



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

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Friday Press Conference Transcript**

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PRESS CONFERENCE

Bob, let's start with you: How have you been getting on rebuilding the staff at Enstone, where do you still lack and what will the effect of all this be on the 2017 car?

Bob BELL: Well, I'm only a small piece of the team that is doing the rebuilding, as you call it, but it's certainly a big challenge. I don't think perhaps from the outside people realise how run down the Enstone squad had become in the last couple of years, so there's a lot to do. As well as the process of rebuilding the team of course we had to build a car for this year and start work on an even better one for next year, which wouldn't be terribly hard. It's been a challenge, it continues to be so, but there's a very strong spirit in Enstone as anybody who knows the place will testify to and we're certainly up to the challenge.

The updates in Malaysia made the car a lot better, with Kevin 14th on the grid and Jolyon taking his first championship point, yet some are saying that Renault has not really been making progress this year. What's happening from your perspective and what's the short-term plan if you like, between here and Abu Dhabi, based on what you've learned in the past week or two?

BB: I think it's probably fair to say that in the last few races our progress forward other than what the Vireo guys have been able to do with the power unit, on the chassis side it's been less to do with new bits and more to do with understanding how to get more out of what we've already got and we'll continue that process until the end of the season. I'm sure like most teams we're pretty much totally dedicated now in terms of development capacity to looking ahead to 2017.

OK, thanks very much for that. Coming to Luigi Fraboni, head of power unit operations at Ferrari. Next season will be a token free season, what will that mean in practical terms as far as the preparation pre-season and the competition we're going to see during the year?

Luigi FRABONI: You know, as Ferrari, we are in favour of not having the tokens, this for us is a good thing. Of course next year you will have still the four power units so we need to follow the rule, but not have the tokens will give you more flexibility on making you plan and also on changes during the season. On our side, as you know, we already used the tokens this year so this means that we had quite a strong evolution during the season and so not having this this limit for next season is good and at the moment the development of the power unit for 2017 is proceeding quite well.

Now, earlier in the season we had a discussion in one of these sessions about starting negotiations about the post 2020 engine formula. What's your opinion? Do you see them being hybrid turbos, similar capacity, but what other directions would you like to see?

LF: Honestly, at the moment I'm more focused on 2017, so I honestly don't have any strong opinion on 2020. I would say that the rules for me are very challenging and I really like it.

Would you like to start the discussions soon though about it?

LG: My chairman for sure will start?

OK, perfect. Hasegawa-san, Honda has made several updates to its power units in 2016, was the result as expected and will you be introducing any further updates before the end of the year?

Yusuke HASEGAWA: Of course we have to shift our development for next year already, so I don't think we can have some update for the rest of the event. But, last update, which we introduced in Malaysia, and Spa was a big update... I think we made a decent level of step up with this. We are not satisfied but we can feel a little bit happier.

Part of the new FIA agreement regards manufacturers supplying more than one team – Eric Boullier was telling us in this conference in Malaysia it would be a good thing – but the Mercedes teams seem to be locked in to 2020, Renault has commitments with its teams, so are you feeling the need to press teams who are not yet committed?

YH: Not yet committed, but we understand the situation, so we are preparing the organisation and we are preparing resource for that.

To supply a second team?

YH: Yes, that's right.

Komatsu-san, we've heard Romain Grosjean on the radio quite a bit in recent races getting quite annoyed with various aspects of the car. What's the problem been and how are you addressing it?

Ayao KOMATSU: Yeah, I think one of the problems is with consistency. We have very small amount of resource and a limited number of people. It's not just getting one specification of the car – each component has to be put together really well and we have to monitor the quality and that area I think we really need to improve. Sometimes you're putting on the same parts but the performance is not exactly the same. Sometimes our diagnostics are not good enough to understand what Romain is feeling straight away, so we really need to improve in every single area but we're really working on that. With Romain, on the radio he's quite an emotional guy but once he comes up in a debrief he's very, very good. He's got a really sense, he really helps us in understanding the car and where we need to go.

It may just be an impression from the outside but your fortunes this season seem to have risen and fallen in parallel with Ferrari's. Is that coincidence or is there more to it and what does that say about 2017?

AK: For us really, trying to understand the fundamental things about the car, aerodynamics, tyres, that's what we are focusing on, but again with our team being new, slightly inexperienced and still with all the analysis processes, data processes in their infancy we just need to start improving in those areas. We really got to put our systems and process in place so we don't have the same problems next year, so we can hit the ground running from February.

Paddy, coming to you, can you give us a bit more detail on what failed on Hamilton's engine in Malaysia? Was it related to having to push so hard in the middle of the race, as Red Bull would have us believe, and what have you done to mitigate against a repeat?

Paddy LOWE: So, Lewis had a failure one of his big end bearings, at a very low mileage actually, a little over 600km, because he had three new engines from Belgium, when he took all the penalties. This was the second of those, first race Malaysia, to be used properly. It was a very young failure for that bearing and not at all typical of the model. And we were operating it within completely normal bounds. There were no parameters out of their normal range. No, he wasn't pushing particularly hard, he was running in a normal race state at that part of the race, so totally unexpected for that reason. We are trying to analyse why the bearing failed. We don't understand it precisely. It's very difficult on these occasions, you don't often see it – the box of bits you get back from an engine blow-up. Very difficult to analyse that forensically and arrive at a root cause. But we've taken a number of precautionary changes across all eight power units that are on the grid to try to reduce the stress on that bearing.

Now Nico Rosberg looks a different driver this year, I don't know if you feel the same way. What changes do you see in his approach and his mentality and likewise how do you see the evolution of Hamilton?

PL: I think Nico is an incredibly strong driver and I think we have seen over the last three years that he can qualify extremely well. I think, for me, the step that he has made this year is that he has improved his race craft considerably. He's proving himself much better able to fight for the positions. He's come across a few points along the way, with a few incidents that didn't quite come off how he wanted, but overall that's where he has made the step.

And Lewis?

PL: Lewis, I think he gets better every year. Very, very difficult guy to beat for Nico, so in one way that's unfortunate for Nico to have such a strong team-mate but the two together are an incredible force for the team – they push each other. That's what is fantastic. When you have two very strong team-mates is that they actually elevate the total performance of the team, and we see that. We have races such as Monza where Lewis was incredibly strong and then Singapore where Nico was incredibly strong and that's what you need, for each driver to push each other to new limits.

Pat, Williams are locked in this battle with Force India, just three points in it, with five races to go. At the moment, though, they are consistently outscoring you – Monza was the only time since June that you've outpointed them in a grand prix. What can you point to

that gives you confidence you can end this season ahead of them and launch yourselves into 2017 on the front foot?

Pat SYMONDS: Well I think it's going to be a close fight. They have done a great job with their upgrades this year and we appreciate that it's not going to be an easy job. I think what we must do is ensure that we have perfect reliability and in the last race in Malaysia I think Felipe could have been in there, in the mix – of course Valtteri beat both the Force Indias in Malaysia – but Felipe wasn't able to join the party because of an electronics problem on the starting grid. So that sort of thing is really the sort of thing that can determine these championship fights. It's unfortunate but I think our focus is on getting the reliability and our focus is on utilisation, because we're not bringing big upgrades to the car – we have a small change on the front wing here. It's really now about making sure that what we've got we use well, we use our tyres well, we get our strategy and our tactics right, and we take the fight right to the end.

We've seen quite a lot of evolution in the senior technical staff at Williams over the last couple of years, will we see more changes in technical management going forward?

PS: We're always looking. We are still relatively speaking a small team and we need to increase our knowledge and our capability in every way, so yes, we are looking a long way ahead now at where we might pick up people, We know we are weak in some areas, we know we have to improve in those areas, so yes, we are always on the lookout for good people.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Last Sunday a driver hinted that his car had been technically sabotaged. Is it possible in this day and age – with all the telemetry, all the data, with the long life engines and components – for a team to sabotage a driver? A question to all of you but Paddy if you don't mind starting, I think you know why.

PL: Yeah, I can't agree with you that the driver hinted there was sabotage. Lewis has been very clear, certainly with us, that that's completely out of the question. I think anybody with an ounce of intelligence analysing the situation would realize that the prospect of us designing a system that would cause a big end to fail at that precise point in the race... if we were that good we would win everything and control everything at every point. We've had other failures in the year that are very unfortunate and if we were good enough to arrange such sabotage we wouldn't have any failures. It's a very tough business Formula One. The engineering is operating right at the boundary of performance and things do go wrong. The complexity is incredible and trying to engineer something to happen on purpose on a car... it's similar to when people say to us 'you favour one driver over another' and the idea that we might give better equipment to one driver or another. If we've invented something that makes our car quicker of course we want it on both cars, because we want to win the race. We never hold back or would ever even contemplate it, even if we could engineer it, which we couldn't. Anyone intelligent could work that out.

Anyone have anything to add? Hasegawa-san?

YH: I didn't get the question. I didn't understand.

I think the question was based on comments Hamilton made after he retired in the last, regarding whether or not someone or something wanted him not to win.

PL: And interpretations of those comments.

Q: (Abhishek Takle – Mid-Day) Question to Pat. Pat, there's been some speculation about your future recently, including that you may be considering retiring. I wonder if you could shed some light on that for us please.

PS: Yeah, I read that myself! I was quite surprised actually. It reminded me of Mark Twain. You will all know that Mark Twain was once taken ill while he was in London and a newspaper in New York picked up the story and actually published his obituary. He sent a very famous telegram to them, saying 'rumours of my demise are greatly exaggerated'. I think I'd probably take the same view on my retirement.

Q: (Daniel Johnson – The Telegraph) Question to Paddy, just returning to the previous subject. Regardless of the interpretation, Lewis did have some quite strong words on Sunday saying "I've got questions for Mercedes, this is unacceptable," he said "something doesn't feel right to me." As the person responsible for the technical operation of the team, how hurtful is it to you and your guys even the insinuation that there may be some foul play involved?

PL: I think the thing you have to bear in mind is that we're all very rational people, certainly in the engineering area and we all know that you can throw three double-sixes in a row. That is possible, statistically – and yet when you see it done, emotionally you feel 'how did that happen'. We have got a little bit of that scenario with Lewis. We have eight power units out there running around and, with the exception of one failure, they have all fallen to Lewis this year on his power unit and that is something that none of us can really understand, how things could turn out that way. But it is just the way the dice has been thrown. Things do go wrong. We understand that and it just so happens that, by pure coincidence, that has occurred repeatedly on Lewis' car. We're gutted about it. We just wish luck wouldn't fall that way. Understandable that Lewis, as we all were feeling immediately after that blow-up, 'how can that have happen again?' Personally, I was only just getting over the idea of the consecutive failures he had in qualifying earlier in the year where already you felt the statistics had fallen very, very unfairly, and I was very happy for Lewis that he managed to recover his points back up to a place of level competition with Nico. So, y'know, it was a real blow. But we quickly try to become rational and just accept that these things happen and then you move on and look to the future.

Q: (Sam Collins – Racecar Engineering) Question for the whole panel actually. There's an engineering skill shortage currently in the UK which is well documented elsewhere. Is that causing problems for those of you who are actively recruiting at the moment and how do you see that developing over the next two to three years with the UK probably leaving the single market and freedom of movement and the EU, stuff like that?

Bob, that's a good one for you to start with, isn't it?

BB: What gives you the impression we're recruiting heavily? Yeah, there is a shortage of skilled engineers, particularly if you want skilled engineers with Formula One experience and that is partially to do with the fact that most engineers in Formula One these days are locked

down with long-term contracts which makes it difficult to get them at relatively short notice. I don't think there's necessarily a shortage of young, eager and very capable of graduates, for example, coming out of the education system. Most teams on the grid try and use that resource as much as they possibly can. And so, I think I would agree there is potentially a skill shortage but I think perhaps the difficulties that a team such as ours faces in recruiting is more to do with the difficulty of acquiring experienced F1 engineers already locked into existing teams. As for the influence of Brexit, it's too early to tell what the consequence of that will be on the future of the supply of engineers in the UK. I think it would be great if the UK plc could develop a stronger industrial base. I think that would be good for the country and I think all of us in Formula One would be fully supportive of initiatives that helped develop that. Not only would it potentially provide more engineering candidates for us in recruitment – but I think it would be good for the country as a whole. But ultimately, what happens, post-Brexit, I don't think any of us can really tell.

Pat, your thoughts?

PS: Yeah, I think I agree with what Bob said. In spite of what I said earlier about always looking for talent, we're not a team that's expanding rapidly in the same way that Renault are. We do run a very strong undergraduate program and I am continually amazed at the quality of the undergraduates that go through our team. They really are very strong indeed. And, of course, the undergraduate schemes are very good because they give us a chance to have a sort-of extended interview with people. We also run graduate schemes. We sometimes take on those that have been on the undergraduate scheme, sometimes others. We don't find a problem at that level. We get very good people coming in. I do agree that getting the senior people is quite difficult. People are on long-term contracts, and we put a lot of time at Williams into succession planning. So we do try to look quite a long way ahead at where things are going. In terms of Britain leaving the European Union, I think it is too early to tell how it will be. We do employ a lot of Europeans. We have particularly in aerodynamics, there seems to be a very strong contingent from France. I hope that we still maintain relative ease of employing Europeans. It's already very difficult to employ non-Europeans in the UK. In my opinion far too difficult. So I hope things don't get any worse.

Hasegawa-san, do you have a view on this? You were nodding a couple of times through what Pat was saying.

YH: Yeah, actually I don't know the exact situation but we have already concern about the effect of the Brexit. Maybe we can answer from the different aspect. It is obvious that we have a lot of good engineers from the UK but also the reason Honda is doing the Formula One is that we have to educate Asian engineers as well, so that we have to take this opportunity to hire more good engineers. But of course we always appreciate that the UK is very open to the world about this even. We don't want to, I don't want to lose this situation, so please minimize this effect of the Brexit. This is not place that we have to ask about.

Paddy, anything to add?

PL: I think we're very fortunate in Formula One that it's seen as a very attractive destination for engineers. That wasn't the case in the past. We have things like Formula Student that have created a greater awareness of the sport and the engineering within it particularly. And I think because of that we have become increasingly international in the staff that we recruit – from Europe and also further afield. So, I see that continuing to grow. It is a great

engineering activity. Formula One achieves great things and it is all about engineering. So I would like to see that develop in the future – and perhaps with Brexit we can become even more international. Maybe there's a positive side to it. I hope that the UK would see Formula One as a particularly successful industry within the UK itself and therefore would see a way to making that work.

Ayao, anything to add?

AK: No. We're growing at the moment but so far we're happy with our recruiting a mixture of young and experienced. No complaints really. It's good.

Luigi, you're not based in the UK but anything to add?

LF: No, nothing to add.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Question to Bob. Bob, obviously a global automotive brand like Renault cannot be seen to running around in tenth place and being ecstatic when they score a point – but given the difficulties you outlined earlier on, particularly the way that the infrastructure imploded, what sort of objectives has Mr Ghosn set the team regarding regular points-scoring, podiums, wins and then championships. And do you think they're achievable?

BB: Yeah. Of course corporately we're not satisfied running around in tenth place and scoring single points. Actually that single point meant a lot to us. I've won a lot of points in Formula One over the years and that point meant more to me than perhaps any other. It's a great motivator and it really lifted team moral so actually it was quite an important achievement. Moving beyond that, Mr Ghosn is very clear in his objectives for the team. He's not here to make up the numbers, he's here to see the team succeed. He also, of course, has been through this cycle before and he knows what it takes and how long it takes to achieve that and he's set us realistic objectives that are in line with that. Next year the obvious step forward for us is to move into the midfield and be competitive there. 2018 to be looking at podiums and so on, and then out beyond that, four, five years hence, looking at a proper championship-winning campaign. No rocket science in that. If you look at history, if you look at what it took when Red Bull bought Jaguar, when Renault previously bought Benetton or when Mercedes bought Brawn it took five years in each instance for them to win a championship. That's the sort of timescale, the sort of road map we've set ourselves. I think it's realistic and it's in line with corporate expectation.

Q: (Gaeton Vigneron – RTBF) Question for Yusuke Hasugawa: Stoffel Vandoorne will be in your car next year; what do you expect from him and having raced this year in SuperFormula does that facilitate his adaptation to the Japanese way of working?

YH: Simply speaking, he's very good and he's very clever and he's always calm, especially in Bahrain. I was very surprised how quickly he suited to the new car. Although he was joining some tests in the winter, I think Bahrain was the first moment he drove this year's car but he did a great job. Of course he's a very good driver but other than that, he's very calm and stable. It is a very great point, I think.

Q: And on the point about him racing here in Japan this year, culturally, in terms of working?

YH: Yes, I think so. He started to be around the Japanese culture and how do we feel and how difficult it is to communicate with Japanese people. I think it will be a great help for us as well.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) To all of you: there's a debate at the moment about tyre testing in February, whether to go to Barcelona or Bahrain, go to both etc etc. There are also some suggestions that people are more worried about engine cooling than they are about the tyre testing because they say the tyres can't really be changed much after the tyre test in any event. Where do your individual teams stand on this question?

PL: Yes, so the situation is that we have the biggest change in tyre regulations probably for one or two decades and Pirelli have asked the FIA if they would support testing in Bahrain, which is outside Europe. So by regulation it requires a process to get there. So as I understand, a majority of teams support that request. For me, the important point that Pirelli were asking for is some hot condition testing of the compounds particularly. The structure of the tyre is created and tested in the lab but the compounds they can only evaluate in real circuit conditions and unfortunately the mule car programme which is running at the moment has delivered three cars which are very helpful to the process but they are not delivering the level of aerodynamic load that will be seen next year. So for me it's a matter of supporting Pirelli's request to contain the risk of arriving at the first race as being the first event with hot conditions and there's real risk to the show. We've seen what can happen, for example, in Indianapolis 2005. We mustn't forget that we need to put on a show, we need to run a 300 kilometers race with sensible numbers of tyres, so that's not an inconsiderable risk and should be covered. So that's why we particularly support that request.

Q: Pat, where's Williams on this?

PS: Diametrically opposed. The cost of doing a test outside of Europe is vast. Depending on exactly how you do it and how much you have to ship back to the UK, how much you can ship on to the first race – we're talking of a minimum of £300,000, probably a maximum of £500,000 so a likely figure sitting in the middle of that. Now to a team like Mercedes, I'm sure that they can put contingencies in their budgets to cover things like that. A team like Williams simply can't, it's a significant amount of our budget, it is unaccounted for and therefore I think it is the wrong thing to do. Now the rules do have an anomaly in them in that I'm sure everyone knows that at this stage of the year you normally need unanimous agreement to change the rules, but there is an anomaly in that there's just this very one thing where at the moment the rules do not allow you to test outside Europe but there is this anomaly that by majority you can agree to test outside Europe. We are opposed to that. The thing that the rules do not allow you to do is to split the testing so you can't have some people testing in Europe, some people testing outside. Now Paddy mentioned we need to have safety and the Indianapolis situation and things like that but I think it's very very clear in the requirements that Pirelli have signed up to and indeed that Pirelli have asked for that we're not running cars to test the safety of tyres. That has to be done off the car, that has to be done before they ever see a track, so I don't think that that's an acceptable reason to go testing in the Middle East or elsewhere. Yes, there will be difficulties but you know we're in the same boat. We are having the tyres selected for us for the first few races which personally I think is a good thing. If it does come about, then obviously people are going to have to do it because, as I say, we can't split the testing but it's going to make a very very serious dent in our budget. If we do it, I think we need to consider where we do it because

we do act like sheep quite often in Formula One and there's this thing of 'oh well, we've tested in Bahrain before, let's go to Bahrain.' Personally I don't think Bahrain's a very good circuit to go testing. We have tested there in the winter, some people remember some years ago that there was a test there which was effectively sand-stormed off rather than rained off. And even when we tested there as recently as 2014, the first few hours of the day were spent just cleaning the circuit up. If you accept you're going to stop on the way to Australia, it really doesn't matter where you stop. I think Abu Dhabi would be a much better place, maybe even Malaysia. But as a team we're opposed to the idea.

BB: I tend to agree with Pat from a personal point of view. I think it's an unnecessary waste. I don't think it will make a massive difference to the show for next year. I think it's just money. All teams at whatever end of the grid could well do without having to spend.

AK: Yeah, I'm in the same camp as Bob and Pat really. If we can test in Europe it's much better for a small team like us and in terms of a logistical challenge it's much more manageable, so yeah, in favour of testing in Europe but at the same time I see the logic for testing in more representative conditions. Again for a smaller team like us, it's difficult to get a comprehensive set of data and to extrapolate from what you've got, so it's quite good to test in the most representative conditions but overall I think if you had to choose, you'd choose testing in Europe.

Q: Of course it's not just tyres that are being testing, it's power units and engines as well. Luigi, where do you stand with Ferrari?

LF: We will see what is the final decision of course. On our side, we have to co-ordinate with all the parts because if we go to Bahrain it's different compared to Barcelona.

YH: I have no opinion. I basically leave it up to McLaren. From a Honda point of view I don't care. Either is OK.

PS: Paddy, I don't think you got your majority, did you?

PL: I need to correct Pat because I think you misstated what I said. I wasn't talking about the safety of the tyre from a construction point of view, I made that clear. It's just safety from a show point of view with the compound. If you have the wrong compounds then we will be trying to do six or seven stop races and we don't have the tyres to do it. That was my point.

Q: (Ken Kawakita – Weekly Playboy) It was last year here that Fernando Alonso shouted 'GP2 engine, GP2 engine' and this year Honda made very big progress and is fighting midfield or fighting for points at every race. How do the other power unit suppliers see the progress Honda have made since last year? Can I have some words from Ferrari, Renault and Mercedes if possible, and having heard that, can I have one comment from Hasegawa-san?

LF: Clearly, in the races compared to last year Honda has done a big improvement, it was a good job done for them which they will continue pushing. On my side, we are doing continuing improvement and I hope that next year we will do an extra step and we will come back to the picture from the last years.

BB: I think it's great for Formula One if all of the power units end up being reasonably close, the so-called convergence band. I think that's good and healthy for the sport and well done to Honda for making such progress so quickly.

PL: I think it's great to see. Honda had a huge challenge to come into the sport having not been in it for a few years and to come fresh in with a totally new formula in 2015. It was always going to be a huge challenge so it's great to see Honda back playing for points and I'm sure we will see more of them in the future.

YH: Thank you very much for the very kind social comment here in Japan. I'm really really embarrassed. I'm happy to show some progress but it's very clear that we are still behind but I really want Fernando to correct his comment this weekend. Still we need to push more, much harder.

Q: (Sam Collins – Racecar Engineering) Bringing you chaps back to the subject of tyres again; for 2017, how much evolution has there been in the wind tunnel tyres that Pirelli have supplied you with over the last 12/15 months, and also, how much information are you feeding back to Pirelli in terms of the loads you expect to see going through those tyres in terms of not just aero but the full vehicle dynamic model as well?

AK: To be honest I haven't been really involved in the '17 wind tunnel development so I'm not really qualified to comment.

PS: We got the wind tunnel tyres quite late actually. I think it was towards the end of February and believe it or not, we ran our first model with rear tyres on all four corners to get some idea of what was going on because we didn't have the tyres available. We haven't really evolved the tyres yet because it's a parallel programme. To answer the second part of your question about anticipated loads, we regularly – in fact we have just in the last few days... all teams have updated the FIA and Pirelli with their latest simulations and it's an ongoing process. So as we refine our estimates of loads, as we refine the vehicle dynamics and the aerodynamics, we regularly have to feed information in a given template - all teams do the same and all confidentially - to the FIA who check it for the coherence of the data and then pass it on to Pirelli.

PL: I would say just the same as Pat. We are regularly providing data to the FIA and then onwards to Pirelli via a prescribed process so as we get closer to the final cars we will build, the data is becoming more and more accurate, so I think we're keeping Pirelli well-informed through that process.

BB: Not much to add, honestly. The processes described by Paddy and Pat are being followed by all teams.

Ends