you a headache you could do without with 2014 and the big regulation changes looming large?

Ross BRAUN: No, I think this business is mostly about managing several programmes and obviously from a development perspective most, or all, of our efforts are in the 2014 programme. Couple of things we still want to learn with this car and in terms of racing, I think what's crucial for these last four races boils down to who races most effectively – because I think the teams are all quite close. We've not raced very well the last few races. I don't think we've scored the points that we could have done or should have done and it's now up to us to make sure we race well in the last four races. Of course if we had something available to make the car go faster, we'd fit it but we don't – and I don't think the others do, so I think between the three teams it's a question now of who races well: the team; the strategy; the drivers and that will determine who finishes second in the championship.

Q: And there's always that little matter of your future in the sport as well – something that might have been discussed on a few occasions in 2013. I think earlier this year you were quoted as saying there will be a soft hand-over to Paddy Lowe. You later denied that. Niki Lauda now says he wants you to stay. Lewis and Nico both want you to stay as well, so what conditions would keep you at Mercedes for the future?

RB: Well there is a transition going on. We're just determining what will be the best timing for that. I want the team to be in the best possible place for next year, so I think when the time is right we'll let everyone know what we're doing. But at the present time that's all I want to say on the matter.

Q: Christian, you're quite a superstitious man and you will take nothing lightly for this weekend but there might be a stack of celebratory tee-shirts around the back of the Red Bull garage and the champagne might be on ice and it could be a double-championship winning celebration for you this weekend. What would it mean to you and to the Red Bull team to make it four double-championships in a row?

Christian HORNER: Well firstly if there are tee-shirts I certainly haven't seen any and they would be wise to keep them away from me. I think that should – should – we achieve a quadruple double-championship it would be an amazing feat for every single member of the team to achieve such results against such illustrious

opposition. But those thoughts really aren't in our minds at the moment. Our focus is very much on this event. The championship tables obviously look very healthy but it's never done until it's mathematically impossible for anybody else to win. So the whole team's focus is very much on getting the most out of this weekend. And then the championship tables tend to take care of themselves. Should that happen here or in Abu Dhabi, the feeling of elation... you can't pre-describe because y'know, we haven't got there yet. But certainly everybody in the team is focussed on the here and now.

Q: And whilst the celebrations are I'm sure welcome, a team that has achieved as much as Red Bull in the last few seasons attracts a lot of attention and teams up and down the pitlane and the paddock wanting to take staff from you to try and emulate that success. We've already seen Peter Prodrumou moving to McLaren in the future. How difficult is it for you as team principal to keep the nucleus of this championship-winning team together for the future?

CH: Well, we have a very strong team and we've had tremendous continuity in the team for a long time now and y'know we've got great strength in depth and that's one of the key assets of the Red Bull team. Inevitably, from time to time, people will move. That's the nature of the sport, it's something that happens to all the team principals sitting here. Inevitably, when you're winning, there's a lot of attraction on members of your team – but people enjoy working for Red Bull, they enjoy the environment, they enjoy the way we operate. We have a very, very low turnover in personnel. I don't expect any further dramatic changes certainly into next year or the foreseeable future.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Ubaid Parkar – F1 Pulse) Question is for the back row: how much driver input has been required in the development of the 2014 car, considering the massive change in regulation? Has it been more or less or the same, considering a few seasons?

RB: Well, I think that in common with most teams, we have regular reviews with our drivers and understand with the car we're racing now what's strong, what's weak, what needs to be improved and that gets translated by the engineers into the designs that we have for next year. I think they are a pretty vital link. Obviously these days we have a lot of data, we have a lot analysis, we have a lot of simulation, a lot of modelling and that also contributes as well, but the driver is still a vital part of that process and we work closely with Nico and Lewis to understand where they see our strengths and weaknesses – perhaps more importantly, our weaknesses and that contributes and that's part of the process in designing and developing a new car.

Q: Is that the same at Maranello, Stefano?

SD: Yes, yes, I can agree with that. For sure, in the next couple of months these kind of things will be more and more closed because also from the team perspective we are trying to learn more and more how the new racing will develop next year, with all the systems, with all the constraints that we have in terms of regulations and of course we need to work together with the drivers because at the end of the day they are the ones that have to perform in the car so for sure, from now onwards will be a crucial time before starting the practice at the end of January, where also, from this side, we need to understand what it is all about because there are a lot of things which will really be brand new.

CH: Well, they're pretty limited in what they can contribute at the moment because it's a voyage of discovery for all of us. It's going to be a very different type of racing next year with the introduction of these power units and new regulations. Obviously we've had to measure the drivers carefully, especially the width of their *derrieres* so they can fit in to the car. We've got a new driver next year as well, so their contribution is limited at the moment but that will inevitably gear up over the coming weeks and months.

Q: You've not had to stick either in a corset yet just to try and squeeze them down a bit?

CH: If it was down to Adrian they would both need to lose about 15 kilos between now and Melbourne next year but I think that's fairly unlikely.

Q: (Shridhar Potdar – Sakal Media) Dr Mallya, this was voted as the most popular circuit by the F1 drivers in its debut year but next year BIC has no date and in 2015 nobody's certain whether the race will happen or not. What's your opinion about the approach of government?

VM: Well, when I was walking in this morning I met Mr J. P Gaur, the owner of the circuit and the promoter of the race and obviously I asked him about the continuance of the Indian Grand Prix. I must say I was very very happy when he confidently and enthusiastically confirmed that the race will be back in 2015 onwards on a sustainable basis so I was delighted to hear that.

Q: Did he give an indication as to what matters have been resolved, Dr Mallya, as to why it could come back again?

VM: Well, the official version given was that 2014 posed scheduling problems and therefore you couldn't have a race now in October 2013 then in early 2014 so I wouldn't like to comment or contradict that. All I'm interested in, as an Indian, and realising the vast potential that this country offers, and looking at the investment that has gone into creating this rightly voted number one facility, is that I want Formula One to be back in India and therefore I was delighted when the promoter confirmed that Formula One would be back from 2015 onwards.

Q: (Shridhar Potdar – Sakal Media) This question is about Sachin Tendulkar; Force India is paying tribute by carrying the words 'Master Blaster' on the car. What are your thoughts on the greatest sporting hero India has produced, Sachin Tendulkar?

VM: You know that cricket is a religion here in India and Sachin Tendulkar is arguably one of the best cricketers the world has ever produced. We are very very proud of his achievements, and as he signs off from test cricket after his 200 tests, we at Sahara Force India believe that it would only be a befitting tribute if we bid an appropriate farewell to the Master Blaster.

Q: (Bharat Sharma - IndoAsian News Service) Dr Mallya, your thoughts on the absence of an Indian on the drivers' grid; there will be no Indian driver this time around and a thought on Jehan Daruvala as well, he's won the British karting championship and Force India has always predicted him as being the next Indian driver on the F1 grid, so how is that coming along?

VM: I think that ever since I became involved as a team owner in Formula One I have consistently maintained that we will find an Indian driver who eventually will be in Formula One, and that's why we started the Force India Formula One academy. Jehan Daruvala is a product of that academy and I'm absolutely delighted with the fact that he's won the karting championship. Our efforts will continue, the programme will continue but producing a Formula One driver takes time and they

have to be good enough and experienced enough to compete with the best in the world so I can only reinforce my commitment, I can't quite predict when it will actually happen but one day hopefully it will.

Q: (Sandeep Sikdar– IndoAsian News Service) Yesterday my colleague questioned Christian Horner regarding the issues and hassles while coming to India. I want to put the same question to Ross Brawn and Stefano. What exactly are the paperwork hassles involved with coming to India?

SD: To be honest we didn't have any problems at all, no issues with any kind of logistics or whatever it is on that respect. Honestly, for us it is important to see when we have such an important country like India hosting this Grand Prix, to make sure that the promotion is done in a way that... we are here and we can have all the fans of India cheering and stay close with the teams because this is something that for sure is an important element of the show.

RB: I think the same as Stefano. We've had a very smooth... the organisation behind it all has been very smooth, there's been no problems at all, we've got everything here that we need to have here. We do enjoy the enthusiasm of the Indian fans and it's a very important country for us to establish Formula One in so we support it completely and hope we're going to be back here soon.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – RacingLines) If I have a look at the seating plan here, the three gentlemen at the back sit on the strategy group by right and those three in the front don't sit on the strategy group by right. I would like to ask the three at the back to please justify the group as it stands whereby you people formulate or do the primary formulation of the Formula One in the future and those three in the front, how you feel about being excluded from the process and in particular Dr Mallya who has invested an enormous amount of money in his own team, how you feel about the fact that as a team owner you are excluded, whereas the three gentlemen at the back are employees and they are included?

CH: You can always rely on Dieter for a straightforward, easy question to answer. I don't suppose I can talk about Dr Mallya's haircut and avoid it that way. The strategic group obviously is a group of teams, the FIA and FOM and it's part of a process that's been introduced. It's a group that previously didn't exist and it's to try and make more headway and a speedier way forwards for forming and creating regulations. All the teams still sit on the Formula One Commission that still very much exists, that has the right to reject or approve regulations to be introduced but the strategic group is made up of teams that have made a firm commitment to the sport for many years to come and it's a way of hopefully effectively introducing changes with the consultation of others because other groups will still exist but it's hopefully an efficient way of introducing changes to the sport in years to come and I think that it is a positive thing. Time will tell if it works or not.

SD: Nothing to add to what Christian said. The thing that I can say is that I'm sure that everyone knew about it and by everyone I assume that because they've signed the agreement, they have accepted this way forward and for sure we have the big responsibility to make sure that all the systems of Formula One will go and take the right way for the future and for sure, we feel this responsibility. We don't want to say 'listen, we don't care about the others' because that's not really the case. So, we take that on board and I'm sure that time will tell if we're doing a good job or not.

RB: Well, I think the responsibilities of that group are the general interests of Formula One. I think it's vital that that group acts and takes decisions which are in the interests of everybody in Formula One. The structure of the group is something

that I think was proposed by the FIA and the commercial rights holder and everyone in Formula One signed up to it. I think it's just important that group does take the proper view on all the interests in Formula One.

MK: Well, we in the front row, while asked about how we feel about it and clearly Sauber is not so comfortable with it because we are not on it. We have nothing, as such, against a group that looks at certain matters and can bring up ideas and also maybe say that this is the right way to go ahead but what matters is that all interests should be represented. Teams like Force India or Sauber are part of the competition and we cannot be happy by being excluded by this group because we do feel that we have to ensure that that's where the danger lies that there's a proper representation of interests in there.

EB: We are not a permanent part of this group but we are lucky enough to be part of this group now so sitting between these two chairs, I think there are some positive and some negative points. I can understand being there and not participating. I understand the frustration of the teams not being there. It's true that it was a wish from the FIA and FOM to have another group, let's say, before the F1 Commission to try to maybe go for decisions. For sure the proposal is to bring it to F1 and make it better and then bring these suggestions to the F1 Commission where they can be debated. We will see in the future if it works, as Christian said.

VM: When this was first mooted, I definitely did question whether the intention was to restrict decision-making to the six teams, to the exclusion of the smaller teams but when I was assured that that was not going to be the case, that the strategy group was to advise on future strategy concerning Formula One, to be then debated or voted upon at the Formula One Commission where all teams are represented, that obviously was a source of comfort. I've spoken individually to many team principals who are part of the big six as I call them, and all of them have assured me, as indeed Stefano did now, that they will look after the interests of all, which includes the smaller teams and on the basis of that assurance, I actually voted to approve this new structure at the World Motor Sport Council, so so long as things work out the way they are intended to, only time will tell.

Q: (Rachit Thukral – RachF1) Question to Eric Boullier: a lot of people have been discussing about the second seat at Lotus next season. Why is your test driver, Davide Valsecchi, not on that list of drivers?

EB: It's not true actually, Davide is on the list but to bring to the grid next year a driver with no experience is a huge step for them - I've done it twice with them, first with Petrov and then with a semi-rookie Grosjean and I think I've had enough to be honest with you. Davide is on the list because we consider him as a good driver, as a GP2 champion but it's true that if you favour a scenario for next year it will be a driver with experience. If we cannot find any driver with experience, fitting the strategy of the team, obviously we will go for a rookie driver and then Davide is obviously on the top of the list. It looks harsh, I'm sorry but it's true.

Q: How near are you to filling that second seat now, Eric?

EB: Hopefully a few days.

Q: (Amanpreet Singh- PTI) Dr Mallya, one of your drivers said that we have probably sacrificed fifth position this season, to be at least fifth next year. How do you see this season for your team considering that you may lose even the sixth spot now?

VM: Well, I wouldn't be as pessimistic as you sound. Yes, there was a time earlier this season when we were in fifth position ahead of McLaren. If we perform well over the next four races there's no reason why we can't regain fifth but as I said

earlier, the lady on my left (MK) has certainly given us a wake-up call and so we will do everything we can to stay in sixth but having said that, yes, we've dedicated our resources to the development of the 2014 car.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Monisha, at one of the recent press conferences, maybe Singapore, you spoke about the way in which Formula One teams have often shot themselves in the foot when it comes to looking after their own self interests rather than the collective interest. Given that history often tends to repeat itself, how much faith do you have in the larger teams looking after the smaller teams' interests in the strategy commission?

MK: Well, like Vijay actually said earlier, you have to have faith in the teams you've known for a long while and you work together with and I think it's no secret to anyone in Formula One that we've had a very successful partnership for many years with Ferrari and they have said a lot of things where maybe we as a small team in the partnership benefited more than others in partnership. As an example, if you look at KERS, what we had decided Ferrari exactly said with us as towards the customer which we were. So I think you have to come in here with a certain amount of trust but at the end of the day we are competitive, but we are all in this together so that's the perspective we take, that there will always be things where bigger teams have a different view to smaller ones but I'm confident that eventually decisions will be taken which have to be good for the sport because we are part of the sport, and in my view, Formula One needs more constructors than just the big teams.

Q: (Shridhar Potdar – Sakal Media) One for everyone; you know previously there was a third title – apart from drivers and constructors - counting for the World Championship. Nowadays the tyre championship has been stopped and everybody knows the problems that Pirelli have created this season. Michelin has showed willingness to come back and make F1 tyres. Do you think that a three way title race would make F1 more interesting and do you support the need for a tyre constructors title?

RB: They were pretty exciting times but hugely expensive in terms of track development. I remember at the time when I was at Ferrari we had a car testing almost continuously doing tyre work for the manufacturer and in our case, we had Bridgestone fairly well devoted to our programme. It can be exciting but it's a huge investment for a tyre company, huge investment for the teams. I don't think the climate at the moment is right for there to be a tyre war and that's what's evolved in a lot of top class formulae. The cost of a tyre war is not sustainable. It's happened in MotoGP, it's happened in Formula One and however exciting it is, it's very very costly in what are quite tough times at the moment.

CH: You couldn't probably have more conflicting tyres than have come to this race but I think, as Ross says, to reintroduce a tyre war would not only be massively expensive you would also end up with two classes of racing because there are then the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and what we have at the moment with a sole tyre supplier is that everybody has the same tyre, everybody has the same compound, everybody has the same opportunity. The testing obviously is heavily restricted now as well. So as an independent team, it offers a far more level playing field and obviously the challenges that all of the teams face now are the intricacies of the Pirelli tyres and how they perform from circuit to circuit and compound to compound, which is a different engineering challenge in itself and certainly will create some interesting strategies no doubt this weekend.

Q: (Ajit Devadason - Syfi.com) To all team principals: a few engine manufacturers have previewed the engines of 2014 on the net and social media and it hasn't been accepted well by most Formula One fans in discussion forums. Do you agree or disagree that engine sound is a strong USP of Formula One, especially when you're going into new markets?

SD: Well, for sure, the element of the engine sound is very important, no doubt about it, but on the other side we need to say that in the last couple of years we've moved from V12 that was a fantastic engine for Ferrari with fantastic high revs, high frequency, to V10, then to V8. Now we're going to be V6 with turbo and then it's just a matter of fine tuning the noise – I mean the sound, apologies for the wrong word – and then of course that is vital for the show, above all for the people who are coming to the track, because unfortunately you don't feel it too much on television.

Q: How do the new V6s sound to you, Eric?

EB: Different, it's true. I remember the V12 as well, the sound of music, but it's part of the necessity to move ahead and bring new technology and to follow the technology that you use in your car every day, so I think it's still going to be a pretty exciting sport.

Q: Have you had a listen to the new V6s yet, Monisha?

MK: I did actually, a while ago, when I visited our engine supplier so considering what Stefano said I have full trust that Ferrari will also sort out that issue.

VM: All I can say is that I have participated in many meetings where Bernie (Ecclestone) has absolutely insisted that there can be no compromise on noise, so I guess there will be no compromise on noise – excuse me Stefano, music, not noise.

Q: To use a Spinal Tap reference, Ross, can we turn the noise up to eleven?

RB: Yes. I think we actually need to see the cars on the circuit because I don't think a recording of a dyno cycle is actually that representative. If you listen to a V8 on the dyno it sounds nothing like it does in the car. I think we should all wait and see. It is what we have and we have to get behind it and it's an exciting new period with these power trains. I think we needed to make a transition at some stage, we're making it now, there's no going back and I think it will be exciting for the fans but we'll see how it sounds when we get out on the circuit. I remember the early turbo days and they seemed pretty exciting to me and we've had a whole range of different engines since then. I don't think – to be honest - that they're been more or less exciting than each other. Just different.

CH: Well, I've heard it on the internet. That's as much as I've heard. Noise of a Formula One car is part of the DNA of Formula One. When people come to a Grand Prix for the first time, the thing that really stands out more than anything is the noise. Noise translates into speed, into excitement and so on, and I think it's absolutely crucial that we don't lose that element. We have to reserve judgement until we hear the cars next year; hopefully, whilst it will be a different noise, it will be an exciting noise that conveys what the sport is all about. Only time will tell.

Q: (Will Buxton – NBC Sports) One to you all if I may. To pick up on Dieter's point earlier about the Strategy Group, the elephant in the room right now is that under cost saving initiatives, customer cars appear to be something that may be considered moving into the future. To the three gentlemen in the back, are customer cars something that you would like to push for moving into the future? And to the three guests on the front of the panel, are customer cars something ever something you would consider taking on? And furthermore to the point Vijay made about trust in the teams that are on the panel, can you ever truly trust the teams on the panel give that by your very nature you are competing entities?

SD: I just can say that we had the first meeting of the Strategy Group on Monday and of course this status was on the table and we will discuss it at the appropriate level. No decision or action has been taken. It is a topic related to the cost of Formula One, so I cannot add more than that at the moment.

CH: It's an interesting debate, really, because if you look at costs and the cost drivers in Formula One, the necessity to have four or five hundred people in order to even compete is, in all reality, too high. Now if you're just looking at it from a pure cost point of view, the most logical way to take out a huge amount of cost would be to sell a car or a year-old car in its entirety. Now whether that goes against the grain of what a constructor should be and is in current Formula One is a separate debate. But if you are absolutely transfixed on saving costs, it is, without a shadow of a doubt the most effective way to reduce costs. Whether it's the right thing to do is obviously another questions. Inevitably there is going to be a lot of debate about it and it's something that, as a sport, we need to be open-minded to.

RB: I don't think we, as a team, are particularly enamoured with the idea of customer cars. I think we are more keen on working towards reducing the base cost of the cars for all teams. And perhaps finding ways of sharing parts that are non-performance differentiators. I know the one that gets classically mentioned is the pedal system and a lot of the parts of the car that are not performance differentiators between the competitors but everybody makes their own pedals and makes their own steering racks, because we have to. I think there is some progress that can be made in those areas without damaging the DNA of the sport at all. We should work on that. I think one point I would make and I think Vijay made it, is the security of the F1 Commission, because whatever the Strategy Group decides, if the F1 Commission rejects it, then it doesn't go any further, it has to go back into the Strategy Group to try to improve the proposal. In theory, there is no way that an unpopular or unsupported idea from the Strategy Group could make it into the regulations unless the F1 Commission was happy with it.

Vijay, you've already touched on having full faith in the Strategy Working Group, do you have trust over the issue of customer cars as well?

VM: As far as Sahara Force India is concerned we are completely opposed to the even the concept of customers cars. Let's just go back to the days when FOTA functioned as a comprehensive, cohesive unit. One of the key elements of the FOTA discussions was how to reduce the costs in Formula One for everybody. But then some of the big teams refused to reduce their costs, and as a result of which the whole resource restriction element went out of the window. Now to try to address lowering of costs through a radical customer car concept is ridiculous in my view. What happens to the smaller teams that have factories, that employ hundreds of people and who are effectively running companies. You can't just discard everything and just buy a one-year old car from an established team and go motor racing. I think that affects the total DNA of Formula One from the day it was started.

MK: I absolutely agree with that. Sauber's been in motorsport now for more than 40 years and our core business is making race cars in different series, so we are absolutely against this concept of a customer car because we're ruining our own business here. I think there are other ways to reduce costs, one way maybe is setting certain financial limits, the other one is also to look at the regulations. An effective way could be through this group and then the commission that you have stability and therefore 'seeability' and that you no longer have to do investment in one season where you exactly know that the next season that this device or whatever is going to be forbidden again. So there are many ways to get hold of the costs and reduce them, which is very important for Formula One. But when you

introduce these kind of measures you're changing so much. This will not lead to any cost reduction because you might have four teams in there that are capable of putting in that much money, but at some point in time – they are all in their to win – when they don't do that and maybe just end up with a few points they leave the sport as well. So it's a very dangerous route to go down.

Final word to Eric.

EB: I think that customer cars are against the DNA of Formula One personally. But I think obviously there is a cost restriction that needs to be in place in Formula One. We all agree with this. Actually even the teams on the back row agree there us some cost saving to be done. It's maybe as Vijay said a wake-up call. If we just think about the concept of customer cars we maybe will sit down all together and agree on a cost saving, which is obviously a budget cap or something else, which is based on the RRA or the old RRA, because at the end we know you cannot cut solely the costs just by switching off the wind tunnel or something else in the company. We need to make it in a way where there is no intrusive manner into any team developments, which obviously will suit some of us here. Also another way is to leave people the choice what they want to do to save costs but we have to have some rules in place. At the end if we don't do this it's going to be more and more difficult obviously to survive. So if you want to avoid the customer car... we can maybe run three cars in the near future to keep a decent grid but still it's more money and it's against cost saving, so we need to think and think cleverly about it.

Ends