



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

## Press Information

### 2014 Bahrain Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript 03.04.2013

**DRIVERS – Jules BIANCHI (Marussia), Jean-Eric VERGNE (Toro Rosso), Marcus ERICSSON (Caterham), Nico HULKENBERG (Force India), Jenson BUTTON (McLaren), Romain GROSJEAN (Lotus)**

#### **PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Jenson, if we could start with you. Obviously you'll reach 250 grand prix this weekend – congratulations on that. Later this year I guess you'll become the third most experienced grand prix driver of all time. Maybe your thoughts on that what lessons you've learned along the way.**

**Jenson BUTTON:** I've learned a lot along the way, as you can imagine, racing for 14 years in Formula One. The thing that surprises me is how quickly it goes by. Fifty races ago I was in Hungary, celebrating my 200<sup>th</sup> grand prix, which I won by the way! So, it's amazing how time flies. You really do have to enjoy every moment of it as much as you can. For me, being 14 years in the sport, I still feel like I have more to learn. I'm definitely not the perfect driver yet, and I never will be, but there is always still more to learn. That's something, for me, that's exciting about the sport. New regulations obviously are changing the sport quite a lot, especially with these new regulations, and again, you always have more to learn. For me that's what keeps the sport exciting and that's what has kept me on my toes for the last 14 years and hopefully for many more.

**Judging from the first two races and also from some of the messages from the team, it seems that McLaren is a bit better perhaps in the cooler conditions than it was in the heat of Malaysia. What are you expecting this weekend – we're in a warm place but it's a night race?**

**JB:** Well, we have a good engine, which helps us here. There isn't as much high speed as Malaysia and Malaysia was also hot. So hot and high-speed corners are tricky for us. It's an area we know we've got to work on, high-speed downforce. So, here it should be quite a bit better. Fuel consumption is pretty tricky here though, I think for everyone, some more than others for some reason. There's a lot of work needed before the race to get the right balance for a night race – our first night race here, which should be pretty interesting.

**Coming to you Marcus. Obviously your first Formula One finish, in Malaysia – congratulations on 14<sup>th</sup> place? Can you describe your feelings and the progress at Caterham?**

**Marcus ERICSSON:** Yeah, it was a good feeling to finish my first F1 race. I think we have done good progress. It's been a tough, a difficult year so far, with the problems we had in pre-season and then Australia was obviously a very difficult weekend for the whole team. But we've been working really hard and making progress all the time, which is the key for us. To have both cars finishing in Malaysia in our home race was a great effort from everyone. Hopefully now in Bahrain we can continue to work forward and first of all a

trouble-free Friday, so we can start setting up the car and then see what we can get from the set-up.

**I wonder if being a rookie in a year with such new and complex machinery proved harder or easier than you expected?**

**ME:** It's been quite hard because especially in pre-season there were quite a lot of issues. So it was difficult to get ready for it before you arrive in Australia, with very limited running. So I wouldn't say it's easier but it's been alright.

**Jules, coming to you, obviously a very frustrating first couple of grands prix for you in Australia and Malaysia, with very few race laps. But the car seems to have run OK the rest of the time. I wonder what your feelings are at this point?**

**Jules BIANCHI:** Yeah, obviously the feeling is not the best. We are trying very hard to improve everything. For sure the car is running well at the moment. We had a small issue in Australia before the start but now it's fine all that. Another issue on the first lap in Malaysia but actually we don't have big problems on the car, so this is the positive thing and now we have to have everything going well for the next races.

**As Jenson was saying it's the first time we have a night race here in Bahrain. I wonder what your thoughts are on that and how it will add to the challenge of racing here?**

**JB:** Well, obviously the lights will be good, as it's always good on night races in Formula One, so I don't expect that to be a big challenge. But it will be good to have a night race in Bahrain. I think it will be a nice one for us.

**Nico, obviously the last two grand prix, two fantastic battles with Fernando Alonso and Ferrari. Give us some insight into those two battles and what it's been like from your cockpit.**

**Nico HULKENBERG:** Well, I think Australia was not quite a battle. I was just driving in front of him and he overtook me by strategy. And in Malaysia there was not much I could offer in the end. I was struggling on my tyres; he was on a fresh set of softs. Still I was trying to make him work a little bit for the move. But it was always clear that he, coming two seconds a lap at me, that I don't have to offer so much. But I think a really positive start to the season for us at Force India. Eighteen points for me already, which is good. I feel we have a good foundation but we need to keep pushing and I need to keep the momentum up because it's a good opportunity to collect good points this early in the season.

**This race last year was obviously one of the strongest for Force India last season. Is there much optimism within the team going into this weekend's race?**

**NH:** Absolutely. The whole team is very positive, everybody is working in the right direction. We had two strong races, we're basically trying to keep the races and keep plugging away at good results. I think here this weekend here is a little trickier. In Malaysia, we had surprisingly good performance on Sunday maybe stronger than we expected. We were quite clear on McLaren and Williams, which was a little bit of a surprise, but I think here things might be a bit more tricky and a bit more tight.

**Q: Jean-Eric, double points finish for Toro Rosso in Australia, Daniil Kvyat in the points in Malaysia; is it fair to say Toro Rosso has started this season on the front foot, feeling competitive?**

**Jean-Eric VERGNE:** Yeah, I think Toro Rosso has done a massively good job during the winter and even before that, produced a good car and I believe there is still a lot more to come from this team. Many things have changed in a good way and you can definitely feel it inside the team and I'm really happy, they've showed some really good results. I think if I didn't have a problem, I think we could have finished again in the points, a double points

finish in Malaysia as well, and that's what we're going to try and do here in Bahrain. But overall, I think it's a good start but the good thing is that I'm sure there is a lot more to come.

**Q: Speaking of changes, can you talk a little about the changes that you've made, in that some of the people you're working with, the way you're going racing this year?**

**JEV:** I've changed many things, I would say. I will not go into much detail but I needed to change my approach a little bit and I think the changes that I've made have been in the right direction. I feel better as a human being and as a racing driver as well, and enjoying more of what I do; I can see that already inside the team, outside the track and on the track. As for the team, I think I still have a lot more to give, so it's all positive so far.

**Q: Romain, obviously 11<sup>th</sup> in Malaysia, close to the points but not quite there. It's been a real up and down couple of Grands Prix for you. I wonder if you could describe your emotions and how they've evolved over the last couple of races.**

**Romain GROSJEAN:** Yeah, I won't say exactly everything I could say inside my helmet sometimes. I think it was good for all the guys that we could finish the Malaysian Grand Prix. Of course it was not the way you would like to see when you start a Grand Prix but at the moment that's where we are plus we were not that far from the points. I think without a small issue at the end of the race, we could probably have got closer and maybe fight for points but it was good and as I said, the guys had three nights in Melbourne when they didn't sleep, all that for not a big reward. And then we went to Malaysia and again, they worked very hard and we all know it's humid and hot there so conditions were tough but we managed to get to the end of the race. I think we learned more about our car and we wish from now on that we get troublefree weekends as was the case on Saturday and Sunday and then from there we can learn, improve and get closer to where we would like to be.

**Q: Do you feel that the team is on a path back to where it was; how long is it going to take?**

**RG:** Yeah, I don't know, to be honest. I know that we still have in our genes the winning spirit and we can still fight back. Of course, when you start the season with everything in the right direction it's easier to move forward but at the moment we've had some issues, we've solved most of them, hopefully no more coming, then we can go from there. Of course, Renault is well aware that the power unit needs to improve a little bit compared to certain other manufacturers, but I think it's going to be good and we can work on our car.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Vincent Marre – Sports Zeitung) Jenson, in all the seasons that you've been racing now, which car has been the most memorable for you? Not the year or the season but the specific car. There must be one.**

**JB:** There have been quite a few, for different reasons. 2009 obviously was good, it was the year I won the World Championship so an enjoyable car to drive. I liked the big front tyres that we use to have as well. 2011 was good fun. It was quite difficult because we had the blown diffuser that everyone had but it was quite unusual to drive, but when you got used to it, there was so much downforce, it was pretty awesome. But then if you look back, 2004 was also a great year: V10 engines, 900 horsepower, revving to 20,000rpm. Obviously there was a tyre war then as well. Most of the lap times that were achieved then, the fastest laps, have not been beaten in ten years. That was a pretty special car to drive as well. All very different eras in the sport, if you like.. It's great to have been around through the V10, V8 and now the V6 periods. I think it's been some exciting times that I've had in my career.

**Q: (Luis Fernando Ramos – Racing Magazine) To all drivers: in less than one month, motor sport will pay tribute to Ayrton Senna on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his passing. I would like you to recall what impact that Sunday at Imola had on your lives and the ones who were too young to remember, maybe how Ayrton Senna relates to you as a driver?**

**NH:** What that Sunday had, the impact of that Sunday? Not many memories, it was just my first contacts with motor racing and therefore I can't really remember so much of it but obviously having heard a lot of stories and have seen a documentary, obviously he was a very passionate guy about the sport, about racing and was always pushing the limit very hard.

**JB:** Obviously I was four years old when this happened, so I don't remember many things but let's say I remember just the fact that all the people were loving him so this is what I remember the most.

**JEV:** Same as Jules. I was four years old so I have absolutely no memory of this but obviously it took me a few years to realise who he was and what he has done for the sport. I think everybody has a massive respect for this guy. Obviously I love all the sportsmen that changed the philosophy of world sport, like Michael Jordan in basketball; I believe he is part of the really big sportsmen of any kind of sport, Ayrton Senna, and I think that's why everybody loved him.

**ME:** Yes, the same, I was four years old so I don't remember anything but obviously he was a great driver and a great person from the look of it. When you watch the documentaries and stuff like that, you can see how great he was both on and off the track.

**RG:** Yeah, I think it was the first or second year that I was starting to watch Formula One and of course it was Prost and Senna when I started watching in '94. I remembered that Sunday, I was watching the race with my Dad and I didn't understand what exactly was going on and why the race was stopped and it was so long. And then, well, I found out a little bit later and of course, Ayrton has been part of the sport... Again, I started watching Formula One when he was fighting with Alain, I think it was a great era and they were fantastic drivers.

**JB:** I wasn't four years old, I was fourteen years old, still very young obviously but I was racing in Italy that weekend, karting, I had just started racing there so it was a massive shock. Basically the kart meeting was over as soon as we heard the news from Imola. A horrific day for everyone but as the guys said, sometimes it takes something like that – a terrible tragedy – to really change the sport for the better and in terms of safety for us guys, it's had a very big impact.

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