



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

**Press Information**

**2016 United States Grand Prix  
Friday Press Conference Transcript**

**21.10.2016**

**TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Cyril ABITEBOUL (Renault), Maurizio ARRIVABENE (Ferrari), Gene HAAS (Haas), Christian HORNER (Red Bull Racing), Monisha KALTENBORN (Sauber), Toto WOLFF (Mercedes)**

**PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Cyril, Nico Hulkenberg has been signed, it looks like a decision has been taken by Renault to spend some money on drivers. What does that say about Renault's ambition for next year?**

**Cyril ABITEBOUL:** Well, we always said that it would be a long-term plan but obviously there has to be some steps and some visible steps. That is the first step of the plan. There will be more development; there will be more announcements, more decisions. We have a substantial investment plan in Enstone. There are also good upgrades coming up on the engine side. So it's all coming together. The structure is coming together. So, fairly satisfied with the way things are progressing.

**Inevitably the focus is now going to fall on the other seat. What do you want from that driver and would you ideally like him to be French?**

**CA:** Frankly, nationality, we don't want to start having some tactics in terms of nationality. We want him to be fast, we want him to make some contribution to the team, just like Nico will be doing with his experience. We know he had a strong spirit and can contribute to get the team together, so the second driver should be doing exactly the same. We have a bit of time to make the decision. We have a couple of options. People are interested and attracted by our project and that's what is satisfying.

**Thank you. Gene, your first home grand prix as a Formula One team owner. Tell us what sense of pride that brings for you?**

**Gene HAAS:** Well, we had a lot of fans on pit road yesterday and it was really heartwarming to see the enthusiasm that they all displayed, wanting to get autographs and shake our hands and wish us well. That was great. The city of Austin is a very welcoming city. The people are friendly; the food is great. All I can say is that it's great to be here in Texas,

especially Austin, it feels really good to be an American in a very American city, so very, very thankful for that. I think this is going to be a great weekend and I really would encourage people to come and take part in this event. I think this is a great race, a great city and we have great weather this weekend and all I can say is that I think it's going to be an outstanding weekend.

**Are you happy with how it has gone? Twenty-eight points so far in your debut season sounds really impressive, or is there a slight sense of disappointment that after such a strong start you weren't really able to keep it going?**

**GH:** Yes, I think you hit that exactly. I think we were very lucky to begin with. We had almost a year to prepare for it, so I think we were well prepared coming from Barcelona, those first few races everything was brand new, everything was fresh out of the package, so we had a lot of good luck and I think with everything being brand new we didn't have to worry about "well, is this part timed out or not". When you get mid-season now you have to start worrying about your parts. You only have a week to prepare for the next race, so now all of a sudden you have this time crunch and it puts a lot more pressure on you. That's where a really good team can show its worth and that's what we're building on. We're struggling right now. It's hard. When these events happen they come at you so fast, you have to respond and you have to respond in just the right way. The more experienced teams do a better job at that than we do.

**Thanks for that. Christian, coming to you: Adrian Newey is here this weekend. Given that the 2017 regulations have more a focus on aerodynamics, how involved has he been in next year's car? Is it more, for example, than this year's car, in the design phase?**

**Christian HORNER:** It's probably about the same. I mean, Adrian is splitting his time maybe 50/50 between Red Bull Advanced Technologies, with this Aston Martin project we've taken on, which is quite exciting. So designing a road car for half the week and designing a Formula One car for the other half of the week. He's here this weekend to keep up to speed with trackside, with what's going on and it's always good to have him at an event.

**You've just had a very interesting Free Practice 2 session. It looked like the long-run performance of your car compared to the Mercedes was very competitive, particularly on the supersoft tyre, and you were pretty close of the single lap too. Are you feeling a tinge of optimism as you sit here this afternoon?**

**CH:** Well, Daniel Ricciardo, or Evel Knievel as he now likes to go by, has had a great day. His short run pace has been very strong, his long run pace has been strong and he's very happy with the balance of the car. Max, on the other hand, has not been quite as happy with the balance of the car in the afternoon as he was in the morning. A lot of good information, a lot of good data but as we often see on a Friday, it's very difficult to know what energy levels people are running at, what fuel levels people are running, what power modes they are running in, so make no mistake, Mercedes are still very much the favourites going into the grand prix but hopefully if we can get to within a tenth or two then hopefully we can put a bit of pressure on in the race.

**Monisha, can you talk us through us your engine strategy for next year, why you think the approach you're taking is the right one for the team?**

**Monisha KALTENBORN:** Well, we certainly think it is the right one and it has been driven by the technical decision makers in the team because we know there is a big change coming up and with the size we have and the capacities we have, we needed to focus on that change. We didn't want to wait for that long, whatever changes might come on the engine side or not. It's clear that the engine supplier wants to develop as much as he can until the end of the possibilities, and we didn't want to wait that long. We decided to work around what we know; we have sufficient information on that environment around the engine. So we can now focus totally on the chassis side and on performance development.

**Do you see any reason to change either of your drivers next season?**

**MK:** Well, we'll see what we do next year. We are in our internal process of evaluating our different options and we'll announce in due course.

**Thank you. Toto, congratulations on the Constructors' Championships for a third year and congratulations also, I hear you're expecting a child, and you too Christian. Sounds like we're going to need a crèche for the Formula One race tracks.**

**Toto WOLFF:** Yeah, maybe a good idea.

**The CEO of Liberty Media has spoken about adding more US grands prix and mentioned Las Vegas and Miami. What are your own thoughts on that, and what's the right number of races in this country do you think?**

**TW:** First of all, it's great to be in such a great place like Austin. Every year we are coming here, it's really a fantastic venue, and having more grands prix in such an important market for Mercedes, it would be good and wherever we can help, we will do that.

**You have two young Mercedes drivers on the grid in Ocon and Wehrlein, and as we're talking about seats being settled for next season, what plans do you have for them?**

**TW:** It's still pretty much in coming together. It's a very interesting competition they are having within Manor and we are still evaluating the future and talking with a couple of teams, and working together for next year, but it's still very early days.

**Maurizio, we spoke with Sebastian Vettel here yesterday about the feeling of driving with Ferrari in America given the following here over decades. Is North America still as important for Ferrari as it was in the days of Enzo?**

**Maurizio ARRIVABENE:** I mean, USA is for Ferrari a super market. It's very, very important for us and for sure to have a good result in Austin is very important for our house, but even so it's important for us that we have USA as a market in general. I'm happy to be here, of course, and we will try to do all our best to deserve the support we have from the USA supporters here.

**Let's talk about the form of Kimi Räikkönen: very much better than the last two seasons. What do you put that down to?**

**MA:** Well, in my opinion everybody gets surprised when they talk about Kimi's performance, but there is nothing to be surprised [about]. The guy was a world champion, with us actually. Most probably he was suffering a bit in the last few years, but now he can feel that the team is... the part of the team that is working with Kimi is committed to him. He has a very good relationship with Sebastian and that helps. It's just a question for him to feel the trust of the

people around him and then he's going to do his best. The guy when he has to push with his feet is pushing very, very hard.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Monisha, we heard what you said about running 2016 engines in 2017. However, last year in Singapore you actually said that a two-tier system of last year's and this year's engines sets a very dangerous precedent and that one shouldn't allow this. Can you explain what has led to the change of heart? And equally to Maurizio: is it not a disruption to your engine business to have to supply two specifications? I know you've done it this year, but Toro Rosso falls away next year, so you don't really have a capacity issue?**

**MA:** What's your real problem? The answer is easy: it's not a problem for us.

**MK:** It's no change of heart at all. I think you're comparing apples with oranges because what was said at that time was within the discussions we were having regarding the reduction of the engine price as such. A couple of the smaller teams wanted the engine prices to be reduced – that was a target set by the FIA and the Commercial Rights Holder. In that discussion, from the manufacturers side, the argument was raised that if can't basically afford it or don't want to afford the engine, you could go for another engine, and amongst all the smaller teams there was unanimous agreement that that's not the way we want to go, if it's a question of your own choice that's a different story. But we didn't want that from the beginning a system like this as set up. As I said, regarding our decision now: this is not at all financially driven. This is technically driven and we think it's the right way ahead for us.

**Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Question for Maurizio. We saw an improvement of performance of Ferrari in Suzuka, in Japan. That solution, that upgrade can be a road direction also for the new car or not?**

**MA:** It's a good question. Because what we took into the car in Suzuka, it's also in view of next year. The performance there was good, under circumstances, because the track of Suzuka, it's a high-performance track, that was ideal. That place was idea for us to test some parts and to monitor exactly the behaviour of the car in certain conditions and we got the right answer, so that's it.

**Q: (Alan Baldwin – Reuters) Maurizio, there was an interview in the Italian papers last week with Luca Baldisserri, saying that there was a 'climate of fear at Ferrari'. How do you respond to that?**

**MA:** It's an old story. Ferrari in Italy is like the Italian football national team. I think pressure is normal, having tension is normal, having criticism is normal, so you have to live with that. Then, sometimes it's going too far. Our job is to be concentrated in what we are doing, it's to follow our way and sometimes to do these simple gesture, and to look whatever we are doing. This is part of the job. If you are working in Maranello, if you work for a brand like Ferrari, you have to accept all of this, like it or not. The atmosphere inside the house is completely different to what people thought about, or what you are reading sometimes in the newspaper.

**Q: (Seff Harding – Zero Zone News) This question's for Gene Haas. Mr Haas, when you and Guenther Steiner put this business plan together to build this team and how you were**

**planning to cut costs, are you pleased with how the business model is going, given where you're placed in the Constructors' Championship right now.**

**GH:** Very much. I think when we first had this plan, it actually goes back probably almost five years ago when they were talking about customer cars, where we are now has completely changed. It's almost like running a race. You have to very, very quickly be able to change your strategy and change your focus and everything you do to get to the finish line. There was a lot of changes in terms of, do you build everything yourself as a typical constructor would or do you go, like some teams, where you buy your engine and transmission from some people, or do you run a customer car? Those were the three decisions that early on we had to make. Customer cars were eliminated by the teams' agreement not to have one, so that went away, and then once we became a little bit involved it was pretty obvious that these cars are technically incredibly challenging and there's no way you can build even a small portion of them in five or ten years. Guenther developed a relationship with Ferrari and Dallara and that's the direction we went in. And it's worked well for us. I think we've actually, from a budget standpoint, have been rather economical in how we run our business. Just like everybody in this room tries to look at the regulations and tries to figure out 'how can I make a car that will comply with the regulations but still give me an advantage over the competitors', our business model in terms of being a constructor has... the way we do things is substantially different than a lot of our competitors but we feel it gives us an advantage with the rules too.

**Q: (Peter Habicht – The Auto Channel) Gene, I have a two-part question: who or what has surprised you most in your first season in Formula One and, to the rest of the team principals, how would you all rate Haas F1 Team out of ten.**

**GH:** I think when we first got involved in here, what kind of surprised me the most was probably the fact that how easy it was for us to get these 28 points. And now that I've been involved in it for a while, I'm starting to realise how lucky we were to get those 28 points because it really put us in a position for the next year's Constructors'. That I don't think we could do that today. So that's probably what surprised me the most.

**And the rest of you, how do you rate Haas' first season: Christian?**

**CH:** I think they've had a great first year. First of all, it's super to have a credible team on the grid. Haas has got a great track record in motorsport in this territory and to come into Formula One is no insignificant challenge so, to have come in, to have come in credibly and efficiently and gone about scoring a good portion of points, being competitive, I think it's very, very positive. I think it's good for Formula One, it's a great addition for Formula One to have an American team. Hopefully one day they'll find an American driver. We tried. No, I think overall they must be very satisfied with what they've done and I think the Formula One community enjoys having an American team as a fellow competitor.

**Toto?**

**TW:** Yes, the track record of Gene in the States speaks really for itself and how they've done in the first year is impressive. Like Gene said, we've been around for many years and he's competing against teams who have built-up infrastructure and capability over decades and doing as good in the first year is really good. Obviously taking an Austrian as a team principal was a good decision. The Austrian-American combination works well.

### **Monisha?**

**MK:** I agree with what Christian said. I think we all know how tough it is to come into this sport and the level is extremely high compared to so many years. So, I think the team has done a very good job there. And when you said that we're planning to apparently have more races in the US, it's so important to have some form of representation made through teams or through drivers. So I think it's only good for the sport.

### **Cyril?**

**CA:** I think they've done a great job and in particular because they are ahead of us so they are some form of nightmare to us, to the championship. Mostly I think it is interesting because they are showing that, as always, the points you are taking at the start of the season are very important. They almost count twice or three times more. Also, that in Formula One it's important to have planning and preparation time. So it's quite different and in contrast to our situation at Renault, where we sort of arrive in Melbourne in a bit of a panic mode. Unprepared. With more resources. So it's all to the credit of Gene and his team, but I think they are compensating, through planning and a clever business model and the relationship with Ferrari, the lack of resources that they have in comparison to other teams. The challenge obviously is to make that sustainable on the long run. That's obviously what I wish to the team.

### **Maurizio?**

**MA:** Of course I'm happy about our partnership with Gene. And also, I have to say, honoured, to work with Haas. The reason why is that it's an example to follow. In the way that they come in, they are investing in Formula One, they trust in Formula One, they are very serious, very committed. They have a long-term agreement and this is what I said many, many times that when we are talking about a new entry team, or when we want to define what they call a 'small team', first of all we need to make sure that they have a commitment to Formula One. In many, many years I saw people coming in, taking here or there some points, having the money in the pocket and leaving. Team Haas is not like this. It's an example to follow in the way that they come in, they have an objective, they're working for their objective and they have a long-term commitment. So, I'm more than pleased and I repeat, honoured to work with a team like this. Formula One needs serious people.

**Q: (Silvia Arias – Parabrisas) Good afternoon, Toto, at the beginning Ferrari was far away and in those races we can say in the last races the competitors are coming. I mean, not enough, but still. Why do you think that has happened? Is it because Mercedes have reached already the maximum or just the others are working well, let's say.**

**TW:** The longer the regulations stay where they are, the more narrow the gap will get. I think this is a particular season where everybody is preparing itself for new regulations next year and, towards the end, that gap shrinks. It's the nature of the business and we can see that between Red Bull and Ferrari and Mercedes it is not four, five, six-tenths any more like it was. It is, like you said, down to one or two tenths. It's probably expected. So the game... there's a completely new game next year. All points to zero like in any other season with the additional interesting factor to see who is going to come out of the blocks better.

**Q: (Alan Baldwin – Reuters) Question for anyone, but maybe Christian or Toto would be best placed: pre-season testing, has there been a decision really on what's going to happen? Is it going to be Barcelona, Bahrain and is it true that there's a suggestion that the in-season be moved to Bahrain instead of Spain?**

**CH:** Well, there's been numerous debates about this. We had a meeting earlier today with Bernie, a collective of all the teams to discuss winter testing. Indeed there was also a vote with the FIA earlier in the week. And the way that the regulations are currently written, to test outside of Europe would require the unanimous consent of all of the teams and that doesn't exist so it's agreed that we will test in Barcelona pre-season. And that in order to hopefully find a compromise for assisting Pirelli after the Bahrain test at the Bahrain raceway that the first of the in-season tests is planned to be in Bahrain, so Niki should get to use his holiday home in Bahrain which is good news, but thankfully common sense has prevailed.

**TW:** No, it's like that. The holiday home I don't know but the testing is like Christian said.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Toto, the Lewis Hamilton who was in yesterday's FIA press conference was a totally different person to the one two weeks ago in Japan, and also his whole demeanour was completely different. Have you and Niki spoken to him about his antics and attitude in Malaysia and Japan, and if not, did you countenance the way that he behaved in those two weekends?**

**TW:** I think that generally, all of us, we under-estimate the pressure that is on these guys. It's a couple of races towards the end of the season, there is all to win and all to lose and I guess that after Malaysia, where he was in the lead, 25 points to take, the engine blew up. That was a very difficult situation for him to cope with. As cool as someone might seem to be outside, inside it kind of eats you up and maybe that's why the weekend in Suzuka was a bit difficult for him emotionally, but he knows exactly that there's a job to be done in the car and there's a job to be done outside the car and it just needs small impulse, not more, and this is what happened.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) I asked whether you and Niki had spoken to him.**

**TW:** We had a couple of conversations but it was generally about how things can be improved. It was not a headmaster kind of discussion.

**Q: (Ralf Bach – Autobild Motorsport) Toto, can you explain to us what really happened after the Suzuka race? It was a little bit confusing, protest and no protest. What really happened?**

**TW:** It was a mis-communication. When we left the circuit, I said that the Verstappen manoeuvre was a hard manoeuvre but probably what we want to see in Formula One. He's refreshing and I think that the drivers need to sort that out among themselves on track. And we decided not to step in and then it was... how can I say?... an unfortunate coincidence that we took off, we left. The team had a minute to decide whether to protest or not and that's what they did and once we were able to communicate again, which was 30 minutes after take-off, we decided to withdraw the protest.

**Q: (Jean-Louis Doublet – AFP) Gene Haas, Cyril Abiteboul said driver nationality is not really important any more but how important is it for you to bring an American driver to Formula One in the near future?**

**GH:** I've heard that question quite a few times and when we started, to me it wasn't really that important because in a global economy, especially in America, it seems like everybody

sources the best products and people from all over the world. Even today, if you look at the number of people we employ in Kannapolis and we employ people in Banbury, UK and we employ people at Dallara, we have people all over the world and that's what makes Haas Formula One. So I kind of think of my team like the United Nations, it's just got people from all over the world. It would be nice to have an American driver but probably the most important thing for us, a new, inexperienced team, we need to have established Formula One drivers so it's a little bit of a contrary problem for us in that there are really no American Formula One drivers that have experience that I think would work with us. As we become more experienced then maybe we could take the chances that some of the other teams do with an inexperienced driver because their cars are known, their teams are known, you put in an inexperienced driver you can help them but until we get to that position, I think we have to be a little bit cautious about taking an inexperienced American driver. I think from a marketing standpoint it would be a home run to have one but at the moment it's not really that high on the agenda because we are more concerned about just being able to compete here every week with the current teams.

Ends