



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

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Friday Press Conference Transcript

PART ONE: TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Frédéric VASSEUR (Sauber), Mattia BINOTTO (Ferrari), Mario ISOLA (Pirelli)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Mattia, it's very tight at the top of the timesheets this afternoon. How did today go for you, Ferrari, and how do you assess the pace of nearest rivals?

Mattia BINOTTO: Obviously we just finished the session so we are looking at the data. I think it has been a difficult session because of a lot of traffic, red flags, so difficult somehow to complete the programme. We had to do some compromises on the programme but trying to collect as much data as possible. As you said, the field is very close but nevertheless we are concentrating on ourselves. Trying to optimise the balance of the car will be very important for qualifying and the race. It will be quite hotter Sunday compared to what we got today, so preparing and working on the balance will be very important and key.

Q: And knowing what you know now, are you confident you can be more competitive here than you were at Silverstone two weeks ago?

MB: I think it's always difficult to judge but certainly today was less negative, let's say, compared to what we have seen in Silverstone. But Silverstone is in the past. I think somehow we need to forget it, being focused on what is this weekend. I don't think the comparison is really necessary. More important just being focused on Hungary.

Q: In the past week it has been announced that the Halo head protection is going to be introduced in 2018. Can I ask you about the practicalities of including the Halo on next year's car, just from a cooling point of view, an aerodynamic point of view, how far down the road are you with those developments?

MB: Obviously the decision has been made at the last Strategy Group meeting in the last week. It's quite a late decision compared to the project but nevertheless, because of the safety it's important everybody tries to work very hard on it. The implications are from the chassis structure point of view. So we need to make sure that we are fitting well the Halo on the chassis and the chassis is resisting to the loads that are required by regulations. As well from the aero point of view it may affect certainly the back of the car and that has to be taken into account when designing the new car.

Q: Mario, just a word on today's running. What have we learned about tyre performance, tyre wear, degradation? How many pit stops can you foresee on Sunday?

Mario ISOLA: Difficult question, because, as Mattia said, during FP2, which is the most representative for us to collect some data, we had two red flags. In terms of delta lap time between soft and supersoft we saw something like 0.8s, 0.9s per lap. It is a bit more than we expected. Our estimation was 0.6, but more or less in this range. We know that the medium is not going to be used during this weekend. The temperature is very high, so degradation will be a key factor on the supersoft, especially on the supersoft, but we don't have a number now. The number of pit stops will be dictated by the degradation of the supersoft. The tarmac is new. Last year the circuit was resurfaced. Very smooth, but very black. So the temperature is going up easily and we expect more than 50 degrees tarmac on Sunday, so it could be quite a challenge.

Q: You've done a lot of analysis since Ferrari had their tyres problems at Silverstone two weeks ago. Can you just tell us about the conclusions you have drawn and whether or not they were freak incidents?

MI: We made a lot of analysis to be sure that we were not underestimating any potential issue on the tyres. So we didn't want to say anything about Vettel's tyre, because we saw together with Ferrari the loss of pressure starting from Turn One since Sunday afternoon. We wanted to take some time to analyse deeply both the tyres. We saw two different failures. One was a puncture. The conclusion was, on Vettel's tyre, that it was a puncture with a loss of air starting in Turn One and obviously at a certain point the construction is not able to support the load and in Turn 6 it failed. For Kimi, it was more difficult, because it was not clear at the beginning. The carcass was still in one piece. We had a part of the tread missing and we had two points in which the belt was damaged, on the inside shoulder. So we had to analyse not only Kimi's tyre but most of the tyres used during the race to exclude that there was any other potential issue. We can away with the conclusion when we were 100 per cent sure that we didn't have any other issues. I cannot say it was debris or an impact or something like that because I don't have the evidence but the evidence is that we have the belt that is damaged in two specific points and the rest of the tyre is still OK, but Kimi had to stop to replace the tyre, so this is the result of the investigation.

Q: Fred, welcome back. Hefty accident for Pascal this afternoon. Just a word on his condition and also the state of the car?

Frédéric VASSEUR: It's a bit too early to have a clear conclusion on the reason of the accident, but we will do the investigation. The monocoque looks OK, but we have to investigate a little bit more. I left the garage straight after the end of the session.

Q: You've been in the new job, team principal, for just a week or so, but it's been a busy week. I just wondered if you could talk us through the reasons behind the switch from Honda power in 2018 to Ferrari power?

FV: Yeah, Sauber and Honda signed a memorandum of understanding a couple of weeks ago but things move forward quite fast in our world and I think that the situation was a bit unclear also regarding the collaboration between McLaren and Honda and on our side the engine supplier had to find a solution for the gearbox. We had a deal with McLaren and the situation was a bit more complicated. On the other end, the collaboration with Ferrari is based on a long-term relationship and we had the opportunity to discuss with Ferrari to get the new-spec engine and I think it was a good choice and we found a mutual agreement with Honda to stop the collaboration.

Q: Just to confirm, it will be a current-spec Ferrari engine that the team has...

FV: Not the current one, the next one!

Q: Exactly! Just to finish, I know you have only been there a week but I'd love to get your thoughts on Sauber as a team, both in the short term and in the long term?

FV: The short term, that will be difficult to achieve something – it's a long-term project for sure. But I think the basics are there. The facility is impressive compared to the other teams. I think we are in a good move. The wind tunnel is a good one and the team, I think that Sauber is still in F1 an iconic name and there is a real team spirit, quite comparable to the team spirit I had last year at Enstone. Everybody is really dedicated, pushy, and now that the financial structure is stabilised I think we can have some hope for the future.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Roksana Cwik – SwiatWyscigow) A question for Mr Vasseur. When you brought Robert Kubica to Spa and he drove the RS01, did you think he would be here?

FV: No, at this stage he did some test sessions in the simulator before. I tried to help him for different reasons. We had the opportunity to do a race in the RS01 in Spa. He did it and he did a good job, but it's not my project anymore!

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Question to Fred, I wonder if you could clarify exactly what your position is please? Are you responsible for the total Formula One programme, including marketing, sponsorship, whatever, or only the sporting side. And if not, who else reports to Mr Picci?

FV: My position is quite clear, that I'm the CEO of the company and team principal. It means that at the end of the day I am in charge of all the departments.

Q: (Peter Farkas – Auto Motor) Mattia, this track might be a completely different story but in the last few races we've seen Mercedes maybe gaining a bit on Ferrari. Do you think it was because there has been some decisions like the restrictions regarding the floor or engine oil burning, or just because you're at different phases of development during the year and it will ebb and flow between you?

MB: I think that each race is different to the others. There have been races at the start of the season where we have been competitive and others where Mercedes has been competitive. If you look, for example, Bahrain very early in the season, they have been very competitive in qualifying, we have been in the race. I don't think that there is a clear tendency and a clear trend on the competitiveness of the two teams. Certainly the development is very important. That has to be done race by race. There are still many races to go, we are just half of the season and I don't see any reasons why this should be one trend or another one. I think that oil burning, as you mention, is something that is not directly related to Ferrari and the floor, honestly I don't think there is any impact on our performance.

Q: (Peter Farkas – Auto Motor) This is again to Mattia. We have seen that both of your drivers are now on their fourth turbochargers. Is it just normal as you are playing around with the element or is it cause for concern and now basically you are sure you will have to take a penalty later this year?

MB: Certainly it is somehow a concern in the fact that we had failure on the turbo at the start of the season and we have to replace them at the very start and you introduce very early in the season turbo number three and turbo number four. Having said that, we introduce as well in the following turbos some modifications for reliability. They are running well at the moment, so we've got all the pool at the moment that have been introduced but we've got all the mileage available on each turbo, so we are rotating them and, obviously it's our objective to conclude the season with the current pool of turbos.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Mattia, a lot of your motorsport and road car competitors are embracing Formula E with a vengeance. Could you see Ferrari ever doing that?

MB: That's something that sometimes we have discussed internally but no decision have been taken and honestly it's a decision that is not down to my responsibility. So, I have no clue and no answer for you.

PART TWO: TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Paddy LOWE (Williams), Nick CHESTER (Renault), Paul MONAGHAN (Red Bull)

Q: Nick, if we can start with you, it's been a difficult day for Jolyon in particular. Incidents in both of those sessions. What state is his car in now? He had the new floor this morning: how much damage this afternoon?

Nick CHESTER: Well, we've got a little bit of work to do as you can probably guess from seeing the TV, so we'll be changing his gearbox anyway because we normally change it on a Friday night, so the rear suspension will get refreshed with that. The floor that was damaged this morning will be repaired and that will go on tomorrow, so he'll have the news-spec floor. To be honest there's nothing that we're not used to repairing. We'll get it all sorted for tomorrow.

Q: Silverstone a couple of weekends ago was a tremendous weekend for Nico Hülkenberg. The new floor seemed to give a lot of advantages there. Does that translate to even more performance around here? How is the performance of the car?

NC: From what we've seen so far today it looks pretty similar. So, we're seeing a pretty good performance here. I think Nico was seventh in P2. It's performing like Silverstone really and we're seeing that performance gain that we did see at Silverstone.

Q: Given the different characteristics of the two circuits, is that very encouraging for you?

NC: It is, yeah, because they're two circuits that are very far apart, so if you can perform on Silverstone and Hungary, you should be in a reasonable place for the rest of the year.

Q: And final question from me is about the Halo. Obviously it's been confirmed that it's going to be introduced in 2018. Do you see it an aero opportunity, as well as obviously the safety benefits. Are there any performance benefits that could come from it?

NC: No, not really. I think Halo, for starters, it's good to have something there that's going to give the driver more protection and everyone's behind that and wants to put it on the car for that reason. But in terms of aero, if anything it's a detriment and, if anything, you have to work around it being fitted to the car. So, I don't think they'll be any huge tricks with it. I think everyone will just want to put it on the car and make it the best they can for the drivers.

Q: Paddy, you've been in this game a long time. Your thoughts on the Halo?

Paddy LOWE: Yeah, there's obviously a lot being written about it. It seems to be quite controversial, let's say. I think it's worth bearing in mind the context. Probably five or six years ago the TRM themselves had identified that the big risk they could see still in the sport was to the driver's head and there were a number of near-misses, typically one per year that we all saw go by and thought one day that could end in tragedy. So that was the

background to developing a solution, and we ended up here with the best option being the Halo. I know it's not the most attractive device but I do think it's the right decision to get it on the car. At least then we've started, we can always make it better in the future. I'm sure we can improve it year on year but at least we've put in place that protection that we intended from the start.

Q: Looking at today's performance, difficult day for the team but in fact it's been a difficult few races for the team and, if you look at the points this year versus last year, you're on 41 now, at the same stage in 2016 you had 92 points. Obviously it's a tougher season but where is the performance lacking this year with the FW40?

PL: Yeah, definitely at the half-term report stage we're not looking as good as we'd like. We're very disappointed, the car is quicker than that points table would reflect. I think one of our biggest problems has been that we haven't been scoring the points we should have done at the track with our speed of car. That's for a number of different reasons. On top of that, we've seen a lot of variation from circuit to circuit. There are places that we significantly under-perform and we really need to have a car that will perform more equally at different destinations, so that's a big focus for next year.

Q: Have you ascertained why the car underperformed at those tracks?

PL: Some of those things we understand, some of them we don't. So there's a lot of work to do. But we're very much hoping we can have a better second half of the season and put some of that right.

Q: Paul, well a very promising start to the weekend for you guys, particularly with Daniel. Your thoughts on how today's gone – and what is Daniel saying about the car?

Paul MONAGHAN: Today offers a lot of encouragement, doesn't it? Both our drivers seem competitive and sadly we haven't got 43 points from Friday afternoon. The bit that remains in our control is our car, so we'll try to work on it overnight, improve it, get the drivers more settled with their setup choices and so on and so forth, and we'll deploy ourselves tomorrow, keep it in good order and see what our competitiveness is like in qualifying and then obviously on Sunday in the race. That's about all we can actually do. The pace of our competitors is down to them, isn't it?

Q: Is this performance track-specific or are you confident you can go forward and be competitive everywhere now?

PM: Up until Silverstone I think Daniel had five podiums in a row, didn't he, so we've been competitive at tracks where we thought we might be a bit weaker, we might have thought we might have been a bit better. In general our car is adept at dealing with most of the tracks. Some will suit us a bit more than others. That's inevitable and that's something true of all the cars in the pitlane. Coming to this one, OK, some of our weaknesses are masked, others are highlighted, but the bit that remains in our control is our car, and let's see what we can do with it tomorrow.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Kate Walker – Motorsport . com) For all three of you please, on the halo: in the briefing yesterday, Charlie was saying that while there are aesthetic objections, you guys have got opportunities with fairings and whatnot to make the device slightly more palatable. I was wondering to what extent you've already begun looking at improving the aesthetics and the performance of the halo or is 2018 just going to be spec and move on from there?

PM: The fairings were, I believe, agreed around about July 2016 or the extent of them. We will make use of the fairings, as Nick alluded to, to reduce the aerodynamic detriment of the halo and I think, beyond that, the aesthetics of it. Yes, if we can have a fairing which reduces some of the aerodynamic detriment and makes it - to the eye of the beholder, shall we say, slightly more aesthetic, we'll take that solution but I think the aesthetics of it, it's not put on there for that reason, is it? It's put on there as a safety device. We'll put the fairings on it, we'll do the work that Nick's talking about, to reduce the detriment and that will be on for 2018.

PL: Well, firstly the definition isn't finally issued yet so we don't exactly know what opportunities we'll have but I believe we'll have the space to minimise the aerodynamic detriment as Nick was saying, and hope within that, generally, we try and find a good aesthetic and these things often go together.

NC: Not much to add. The fairings are allowed; it's a fairly small fairing and as Paddy has said, not all of the regulations for fairings are finalised yet. We'll be doing a little bit to reduce the aerodynamic deficit.

Q: (Andrew Benson - BBC Sport) Nick, you're testing Robert Kubica again on Wednesday. Can I ask you a few questions in one about that? How it initially came about? How long the team had stayed in touch with him? Who contacted who? Why now, after six and a half years? The mental fortitude and struggle it's taken him to get to this point and what you've seen so far about his readiness to return to Formula One?

NC: OK. Yeah, quite a few questions there. Yeah, to start off, the background... I must admit I don't fully know the background or how the contact was made but obviously we know Robert, we know him from when he drove in Renault before. He was a super driver. It's nice to give him the opportunity to get back in a V8, get some mileage, see how he can handle it and then he'll get another opportunity in current machinery in the test after Hungary and it's a good opportunity to see what he can do and whether he can come back to Formula One someday.

Q: (Andrew Benson - BBC Sport) From what you've seen so far, what would you say about his readiness and his physical limitations and whether they affect him in the car and what changes you've had to make to the car to adapt to those?

NC: Yeah, well from what we've seen so far his mental fortitude is great, he's pushed very hard to come back. Physically I think he's passed all of his fitness tests and we've had to do very little to the car so he's actually managed pretty well in a modern F1 car.

Q: Nick, can you give us any more details about the steering wheel, have you had to make changes to how he changes gear or anything like that?

NC: We've made some little adaptations but nothing too serious.

Q: (Roksana Cwik - SwiatWyscigow) Mr Lowe, we saw in the second practice that Felipe had a lot of problems in turns four and five. He also asked for the car to be checked. Can you say something more about those problems?

PL: Yeah, Felipe did have a couple of spins in P2 which took him by surprise so we are still trying to understand and analyse those. At this point, we haven't understood it. It was interesting that in that session, a lot of cars were going off at corner entry with very unstable balance so we don't know whether it might be something to do with the tyres, some general characteristic or not or something to do with our car.

Q: (Istvan Simon - Auto Magazin) Mr Chester, we have seen a pretty bad accident by Jolyon in free practice when he basically crashed the undertray of the car or the

diffuser of the car. Do you know the reason? Was it a driver failure or a failure of the kerbs or anything else?

NC: Yeah, I think you're probably referring to the free practice one accident. Yeah, he ran wide over the kerbs and just... there is a little drop on the outside of the kerbs and that's enough to bounce the chassis and the floor and the front wing so yeah, it was just enough to rip the front wing off.

Q: (Istvan Simon - Auto Magazin) Is it the same as we had last year?

NC: The kerbs are slightly different so there was a single row last year, there's now a double row so they are different and really the intention is the drivers shouldn't be going right over the second set of kerbs.

Q: (Istvan Simon - Auto Magazin) Do you have a spare part for this?

NC: Yeah, we do, fortunately. We've got a reasonably good stock of front wings and we're repairing floors for him so we will be in good shape from tomorrow.

Q: (Peter Farkas - Auto Motor) This is primarily for Paul but all three of you please... Even in P1 we saw a spectacular time from Daniel. He was only a couple of hundredths from the lap record, set in 2004 so was it a surprise that the track was so quick, even in P1? But in P2, there didn't seem to be such a huge track evolution. I mean he only went a little bit better so do you have an explanation for that, did it surprise you that it was already so quick in P1 and why it wasn't so much quicker in P2?

PM: OK. Hungary, as we used to come here years ago, you would see the plumes of dust behind the cars in P1 and there was a huge track evolution. I think to all of our benefits, the track is now superbly cleaned before we start running and as such on the slightly cooler track, if that suits your car and tyres a little bit better, then P1 is an opportunity to operate the car near its limits without being grip limited by dust and so on and exploiting track evolution. Therefore, as the track warms up, it's not always possible to then have the evolution you typically see from some of the other tracks in P2 and I'm not surprised we didn't see big steps for the second practice, to be perfectly honest. As for the actual lap time, when you do a simulation, you can obviously factor in an amount of grip on the track; we put in what we think is the aero model, what we think is the engine model, verification actually happens at the track so... Everybody can have a go at their simulation and then we'll all say yes, we're on it, or no we're not or we're quicker, we're slower. It doesn't actually matter. We don't race the simulation tool. That helps the preparation, it helps everybody and now it's down to Saturday and Sunday for the competition.

Q: Paul, can you give us a guesstimate of what you think pole position might be tomorrow? What time?

PM: I'm not going to do that, no. I'm going to duck that issue on the basis I can't tell you how fast our competitors' cars could be and nor am I going to tell you how fast our one can be.

Q: From Paddy and Nick: any thoughts on the grip level available in FP1 and the track evolution or not?

PL: Only to say, as Paul was saying, one of the tricky things in modern Formula One is tracking the evolution of the track but what was the track temperatures, these tyres are very sensitive to track temperature. It's one of the challenges we face and you know that today was no better example.

NC: Yeah, very similar. I think the cars are very sensitive to tyre temperature. The track temperature came up for the second session and it was a little bit windier as well so I think that made it a bit tougher for some of the drivers.

Ends