



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

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Friday Press Conference Transcript

PART ONE: TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Zak BROWN (McLaren), Christian HORNER (Red Bull Racing), Claire WILLIAMS (Williams)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Zak, we'll start with you, it was announced today that Jenson Button will race for you at the Monaco Grand Prix. Tell us about that.

Zak BROWN: He was the obvious first choice but we had to make sure he was up for it, since he's now relocated to the States and he was very up for it as soon as we contacted him. I think it's great for our team to replace one world champion with another for Monaco. Jenson has won a round there, loves the circuit, and didn't take any convincing whatsoever when we contacted him. So good for us and good for the sport.

Q: Obviously this comes about because Fernando Alonso is going to race in the Indianapolis 500. What did it take to pull this deal off, Alonso to Indy, both externally, but also internally within McLaren?

ZB: It came together very quickly. Take a step back: my boss, or bosses, are the executive committee, which is run by Sheikh Mohamed and Mansour Ojje and they are a real driving force and motivational individuals who are really pushing us to do new and exciting things. And so, ultimately on that direction Jonathan Neale and I work very closely together. And when this opportunity came along it really started off with me and Fernando kind of joking around about it. I was actually kind of serious, but I wasn't sure if he would be. He kind of flirted back... that was pre-Australia. We then had a breakfast with Honda and he told them of his desire to race at Indianapolis and ultimate try to win the triple crown. At that point I could tell he was serious about it, but didn't think 2017 was the timeline we were talking about. Then we spoke after Australia and he asked for a dinner Friday in China and I said "hey, about that Indy thing" and he said "that's exactly why I want to do dinner and discuss". At that point I knew it was serious, so I got on the phone to the chief exec of Indycar to see if it was possible. And through a lot of skunkwork, because I really didn't want any rumours getting out there, in case it wouldn't happen, which I thought would be the case, and we were able to put it together. We went to the executive committee and checked in with Eric to see what he thought of the idea. The executive committee blessed it and Saturday morning Fernando said 'let's do it' and then we ran pretty hard for 72 hours to make it happen.

Briefly, Fernando yesterday here said that you have a vision of McLaren as a multi-disciplinary organization, a bit like in its past, racing chassis at Indianapolis and Le Mans and so on. Tell us a little bit about that.

ZB: Yeah, as you mentioned our past... we have a lot of history. We've won Indianapolis three times, we won Le Mans, we won CanAm, we're now doing batteries for Formula E in the future and I think the McLaren brand is raced all over the world in all sorts of different formulas and as the executive committee said, if we can go win, if it's commercially viable and it fits the McLaren

brand, we're all a bunch of racers, so let's go racing. I think that is what we will see McLaren continue to do.

Thank you for that. Christian, first of all, long run pace today looked pretty promising. Obviously it's very close on single laps, with some strange things happening to various different drivers, but you must be pretty encouraged by what you have seen?

Christian HORNER: Yeah, I think today has been a very positive day really, particularly on Daniel's side of the garage; he's had a very productive day. So yeah, I think we've hopefully closed that gap a little bit here. The car seems better suited to this circuit and hopefully we can build on that through the weekend.

Q: Slightly tricky start to the season – over a second off the pace initially, podium for Max in China – but we're hearing that there's a radically or updated car planned for your team in Spain, according to some comments from your team today. Would you like to clear that up?

CH: I think that all the teams are developing hard and the first real acid point tends to be the start of the European season and we're no different. I'm sure several teams are targeting Barcelona with various update packages and we're no different. But in between now and then we're trying to get performance on the car, understand some of the issues and constantly move it forward.

Q: Just for clarity would you describe it as a very significant upgrade?

CH: If it delivers lap time, yes. It's a significant cost, so we'll see. Hopefully it will be value for money.

Q: Finally, it's not yet 12 months since Max Verstappen came to your team. His learning curve, by his own admission, has been almost vertical but I wonder in what areas have you seen real improvement, real transition from last year to this?

CH: I think he's just growing more and more in experience. He's 19 years of age. It's obvious that anybody of that age is still learning everyday a huge amount. As he gains more experience, his development is extremely impressive. His race again last weekend was outstanding particularly the first half, it was particularly impressive, particularly from where he started on the grid after a difficult Saturday afternoon. He's growing and growing and that's what makes him so exciting and personally I think we've got the most exciting driver line-up in Formula One at the moment and it's great to see the guys really pushing each other hard and racing like they did last weekend.

Q: Thanks very much. Claire, first of all, congratulations on your baby news; that really will be a first for a Formula One team boss?

Claire WILLIAMS: Having a baby? I think Christian's had a baby recently...

Not personally!

CW: I think there are lots of team principals that have had babies before me, but thank you.

Since you were last here there has also been a major overhaul of your senior technical staff. Tell us a little bit about the background of that and also what influence Paddy Lowe has had and your expectations of him.

CW: There hasn't been a massive overhaul; we still have most people in play. You're probably talking about our two most significant hires over the past... that we hired a while ago but who have just come into the team over the past few months. So, starting with our new head of aero, Dirk de Beer, who joined us now many weeks ago actually and who has already had a significant impact in our aero team and is doing a fantastic job and obviously the car he designed won the first race this year, so that's a real positive for us. And then obviously Paddy. His arrival into the team has been hugely motivational more than anything so far. Obviously it's going to take a bit of time for him to embed himself in the team and to found out where the true weaknesses are and to start rectifying those. Just having somebody of Paddy's calibre, I suppose, join our team is not only a message for everybody out there, looking and seeing where our ambitions are, but also

it's a huge motivating force for everyone within Williams to know that the board at Williams is hugely ambitious about our future and we want somebody of Paddy's calibre to come and help turn our fortunes around.

Q: Obviously you raced for a couple of years more or less on your own after the introduction of the hybrid turbos. Last year you were arcing with Force India. But this year it looks like you're in a very tight midfield battle. With a rookie driver in one of your cars is there a risk of not scoring the 130 plus, 150 plus points that you've been getting that you need to get to maintain that?

CW: Yes, I know that having a rookie in your car you are always going to have those concerns but I think it's still fairly early days, we're only at race three of the season but I think to date in those first two races, despite obviously having the two DNFs, neither of which was Lance's fault, that he's already acquitted himself quite impressively to date. He's done a fantastic job in China alone, getting into Q3 in only his second qualifying session, when he had very few laps in the Friday session, like everybody obviously, but still... I don't have as many concerns as you might imagine. I think Lance has really proved that he deserves the seat in a very short space of time. Obviously we are going to give him the space he needs in order to grow and to build but I don't actually doubt that he's going to be able to be capable of scoring the points that we need him to.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Ysef Harding – Xero Xone News) Zak, Fernando Alonso said it is a win-win situation or everyone involved with him appearing in Indy. Do you agree with that? And do you also feel that it will help, while he's there, the branding issue that exists with F1 and Indy, that a lot in the States get the two confused, and that him being there will spark that curiosity, especially for young people, about who Fernando Alonso is and what series he races in?

ZB: Yeah, I think the announcement is great for the world of motorsports, definitely Formula One. Anytime you have a two-time world champion and McLaren racing all the fans are going to want to see how the Formula One team and the Formula One driver does. I think that's definitely going to raise a lot of awareness for Formula One, because that's the headline: Formula One driver, Formula One team. On the flipside, obviously great for Indianapolis. I think the last time there was that much noise was when Nigel Mansell came over to Indianapolis when he had won the world championship with you [Claire Williams]. It's great, it's a lot of intrigue and it's a real racer thing to do that used to happen all the time with the Jackie Stewarts and the Mario Andrettis and that's all the feedback we've had 'it's great to see it' and hopefully we'll be competitive.

Q: (Kate Walker – Motorsport.com). One of the things we have seen with our new owners is a loosening up of an awful lot of things in the paddock and the surrounding environment and I was wondering if you had seen a similar loosening up in the attitude of sponsors towards Formula One. Whether or not deal are being done or not, are you seeing increased enquiries or increased interest from parties new or old?

ZB: Yeah, I think there is a really good buzz around Formula One. It's early days, finding partners takes time. We've been fortunate to announce a couple: Logitech in Australia. I think everyone is excited about the future of Formula One. Liberty Group, which is now really FOM, we keep calling them Liberty but it is FOM, are going to push the envelope and I think there is... the drivers, you see them doing a lot more fan engagement, there is a big degree of optimism in pit lane.

CW: Everything Zak said really. I don't want to repeat what he said. The level of interest is higher than it probably normally is, certainly more than it has been for the last two or three years at least. But I think, as Zak said, people are waiting to see what happens. Liberty, I'm sorry, FOM, have got some great ideas and teams are able to do more than they have been in past season and that's going to have a positive knock-on effect but the more we see coming out of the sport I think that's going to then start increasing the conversations we are having, and maybe towards the end of this year when our conversations for '18 start ramping up that's when we'll really see the positive impact.

CH: I thought it was great to see Bernie doing a Facebook Live from the paddock earlier today. Times are obviously moving on and changing. Opening up the digital channels had an immediate impact where the personalities of the drivers are shining through a bit more. The way people follow media in general now, particularly social and digital media, being able to engage with drivers, with teams through a race weekend, seeing some of the behind the scenes action of what's going on. Some of the content that's getting out there is fantastic and Formula One is all about generating great content and great on-track stuff and if we can bring more fans in through some of the social channels hopefully they will turn on the broadcast on a Sunday to see what happens in a grand prix. Hopefully the strategy that's being worked upon and built for the future will enable more revenue streams to come into the sport.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and Speedsport) Claire and Christian, would you ever consider letting one of your drivers skip a grand prix to compete in another race?

CW: I knew that someone was going to ask this question! And not to upset the gentleman on my left but, no. I don't know if that's because I'm my father's daughter and I know Frank probably wouldn't but no I don't think I would but I won't expand on the reasons why.

CH: It's a difficult one for Fernando, he's having a tough time. Zak's got the problem that he got a depressed driver on his hands; he's trying to keep him motivated. He's come up with this idea – send him to Indianapolis. Must be barking mad, it's the nuttiest race I've ever seen. No testing. He's just going to jump in the car. Turn One is a proper turn as well. It's not just easy flat all the way round. I think he needs to see a psychiatrist personally. Would we let our drivers do it – no. I believe if a driver commits to a team... it's a bit like disappearing with another girlfriend half way through the year and then coming back, it doesn't seem the right thing to be doing. Perhaps if the races didn't clash or do it at the end of his Formula One career, but obviously McLaren have got this approach which is different to ours but good for them.

Any reaction?

ZB: Fernando's not scared. No, he's going to get some testing in. He is studying Indianapolis. It's obviously going to be a challenge but he wants a challenge. A rookie driver won it last year. Not that we're going to set any expectations. He'll have a car capable of running at the front. He'll be extremely prepared and I think he's going to put on a good show. He's very smart and that's what you need to be around Indianapolis. So yeah, I think it's going to be good. Everybody is going to be watching.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) I wonder, I heard many people here in the paddock saying that maybe one of the reasons Red Bull does not have a competitive car is because it was concepted with the suspension it used with success last year and was legal. Then suddenly the suspension was not legal and then you almost lost the project. Is there any meaning in it?

CH: Unfortunately not. It sounds good and I'd love to be able to hang our coat on that one but the clarifications that came out about suspension shut avenues of development down and the systems we're running on the car are very similar, almost identical to what we ran last year. We started to pursue a different route over the winter in R&D that never actually ran on the car because of the weight involved – and that's another challenge of the current cars. All it did is close off that avenue. It didn't fundamentally change anything. I think our problems are more aerodynamic than they are mechanical and that's very much where the focus of attention is.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) If we have a look at the respective histories of your teams, Claire in your case Williams' last big winning period was before you branched out into Advanced Engineering, if you look at McLaren, McLaren's successful periods were between Can-Am and the road car operations: whenever you seem to do something else, Formula One results have dropped off, in Red Bull's case, you're now looking at the road car work with Aston Martin. Is it purely coincidental that Formula One results seem to drop off as teams get involved in other activities or should Formula One actually be a single-minded pursuit?

CW: We set up Williams Advanced Engineering in 2010-2011 and despite the one-blip wonder of Barcelona in 2012 we haven't had much success since the parting of the ways with BMW

which was, what? Six years prior to that. So, I don't think you could possibly say our dip in performance was related to the fact that we set up Advanced Engineering. I disagree. Having seen how our operation works, and how integrated the two are, there are very fine boundaries between the two. Yes, there are some shared facilities operationally but each business division operates independently of the other and doesn't strain resources of the other. Actually, they benefit each other. So, for us having an advanced engineering division is fantastic from a partner perspective and there are shared learnings as well on each side from a technological perspective so, from a Williams perspective, I don't believe the reason we had a dip in performance was because we setup a different division. I think if you are set up efficiently and properly then you are perfectly capable with having both.

ZB: I think in McLaren's case that's not accurate. We did the F1 Road Car in the 1990s and have won multiple championships since. We then built, with our former partner Mercedes, some road cars and we were winning races. And I think, as Claire said, these are individual businesses. There are learnings from one to the other but we are not a few thousand employees and the people building the automotive cars are not the people involved in Formula One, or [McLaren] Applied Technologies. So I think it's beneficial, they learn from each other and I think it's nothing more than a coincidence that you point that out and the three of us here have additional activities. I think you need to have additional activities and it's pretty hard to be just a Formula One team now is also the commercial reality.

CH: Red Bull's run Red Bull Technology for many years now, supplying obviously, Toro Rosso, various elements, obviously within the regulations. Red Bull Advanced Technology has been a further development of that. Has it had an impact on our performance? I don't think so in reality. I think that it's a small group of people that are focussed in a separate building. Of course, Adrian is splitting his time between the two projects so you could argue, 'well, Adrian being half-time involved in Formula One, has that had an impact or not?' but the group is sufficiently big to be able to cope with that. Of course, his interest and input into Formula One is pretty intense at the moment.

Q: (Louis Dekker – NOS) For Christian. How much damage can a T-wing make?

CH: Today it did about £50,000 worth of damage so I think they should be banned on the grounds of safety and cost! And that's not just because we don't have one. It's unfortunate. It's one of those things. A bit of debris on the circuit today that had fallen off, I think, Bottas' car. Max was the unlucky victim that was the first car at speed to come across it. It did quite a lot of damage to the underside of the car. One of those things, unfortunately.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) To all of you. You were talking about better promoting Formula One and everything. What do you think about some teams that they don't make the drivers available for the media? And also, if you go to the media centre, and you look, all the time the teams dedicate to the media in general are extremely low – and all of them at the same time. If you are alone, you must choose where to go. Don't you think it time Formula One tried to follow different rules, to put media in the place media should be with all respect that is missing today?

ZB: I think with drivers, obviously with time, they have a lot of demands behind the scenes with sponsors and engineers and the fans. And media want to spend as much time with them as they can, which is understandable. I think we need to be more creative in how the media engage with the drivers and vice versa and how the drivers engage with the fans. I know our drivers are very happy to talk about new and exciting topics in new and different ways, and so I think hopefully some of this stuff teams can work together on with the drivers and the media and FOM. I think the energy and excitement is there, we just need to do it in new and innovative ways.

CH: Personally... Formula One is a media business and the drivers, part of their responsibility is to communicate with the fans and in order to sometimes do that, obviously, they've got to communicate with the media. My biggest bugbear and the thing that really pisses me off is when you see drivers sitting up here with a mobile phone showing zero interest. So, I think Matteo should ban mobile phones from all press conferences with drivers. They can Snapchat now whenever they like outside. I think they have a responsibility. They are the heroes that people are looking to. Looking to be inspired by, looking to follow, looking to get excited by. They have a

responsibility as well to driving the car but to promote the brands that they represent, the teams that they represent and the sport overall.

CW: I totally agree with what both Christian and Zak have said. I think it's all of our responsibilities as teams, drivers, to do more and to be more present and available to fans, to the media. I know that Liberty, FOM, have lots of plans in place. As I said earlier, it's going to take them a while to evolve through that process – but I think that process needs to be done collaboratively with the teams and the teams engaged. I don't think you should be looking at one thing you think there's a problem with and trying to fix that. It needs to be done from a holistic perspective with everybody working together in order to achieve the maximum benefit for the whole of the sport.

Q: (Louis Dekker – NOS) Question for all three of you. After China, this is Bahrain, which is mentally, physically hard on team members. Your colleagues, are they all 100 per cent the same as in China or did you fly in members from other parts of the world. Does the team change in a week?

CH: Fundamentally the team doesn't change. On average, we're travelling with mid-70s in terms of personnel, 75-76 people. We have less marketing people here because we're quieter on the hospitality but the guys in the garage are 95 per cent all the same people that you would have seen in China last weekend; the guys and girls in the engineering department are all the same. Of course, there's a few additional people that have come out, that we rotate, so they experience a grand prix weekend. And then there's a bigger influx of people for the two-day test, so we'll actually have more people at the test than we do at the race for the two days of running with one car.

ZB: We had a lot of people that went direct from China to here. I went back on Sunday night and came back on Wednesday, I think the teams are pretty used to it. It's not an abnormal schedule. And then you get on the right sleep patterns and it's nice that this race is not a super-early start – obviously it ends later. But no, I think everyone's in good shape.

CW: Nothing to add, it's the same.

PART TWO: TEAM PERSONNEL – Mattia BINOTTO (Ferrari), James ALLISON (Mercedes), James KEY (Toro Rosso)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Mattia, a lot of new parts on the car this weekend. How have they performed and can you give us an explanation of the stoppages for Räikkönen and also for Vettel?

Mattia BINOTTO: It's true, we've got a few new parts on the car this weekend. The most obvious was the front wing. To see how if they are behaving well or not, we need some more analysis. So far, so good but let's see when the engineers have looked at all the data what we run for the rest of the weekend. On the problems we've got. In FP1, power unit issues for Kimi, I think it was quite obvious. We change it for the afternoon, just a precaution, important for us to make sure Kimi could run in the afternoon trouble-free. And then for what happened, honestly it's still to be fully understood. We analyse all the parts and hopefully all the elements of the power unit could be used in the future once again and sorted out. In the afternoon with Seb we had a minor electrical problem but this one is not too worrying and we had the opportunity to run once again within the afternoon.

Q: The second question is, how did you manage to deal with taking on the new technical management structure last summer and then produce a competitive 2017 car. What were the building-blocks for this? How did you do it?

MB: I think honestly we've got in Maranello good people, good engineers. It's a good, and great team. Finally it's really the team itself that works well and very hard during the winter time and somehow we got the good results we've got so far.

Q: James Allison, welcome. You only joined Mercedes last month so where is your input going at the moment: to the 2017 development or to the 2018 design masterplan?

James ALLISON: OK, well all of my effort at the moment is just focused on getting properly up to speed with a completely new group of people and a big and complicated organisation, so that I'm able to contribute as I learn more and more about that organisation. So it's learning where I stand now, hopefully contributing as I do so to this season and looking beyond to the seasons to come.

Q: Well the other person who is new within that team is Valtteri Bottas and we're seeing him improving through the testing and through the first two races. Can you give us a bit of insight into what you're seeing behind the scenes in terms of his development?

JA: Yeah, we are both the new boys but Valtteri has certainly found his feet very quickly with his engineering team in the racing group and has shown, really from the outset, that he has a very tidy pace but he's learned quickly all the systems on this car and he's bedding himself in very well to the team and starting to do what we hoped he would do which is be pretty close and ever closer to Lewis.

Q: And James Key, coming to you: three points scores from four starts so far, fourth in the Constructors' championship. Is this shaping up to be your most competitive season for a while?

James KEY: Well, we've got ninety per cent of the season to go still at the moment, so I think we have to be a little bit careful. I think where we are is a snapshot of the situation with the teams that are around us to be honest. But yeah, we're fighting to try and be the best of the rest behind the top three teams, just as all the other teams around us are. I think although it's going to be substantially down to a development race, I think ultimately, given how close everyone is we have got the benefit of probably the most experienced driver pairing the team's ever had and we're developing PU so there are two things to tick off the list that perhaps we haven't had before. The rest, I guess, is down to us.

Q: How much is success this year dependent on Renault delivering the goods on the engine? Obviously we saw them today going very quickly with the works car.

JK: Absolutely, yeah. I think it's a mix of things to be honest with you. I think that there's still an awful lot of potential left in these power units even now in their fourth year. We see that as each year progresses so more performance is found so definitely it's still got a large authority on the total car's performance still and therefore it's definitely important for us but I think probably with these new regs the chassis has a slightly bigger authority so a mix of the two is ultimately the answer but I don't think you can rely on one or the other.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) Question is to James Allison but if Mr Binotto would comment afterwards. James, you started in Ferrari in July 2013 and the basis of these new regulations was created in February 2015. You left Ferrari in July of last year, so you had a lot of time to work there. What was your importance for this existing car of Ferrari today, because when you left, you also had the final text of the regulations that was decided in April of last year?

JA: Well, I left Ferrari many months ago and joined Mercedes just some small number of weeks ago and anything that Ferrari has done for this year's car, as Mattia said, is a credit to the people that work at Ferrari over these months and what they have delivered. Similarly, in the team that I'm in now, the credit for the fantastic performance of this team so far is down to all the people that have been putting in the effort at Brackley over those months. I can only really be held responsible for the state of my garden at the moment which is looking very fine as a result of all the effort I've put into it in the last six months or so.

MB: I think that somehow James has already answered, nothing more really to add. James was part of our team at the beginning of last year, as it's true that there is plenty of people working at Ferrari and the credit is to everybody.

Q: (Kate Walker – New York Times) I was wondering if you could talk me through the individual decision-making process at each of your teams when it comes to requesting clarification from the FIA on the legality of your opponents' vehicles? At what point do you decide it's worth pursuing and how do you decide when it's not worth the paperwork?

JK: I think it's a case-by-case basis to be honest with you. Clearly we all look at each others' cars, we all have photographers and so on. You rarely see something that's particularly controversial because it would be very obvious to everyone but I think if you felt that someone had something questionable or let's say something you clarified before which the FIA perhaps didn't entirely agree with your view but you see it on another car, typically you might pursue it but I think it's a bit of a case-by-case basis. Sometimes you might talk to the team and question and sometimes you might talk to the FIA and discuss it with them and escalate accordingly but I really think it's very much a case-by-case.

JA: OK, it's pretty much as the other James said. The only thing I would add is that the FIA are normally pretty attentive to these things themselves and it's their job to get on with and decide what's right and what's wrong and they are pretty much on that stuff all the time.

MB: For me, there is one more thing we need to add. Certainly sometimes we seek clarification from the FIA to know exactly what's possible to be developed some more. I think it would be wrong to start development spending investment and money on something which will be judged illegal by the FIA and I think that's the main reason why we are asking the FIA for clarification.

Q: (Lennart Bernke – Bild) Signor Binotto, Niki Lauda said this week he believes the secret behind the success of Ferrari is basically you, since you reorganised the structures and all that. Can you give us a little insight what do you think about the quote from Niki and what did you change since you are in charge since July?

MB: I don't think any comment is necessary and is not really relevant. As I said before, we are many people in Ferrari. Each of us has his role which is an important role and there is not one more important or less important in the team. What we've done since July, I think... as I said, it's a great team with great engineers. It's simply making sure that everybody was delivering, being accountable, feeling accountable and getting the right team spirit.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Whenever there's a major regulation change as we've had for 2017 for example, there are all sorts of various interpretations of the regulations and solutions and whatever else. Referring to what you said just now about case-by-case, are there any details on any cars that you see out there at the moment that any of you have any suspicions about whatsoever or are you totally happy that all cars are legal at the moment?

JK: Yes. I think there's a few things that we probably want to question but there's nothing major, let's say, just details.

JA: I think that's pretty much the case. It's a huge reg change and it's been a remarkably troublefree one so far, given the magnitude of the change. Cars have come out looking good, they've come out hitting the performance targets that the reg change was supposed to have. We've got a brilliant fight at the front of the field. Those are the things that I think the reg change has bought us and if there's any skirmishing going on then it's no different from any other year and is just part of the normal cut and thrust of the sport.

MB: I would agree with what they said and what James Allison just said. I don't think there is anything different compared to the past years, nothing major to be mentioned.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) James Allison, question about the T-wing. It fell off today again as in China. Is there any pattern, that you can already see why it happened?

JA: Well, it's a surprise because we've done a huge number of kilometres without problems and then we've had two annoying hassles so I suspect it will be a small manufacturing defect and it's something we will need to reinforce to make sure it doesn't happen again, come Saturday and Sunday.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) At the end of March there was a meeting of the engine people looking at the formula from 2021 onwards. What would you prefer to see: a completely new change of engine, architecture, etc. or retain the existing one, maybe tickle it round the edges, make it a bit cheaper or whatever; fundamentally retain this one?

MB: We had a good and positive and constructive discussion in Paris and I think that the output finally was that we should try and keep the current format but as you said, a few things certainly need to be reviewed. I don't see any sense why we should change completely. All the automotive is going towards hybrid cars and the technology we've got currently in F1 somehow is on the edge of the technology and that, I think, is where we should be and we need to stay.

JA: Well, as Mattia said, there was a meeting, all sorts of possibilities were discussed and now a bunch of opportunities and guidelines for further discussion were tasked to the teams to look into and come back to that same group and report back in the coming months. I think what's important, as Mattia said, is that the power unit retains the sort of broad direction that it's been heading in and that it stays an important part of the competitive elements of what makes this sport so interesting.

JK: I fully agree with the technological points made by Mattia and James to be honest. I think they are amazing machines that we have in these cars and probably we don't talk about how amazing they are enough to a certain extent. Equally, I'm the only customer here and the majority of teams are customers and when you have the level of authority that these power units currently have over your performance and there's not much you can do about it if you're in a bad shape – and unfortunately my team's been in that position before – it's pretty serious, so I think from a performance point of view we need to consider what options there are, not to rein in people because both Mercedes and Ferrari have done a fantastic job with where they are but when you're really suffering – and there's a team out there now who have been suffering a lot this year, as we know – it really is a bit of a killer and there's not much you can do so we probably want to understand what options there could be because as a customer you're kind of very reliant on your supplier and of course the cost is fundamental as well. The costs now for customer teams are incredibly high. If there's a way to control that better and make it more feasible then that would be very welcomed, I think.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) This year, all the teams are working on new territory: more downforce instead of less downforce. Is there any area in particular after two races that you saw something or 'this I didn't pay attention to properly: this is something new, we didn't realise why we must make an effort', more in one area than another one?

JA: Actually, for such a big regulation change, I don't think any single team has come out with any breathtaking interpretation that everybody else missed. I think there's a number of detailed interpretations that each team will look at the others for but there's not one thing where you think 'oh my God, I wish we'd seen that.' And I think in that regard it's been a pretty successful regulation change. All the teams have done a good job of interpreting what those regs mean and that's one of the reasons why the performance uplift has been where it was supposed to be.

MB: I align with James' comments. So far I would say no main surprises or let's say, OK, we didn't realise, we didn't think about it. I think it's only the start, it's only the start of a new era in terms of new regulations, more to come. We may be surprised later on in the season.

JK: I echo the comments Mattia and James have made, to be honest with you. I suppose the one thing that was obvious for us behind these two guys is the disparity in performance, so there's a lot more still to be found by many of us but it's not one single thing, it's a mix of many things, I think.

Q: Can you pin down the causes of that performance?

JK: I think that if I knew what it was we would be in better shape but I think there's lots of detail and there's some tricks aerodynamically, I think, that are pretty complicated to get right and some have and maybe some haven't. And that could be quite a big performance differentiator

but also power units and other things probably play their role too but there's no one thing but we have got a big spread of performance at the moment, so there's more to be found, for sure.

Ends