



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

**2016 Malaysian Grand Prix
Friday Press Conference Transcript**

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TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Franz TOST (Toro Rosso), Robert FERNLEY (Force India), David RYAN (Manor), Eric BOULLIER (McLaren)

PRESS CONFERENCE

A question to all of you, we asked the other team principals the same question in Singapore, your thoughts on the arrival of Liberty Media in Formula One, what it means for the sport, and in particular what it means for the smaller and medium-sized teams?

Robert FERNLEY: I met Chase Carey for the first time, I found him extremely approachable and willing to listen, but I think it's far too early to make any predictions of where things are going to go or even opinions on that. I think they need time to be able to look at where they are going and what plans they have for Formula One and then once they make their announcements on the direction they want to go I think then maybe we can make some comments but it's too early to judge at this point.

David?

David RYAN: Well, I've never met the guy, so I can't really comment from that point of view. I know what I've read, which is the same as the rest of you. Really, it's a case of waiting. I'm sure that he didn't buy into it not to make any changes and I wait to see what happens and see how it all pans out, but I'm sure it's all good news.

And Franz, your thoughts, particularly with reference to the medium-sized and smaller teams?

Franz TOST: First of all, congratulations to Liberty Media for this fantastic deal, because Formula One in the meantime is a very well known trademark all over the world, thanks to Bernie Ecclestone and Max Mosley – they have done a fantastic job over the last 40 years. I assume that Liberty Media, as they belong to a very financially strong group, have a quite clear programme and plan of what they want to do with Formula One. Personally, I hope that Formula One will become much more interesting in America, that we will hopefully have three races over there – one on the east coast, one in Austin and one on the west coast – and I expect that especially on the media side they will work on our weak platform, the

digital media and social media, and then for the smaller teams, from 2021 onwards, the money is being distributed in a much fairer way and equal to the teams and last but not least, together with the FIA, they will find a way to reduce costs in Formula One.

OK. Eric, obviously McLaren is not a smaller team, but your thoughts on the above?

Eric BOULLIER: Well, at McLaren we are very positive about the arrival of Liberty. They are used managing big business, connecting fans to media, so we believe it's good for Formula One. At the same time, I think they will take their time to understand the business, where they want to bring the business, the show, the entertainment, to which level. We will see what they suggest and plan.

OK. Moving on Eric, tell us about the strategy around the updated Honda power unit this weekend and looking forward to next weekend in Suzuka. It seems to perform quite well today in the back of Fernando Alonso's car, what's decision on Jenson Button and where is this power unit improved?

EB: It's mainly reliability-driven, so it's a reinforced block and a few things on the engine. There is a possibility to exploit the PU a little bit better, but it's not definitely right... not just pure power on top. So it's mainly reliability-driven. I think we are happy with today, we did a lot of miles with no issue at all, so it's just a green light for the future, for the end of the season. And as far as Jenson is concerned, when the mileage of his PUs reach the limit we will swap the engine.

That won't be this weekend.

EB: No, not this weekend.

Thank you. Robert coming to you, Williams' Rob Smedley recently said that his team should not get too hung up on its battle with Force India for fourth in the Constructors' Championship, but what's your team's stance? Are you diverting resource to continue to develop this car to make sure you get that P4 finish?

RF: No, not at all. Our focus in terms of the design side is on the '17 car and has been for some while. But I think there is more to come out of the '16 package from a track engineering point of view and we continue to get performance out of it every week and as long as that happens we can hopefully take the battle to Williams all the way.

Thank you. Coming to you Dave, Esteban Ocon was here yesterday, saying in the Drivers' Press Conference that it's been quite tough to come into Formula One halfway through the season. So how do you, as the boss, assess his performance relative Wehrlein's, given that Haryanto outqualified Wehrlein several times?

DR: I think Esteban is quite right. To arrive part way through the season into a team that has been developing along with Pascal is a big ask. We haven't helped the situation because he hasn't had the best of reliability up until now. But the kid's fantastic. He's got a fantastic attitude, he's got huge potential and together with him and Pascal it's a great driving line-up.

Q: Franz, we heard again here yesterday in the drivers' conference Dany Kvyat saying he's rediscovered his love for Formula One after the performance, the drive in Singapore last time out. How good a performance do you feel it was and is there still time for him to retain his seat for next year?

Franz TOST: He showed in Singapore a very good performance and it's good to hear that he still loves Formula One, especially if he is driving for Toro Rosso. Daniil Kvyat is a high-skill driver, you know this because there's a reason behind that he won the GP3 European Championship, and the way how he won it. He lost it a little bit in the last months but fortunately he is coming back. I hope that he will also do for the rest of the season good races that he shows his talent and his potential – and then we will see what happens in the future.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Kate Walker – motorsport.com) I've got a question for all of you please. One of the things that we have heard about the change in ownership is the potential introduction of a franchise system. I was wondering both what your individual opinions were and, if they differ from your owner or boards opinion, what the official stance was on the potential of a franchise operation?

Robert?

RF: I think... I mean the devil is always in the detail Kate, and I think we have to wait again and see what they're proposing in terms of how the franchise is going to work up or whether it's either going to be a full franchise program. But I think something that is giving Formula One stability, more importantly I think something that is anchoring the teams into Formula One, because it takes four or five years to build a team and whilst owners do come and go, the teams tend to be the same teams being transferred. I think it would be very, very good for the teams to have that stability and that security going forward. If the owner comes in and they perform well, then hopefully he or she can make a profit. If they don't, then they take a small loss. It's part of the trading. But I think it is a different view for Formula One and one that we should look at very positively.

David?

DR: Actually I think Bob put it very well and I support that view. I've heard lots of different approaches they're going to take but until we get something firmly on the table, I can't really comment. Bob's view is correct.

Franz?

FT: I think it's quite early days to discuss this and to think about this. We will see then, it's a decision of Red Bull whether they buy shares on it or not and for the rest we will see.

And Eric.

EB: It's difficult to have a strong opinion at this stage, y'know? Just based on the word 'franchise'. We need to see the details of what they want to achieve. We don't have yet the full picture, so I can't have a strong opinion on this obviously. I think yes, what Bob said is true. If everything is happier in a better world everybody will be happy. Today I don't know what's going on, what's going to happen yet.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Bob, it's a year virtually to the day since you and Sauber registered a complaint with the EU Commission in Brussels. First of all I'd like to know some progress to date in the past year but before we do that, I'm now advised from Brussels that you and Sauber are possibly looking at filing some complaint in the US as

well, an anti-trust complaint. If you could comment on that as well please and give us some idea of the progress. And then the other three, have you received requests for information from the commissioner in connection with this particular case.

RF: Yes, let's... probably start from the beginning I think Dieter is the easiest one. Yes, we have put the complaint, that's common knowledge, I think about a year ago, it has gone through due process and I can confirm it has gone to next level in terms of a request for further information from the EU. Who those have been sent to, I don't know. From our point of view, because we're in legal process with them, we can't say anything about what we're doing – but I can confirm it is at that stage from an EU point of view. With regard to your question on the US legal matters, I think, you know, it's not appropriate for us to discuss something where we're getting legal advice. It's probably a bit speculative – but for sure everything is still on the table from our side. We are very, very committed to challenging what we believe is a very anti-competitive system with these bi-lateral agreements. Whatever it takes to deliver that, we will certainly look at.

And the second part of the question, to the other three, have you been requested any information from the EU? Eric?

EB: No.

Franz?

FT: No

David?

DR: Not that I'm aware of.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and Speedsport) Gentlemen, the provisional calendar for next year is another 21 races. The new owners of Formula One are on record saying they want to add more races. At what point do you have to start rotating crew and would you have to add staff or is there enough back at home to do that?

EB: I think we are at the limit already so if there would be more races, we would have to have a rotating system with staff people. And no, we don't have reserve people back in the factory so that means we would have to hire some people.

FT: That's the same. I think that 20/21 races is quite a good number and if additional races come onto the calendar we also would have to think of a rotating system to bring in more people, because otherwise it's difficult to handle everything but if we have more races, we also have more income and therefore it shouldn't be a problem. In the end, there must be a profit for the teams otherwise it doesn't make sense.

DR: I go back to the days when we had 14 races and that was too many so... Twenty-one feels like it's too many but if they're talking 25 races... Dan, I guess it depends what the package is. Maybe they are two-day events, maybe it's a different format. Again, until we know what they really are asking for or what they're thinking of, it may be that it works or not. We just have to wait and see.

RF: Same as Eric. We would need to increase the personnel significantly to be able to bring in reserves.

Q: (Chris Lyons – AP) Bob, in Singapore Sergio said that he felt sure that his contract would be organised by the time we got to Malaysia. Now he's saying if it doesn't happen by

Japan, he's going to look elsewhere. Can you give us some insight into what the hold-up is? Is it the commercial aspect, sponsorship aspect of the contract or is there something else?

RF: No, there's nothing else. The driver contracts have been completed for quite some time, as you know. Vijay announced that some time ago and it's literally dotting the i's and crossing the t's on the commercial side and if it takes a week, that's wonderful, if it takes a couple of weeks, so be it. It'll happen, we're very confident that Checo will be with us next year. I don't think we ever deviated from that.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Eric, there's a report in Autosport this week that Honda are expanding their facilities in the UK in preparation or possible preparation for a second team. The way that I understand it McLaren needs to approve this. Is it something that McLaren's in favour of? Would McLaren like to see a second team and what sort of level of development are we at given that you're partners?

EB: Well, we had a position in the past, obviously, where we both agree with Honda that it would be better to focus on us, on one team. As you know, the regulations have changed as well. In the future there will be some obligation for an engine manufacturer, and I think that at some stage it's going to be interesting for maybe Honda and the McLaren-Honda package as well to have another team but we don't know when, so we see this as them just making themselves ready with the possibility in the future that it can happen but so far we are still one team and focused on McLaren.

Q: (Chris Lyons – AP) Just to follow up to that question to the other three: it's clearly too late for 2017 but would you be interested in a Honda supply and how soon could that happen?

FT: We have a Renault contract.

DR: I think we've got the best engine on the grid in our car at the moment so we're fairly OK with that.

RF: We're also committed through to 2020 with our engine supplier and have a very strong relationship with Mercedes.

Ends