



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

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

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TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Dave RYAN (Manor), Franz TOST (Toro Rosso), Eric BOULLIER (McLaren), Robert FERNLEY (Force India), Mike O'DRISCOLL (Williams)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Bob, if we could start with you, the news broke recently that Nico Hulkenberg is off to Renault. Does his departure weaken the team going forward?

Robert FERNLEY: No, not necessarily. Nico will certainly be missed because he's been a great part of Force India and the growing of Force India over the last few years, but we'll just have to make sure that we replace him with as good as we possibly can.

Well, a lot of drivers have been linked to your team for 2017, how close are you to making that final choice?

RF: First of all, I'm not close at all. It's Vijay's decision and we'll start those discussions probably when we get back next week.

So have you got a deadline in mind as to when you want to have it nailed down?

RF: No, I don't think so. I think we'll take our time, have a look at what offers are on the table, Vijay will make his decision and then we'll announce it.

Sergio said in the press conference yesterday that he's staying at Force India because of the opportunity that the new cars next year will bring. Has the team got the resources and the capability to deliver on those expectations?

RF: Yes, I think so. What is exciting for us for 2017 is that it's the first time we are on a reasonably level playing field. We're not quite the same as the big teams, the big manufacturing teams, but you've got restricted aero programmes, it's the first new generation car that we will do using a 60% model and I think we've shown already this year what we can do once we moved up to 60%, so I'm very optimistic that the team will be very competitive in 2017.

Thank you. Dave, you've been in your job for a year now, what were your goals then and have you realised them?

Dave RYAN: Well, when I arrived it was obviously a team in a bit of a holding pattern but with big ambitions. It became fairly clear to me early on that we needed to attract some different skill sets and some good people, which I'm pleased to say we have. So yeah, we are definitely heading in the right direction. We do need to improve in all areas still, but I think we have come a long way in the past year.

So looking at the longer term, what can the Manor team become?

DR: Oh for sure we want to become a strong midfield team. If you look at where we were last year and where we now sit, we've made a huge improvement. We need to keep making improvements and our goal is to be a serious and strong midfield team.

How integral are your current drivers to that ambition?

DR: Well, the drivers we've got we're very, very happy with, they're a great couple of lads, but going forward who knows.

Thanks, Dave. Coming to you Mike: this is the first time you've been in an FIA press conference as it's usually a role filled by Claire Williams for the team. She hasn't been at any races recently. Why is that and are we likely to see her before the end of the season?

Mike O'DRISCOLL: I certainly hope so. Frank, as you know, was taken ill at the Monza race. He's been a fixture in the paddock for so many decades now it's strange not to have him with us. He's had a tough time in hospital. He has contracted pneumonia. He is making a recovery, a slow steady recovery. We hope to see him back at Grove very soon. We all know how determined he is. We expect Claire to be back at a race... she has wanted to stay close to home, close to Frank, but in this modern world you are only ever a phone call away, so we stay connected and she's part of everything that happens on a minute-by-minute, day-by-day basis. We hope to see her by the end of the year and hopefully that will be Abu Dhabi and this will be maybe my first [press conference] but it might be my last as well, so thanks for having me!

Pleasure to have you! Williams have had a difficult season in which you've slipped backwards. From your perspective, as CEO, why is that?

MO'D: Yeah, two very good seasons in '14 and '15 and this year has been more difficult. First of all I'd like to give a lot of credit to Force India. I think they have done a superb job this year in bringing the fight to us and making the battle for fourth place more interesting than we would have liked, maybe. I think it's also fair to say that the development of this year's car hasn't gone as well as we would have like – all of the upgrades we brought haven't been as effective as we would have wished. I also think it's fair to say that we made an early decision in the season to focus on the 2017 development. We can play Monday morning quarterback and decide now to double guess – was it too early, too late – but we stand by the decision we made and we haven't given up the fight for fourth place and we intend to get it back in the remaining three races.

And just a final question from me: we haven't had your thoughts on the takeover over Formula One by Liberty Media. I would be interesting to get your thoughts on that?

MO'D: Yeah, first of all, I think Formula One is just a terrific global sport and it's no surprise that it has attracted interest from bidders around the world, from some of the large companies and it's a tribute to the work that Bernie and his team have done over the years in building Formula One to the sport it is. Liberty are a global heavyweight in entertainment, digital, media and telecoms and I've no doubt they can grow it and take it to new heights and that two working together are a very effective combination.

Franz, you announced last weekend that Dany Kvyat has signed again for 2017. How does he make your team stronger?

Franz TOST: First of all, Daniil Kvyat is a very high-skilled driver. As we know from the past, he won the GP3 European championship; he was this year in China on the podium. Therefore, we are convinced of his talent. Secondly, his experience because next year will be his [fourth] season in Formula One and especially with the new regulations his experience will help us. And third, each party knows each other now very well. That means the co-operation also regarding next year's new car will help us hopefully to operate quite successfully.

While we're on the subject of next year, you've got two relatively experienced drivers in Kvyat and Sainz, you're going to have an up-to-date engine from Renault, you've managed to retain all the key technical staff in the team during the course of this year. Given all that stability how does that change your ambitions for 2017?

FT: First of all we must know how good the car will be, how good the complete package will be, because it's difficult to estimate nowadays where we will be, I think no team can do this. But I think we have all the ingredients together to come up with a very competitive package, because the technical staff, under the lead of James Key, have in the last years done a fantastic good job. As you mentioned, with Renault we have a new engine partner and their power unit is quite strong and I hope this will also be the case next year. We have two experienced drivers, which was never the case before at Toro Rosso, and also the team itself is improving. I expect a lot from the team and I hope that everything works into the direction what we think will be the case.

Thank you Franz. Eric, thanks for waiting, I'd like to continue exploring the theme of next year with you as well, because it looks likely that McLaren will finish sixth this year and given the amount of work that's going on in both Woking and in Japan at the moment, what is the minimum that acceptable for McLaren in 2017?

Eric BOULLIER: Doing better than '16. Obviously we don't have any numbers in terms of ranking in the championship, or targets like this. There is, like you said, still a huge amount of work to be done in Woking and in Japan, so we'll see next year what we have as a package. We'll see how fast or quick we can develop the car next year and then we will draw a line about where we want to be. But we just want to be on the move now. We were ninth last year in the championship, sixth is very likely this year obviously. We just want to be better next year.

So ninth, sixth, third in 2017?

EB: No comment!

My words, not yours! Now, Jenson Button in Monza announced that he is going to take a sabbatical next year but he is going to retain very close links to the team. In your position as Race Director can you tell us how he will work with the race team next year?

EB: Well, there are many ways for him to bring, let's say, his experience and feedback and guidance as well. It's good when they are in car, but outside the car as well, especially a driver with a lot of experience, can bring some good advice. He will obviously be a part of the simulator team, which is important to correlate with the car. He will be attending a few grands prix as well, so his vision or let's say his understanding about the racing next year from outside the car will be interesting for the team. In many ways, his great experience will be a good contribution for us next year.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Joe Saward – Auto X) You're all from different backgrounds as team principals, or racing directors, whatever your official title is. They don't have a school for team principals: what is it you need to be a Formula One team principal?

Bob, let's start with you.

RF: A reasonably thick skin, I think. I don't know actually Joe, you're very right in saying there's no school for it. It's something you have to build with experience. I don't think anything comes easily. You have to have a knowledge of all elements of racing – so it's commercial, technical, hospitality, every aspect of it. I think unless you have that overall awareness of what's going on in Formula One at all times, it's a job that will elude you.

Franz?

FT: First of all, you should know and be aware about the most important pillars in motorsport in general, and especially in Formula One because to run a Formula One team, you cannot compare with a normal company. Formula One has their own rules. Especially it takes time to build-up a team, to find the correct people, that they work together. As you know, you hardly have technical problems, you have only problems with people who are working together or not working together. You have to find a way that this is the case. Then, on the economic side, to find sponsors, to convince companies that Formula One is the best possible platform for marketing reasons. And to bring in, let me say, the satisfaction in the team: that the people are motivated; that they like this job and to convince them that this is a very special work – because there are not so many Formula One teams, that they are lucky to go to 21 races for example, to see different countries and so on.

Mike, interesting to get your take on this as you have experience of the wider car industry

MO'D: I wouldn't disagree with the comments you've already heard but I'd say that, as with any organisation, it's about people and it's about leadership and it's about motivation. It's about the ability to organise. And great instincts. And if all of that's founded on really good knowledge of Formula One and motorsport, I think you'll succeed.

Eric, do you have anything to add?

EB: Most of what they say I would agree to – but I think first you need to like racing. If you don't like racing I would never turn up in the paddock in my life, y'know? Obviously if you like racing then it depends on where your pass is going. I guess to be a racing director or a

team principal you need then yes, you need to lead, you need to understand who you're working with, you need some commercial skills, some political skills, some... I don't know, most of it you try to get.

Dave?

DR: First of all, if you talk about team principals, if you go back to Frank Williams and Ken Tyrrell, people like that, Ron Dennis, those team principals, they owned the team, they did everything. It's changed now. Not one of us here owns the team; we all work for other people and, for me, it's all about understanding your role within the organisation. We had different people with different skillsets and we work to those skillsets. In terms of a team principal, I think it's very different today to how it used to be and it's really just putting the right people in the right places to do the best job they can.

Q: (Silvia Arias – Parabrisas) Monsieur Boullier, with Jost Capito arriving next year, what will be your position in the team?

EB: Well, if I may correct, first he already arrived because he started on the 1st of September. My position exactly the same, racing director, his position is to be CEO, which is to different roles within the company. One is obviously being in charge of the business and more factory-based and the other is in charge of the racing. So no change. There is a racing director and a CEO in Manor, the same in Williams, there was the same in Lotus where I was before, so...

Q: (Seff Harding – Zero Zone News) This question is for Dave Ryan. You have a very talented pool of drivers at Manor. Does having such a talented pool of drivers make it difficult to choose from. And the second question, you have one that has won the Indy 500 this season, and has that caught the eye of the higher-ups at Manor?

DR: Well, first of all, we do have a pool of very good drivers at Manor. Pascal and Esteban are fantastic talents, we're very lucky to have them, they've been great for the team, they've pushed each other along and pushed us along as well. Together I think we're doing a pretty good job. Alex, winning the Indy 500 was fantastic for him and he's great to have on board as well.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) To all of you. Next year will be the third year in a row where a team has run last year's spec engines. Originally it was to help Manor-Marussia in their situation and this year with Toro Rosso because they were engine-less. But next year Sauber will be running this year's Ferrari engines. In view of the engine agreement that was struck in May, is it really necessary to have a regulation permitting this or should that regulation be closed, that we only have one tier of engines?

Bob, why don't you start?

RF: I think I'd like to see one tier of engines mainly because it keeps everybody very competitive – but you have to probably look at the reasons individual teams have had to go down those routes. Only those teams can give you the answers on there. We have issues in Formula One in terms of obviously the distribution of payments and things like that. Some of it can be financial, some of it's performance-based, some of it's availability-based. I think you have to look at the whole thing – but if we could move forward on a better programme it would be much better if all the engines were current.

Franz, what's your take on this?

FT: I don't know all the reasons and background stories why Sauber decided to go with this year's engine. I wouldn't like to be in this situation because it's a big disadvantage on the performance side to run with last year's engine. From the regulation side, I think it should be kept open because a one year old engine is most-often cheaper than the newest specification. Therefore the regulation should allow it. From the performance side the team anyway is disadvantaged.

Eric, how about you, Honda doesn't yet supply another team, what's your take on this?

EB: There will be a time, I guess, when they will supply another team in the future but I guess, ideally we all want to have a new spec engine. Obviously performance very similar – but I think like everybody said before me, there is some various conditions like availability, finance or this kind of thing which will make a difference today. I guess in the future we are going to tend to have all the same spec.

Dave?

DR: I would imagine any team would like to have the latest-spec engine. So if you take that into account and the team chooses to use an older-spec engine then there's obviously commercial aspects you've got to take into account. So, leaving it open at the moment I think is fine.

Mike?

MO'D: I'm not against a team using a prior-spec engine, they would have their good reasons, commercial reasons, for doing so – but it's symptomatic of a much bigger problem which is revenue distribution in the sport. There needs to be much greater equality.

Q: (Thomas Gorton – Dazed) This is for all of you. Who do you think will be running the sport next year – and who would you like to be running the sport next year?

Eric, would you start us please?

EB: Good question, because we are not in charge of the sport, we are obviously not behind the doors in the boardrooms and obviously we are all, from the comments I've read in the press, happy that Liberty is onboard. Bernie is still in charge and still running the show, so I guess it's going to be a mix or all of them all.

Mike, we've had your thoughts on Liberty, so Franz, how about you?

FT: I think the taking-over process takes time. It's not from one day to the next day. I assume the next year and also the year after it will be a combination of Bernie and Liberty together and afterwards then we will do.

Dave?

DR: We're just happy to be here. So that's the first thing. I think with Liberty coming on board it obviously opens the door for discussions on how to change things for the better or just to be different perhaps. We're just happy to be here, whoever's running it.

And Bob.

RF: I think obviously we're excited to see Liberty come on board. They have a tremendous expertise in sports marketing which is quite unique to America, and having obviously lived and raced in America for a number of years, I recognise that as some of the best in the world. What we also must remember is Formula One is a unique product. It has been created as a unique product by Bernie. We need Bernie to help that transition into the new ownership and I think it's very, very important for the new owners to look very carefully at this unique product that is F1 and maybe integrate the sports marketing into F1 and not try to integrate Formula One into an American sports marketing programme.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Franz, next year you'll have the same engines as the main Red Bull team, obviously the same tyres, you've got two very very strong drivers and that leads us to believe that particularly with your strong technical team that you could actually be a challenge to the main team. Will there be anything such as Red Bull team orders internally? Will you have to give way to the Red Bull team if you should be running them close?

FT: As you know, this is not the philosophy of Red Bull. Nevertheless, Red Bull Technology is one of the strongest technical teams in Formula One. It would be nice if we could be close to them but I don't think that we will be in front of them or that we will fight against them. It would be nice but Red Bull will not call us back, for sure not.

Q: (Seff Harding – Xero Xone News) To follow up on the earlier question, in terms of marketing for Liberty Media, in the United States do you feel that a larger platform in terms of packaging to devices, to social media would be necessary to help expand the visibility of Formula One, because it doesn't work in certain markets outside of the US?

MO'D: I think for sure, if I understand the question correctly, that there's a great opportunity to expand the sport in the Americas, in North America and the USA specifically. I think it would need a greater critical mass of races, either on the East and West Coast as well. The digital component is key for reaching a younger audience globally. I don't think that's North America specific.

FT: Yeah, we all know that Liberty Media is the best company to bring in all these tools which Formula One needs in future, the digital media, the social media and I'm convinced that their marketing strategy will find a way to bring Formula One forward, because we have some deficiencies and how they will do it we will then see, which strategy they will come up with.

DR: I think there's general agreement that we need to appeal to a bigger audience, perhaps a different audience as well. However we do that, it will apply to America, everywhere.

BF: I think the digital and the social media market is going to be very important but we've also got to make sure that we can monetise that, and that's going to be one of the challenges that Liberty will face.

EB: As far as Formula One is concerned, we agree that the US market is still very young, to be honest. We can do much more in America and North America. But Formula One is a global series and maybe the only global platform in the world as a sport, so we need to stay global. That means that we have plenty of room to develop the sport side, the business side and consequently, social media is key in any marketing tool box and before we can monetise, we maybe need to use this tool just to promote Formula One for the youngsters if we can do it in term of rights and then see the future. But again it's global, it's not only US.

Q: (Victor Macin – ESPN.com) Bob, what kind of driver are you looking for to replace Nico Hulkenberg ? Is he German, is he Mexican maybe?

BF: As I mentioned earlier, I think the decision for that will come next week or the week after or even the week after that. It will be Vijay's decision and I think it would be wrong for us to pre-empt anything along the driver line at this time.

Q: (Victor Macin – ESPN.com) And to Dave, are you worried about the rumours that Pascal Wehrlein will leave the team?

DR: Well, as I said earlier, Pascal's a great talent and we'd love to keep him, but it's Mercedes' decision as to where he ends up.

Q: (Silva Arias – Parabras) Can you please tell me, from one to ten, how you score your team regarding their performance this year, concerning what you expected at the beginning of this season and what is going on now, at the end of the season?

BF: Well, I think given the fact that we're challenging for the highest position that the team has ever had, I think I have to give them a ten. I don't think there's anything less than that.

EB: Well, I think, if I remember, Ron Dennis said five out of ten, so I have to stick to my boss.

MO'D: Report card for the year? I think it would be a five or a six out of ten, quite honestly.

FT: Six.

DR: Difficult one. I'd say about four or five for us. We set ourselves some pretty big targets and by and large we've achieved them but we've got to make a big improvement again for next year to be where we need to be. We've done a good job but going forward we need to do more so to put a number on it for me is pretty difficult but maybe that's about it.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Mr Ecclestone recently said he would like to see Formula One more exciting which some took to mean more dangerous. He was talking about walls around the circuits and whatever else. Your drivers were fairly dismissive about this yesterday. Being the people who pay the bills if they hit the walls, how do you feel about it?

FT: There must not be walls around, because it's expensive if the cars crash in there. No. But we should get rid of all these penalties and all this nonsense, if a driver touches another driver, that he gets done up or whatever. But we need interesting races and if they crash into each other, they crash into each other, this is what people always want to see. Formula One is also entertainment. And currently, we take too much care about all the safety issues and so on. Formula One is dangerous, we know this, but currently at the race track, if you look, nothing happens any more. Some friends said to me 'I don't watch Formula One any more because there are the two Mercedes in front. If they don't crash on the first lap, the race is gone. I can sleep somewhere else, not in front of the TV.' This is absolutely wrong. First of all, we need to come up with a parity between the different teams. The ideal case would be two or three teams would fight for the championship until the last race, Constructors' championship as well as Drivers', not as the last years when everything is decided with a couple of races to go, before the end. Then if drivers fight against each other and if they crash against each other and something happens, then they should not go to the stewards and get a penalty for this. People want to see real racing, people want to see that something is happening. This is not the case any more, currently.

EB: I agree with Franz on at least one point: we want to have close racing which is why the fans like... which is why we like racing as well, and I think it's going to come after every

change of regulations, especially the last one with the power units. Obviously there is a lot of disparity between the cars and the performance but if you're back to 2012 and 2013, I think if I remember, in the first ten races there were nine different winners. And then everybody was complaining that it was not good enough. So I obviously don't think a wall will bring a solution and it's expensive to build as well. I think it's just making sure we can bring the regulations to a point where we can give a chance to every team to be competitive and if you have all the cars, all the drivers competitive, then you can have very good and close racing.

BF: In all the things that Bernie says there is a message there and I think that message is that we need to get a little bit more excitement into the racing itself. I think there are ways that we can deal with cars going off, track limits and things like that and give opportunities for drivers behind by de-rating or whatever. That technology is available. I think we could do a lot more to get it more exciting without endangering the drivers in any way, or without making the tracks so they are F1-specific because we've also got to think that a lot of these tracks are also doing MotoGP as well, so whatever we do has to fit in with those as well. So I think yes, there are things we can do but I think Bernie's message is let's get it a little bit more exciting.

MO'D: Yeah, the big point's really excitement, isn't it? We need good, close racing, compelling racing. As you've heard from everyone here, we all want to see that.

DR: Well we do need close racing, for sure, but if we had a fairer distribution of funds, our cars would be closer together, that would be a start. But I think what Franz says is absolutely right. The drivers are over regulated on the track, some of the recent decisions and points and reprimands and so... personally, I think they are just too far. The drivers are discouraged from actively racing and some of the incidents that have been penalised I just don't get, it's just racing and you're just not allowed to do it now. The blue flag situation is also frustrating and I'm not so sure that the blue flag adds much to the racing. For sure it aids the lead cars but it really disrupts the racing for the guys at the back and we're all part of it. So I think, for me, we need to look carefully at how the sport is regulated when it comes to racing, would be a great help, and if the drivers were allowed to be themselves. There's not many drivers who aren't more than the corporate figurehead of the company. They're not allowed to express opinions, or they are discouraged from it. I can understand that side of it but it would be nice if we had a few more personalities. Lewis gets criticised for what he does. Well, why? He's just out there doing his thing and if we had a few more drivers doing that sort of thing I think it would add to the sport.

Ends