



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2016 British Grand Prix
Friday Press Conference Transcript
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TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Dave RYAN (Manor), Eric BOULLIER (McLaren), Vijay MALLYA (Force India), Claire WILLIAMS (Williams), Maurizio ARRIVABENE (Ferrari), Toto WOLFF (Mercedes)

PRESS CONFERENCE

First question to all you, it's been two weeks since the UK public voted to exit the European Union. As team principals employing many EU nationals in the UK, as well as UK nationals in Italy of course, what impact do you think this will have going forward and what impact has the falling pound, for example, made so far?

Toto WOLFF: Well, for us it has a big impact because from a personal level we don't know where it's going to go. There are many experts working in Brackley and we don't know how that's going to be handled in the future and it's the same in Germany, within the DTM team there are many Brits and it looks like everybody could be impacted the situation. In terms of the currencies, you can't interfere anyway. The weak pound is not so bad for us as we are getting the income in dollars and the mothership subsidises in euros, so it is actually a good ratio. But we have to wait and see. Nobody really knows what consequences are going to be, whether some kind of agreements are going to be formed. There is no short-term impact I guess.

Vijay, your thoughts?

Vijay MALLYA: I've reviewed the position at Force India and we are largely British-centric, so we don't expect that Brexit will affect us in any significant way. Of course the depreciation in the value of the pound helps because the income is largely in dollars. Other than that I see no change.

Claire?

Claire WILLIAMS: I think it's slightly too early to see what the long-term impacts are for us as a business. There have been some short-term impacts around costs. We unfortunately pay for our engine in euros. All the hard work that we have done to bring the cost down by €4m for 2018 have been counterbalanced. Maybe Toto will let us pay for our engines in euros going forward, I don't know – a conversation offline. And then, for us there are concerns on

the medium term once Article 50 is invoked and the implications of that around freedom of people to move in employment. I think we have to wait and see the true implications of that. Personally, for us an independent team, we don't have a mothership, like Toto does, and many other teams, and sponsorship is one of our key incomes. I think with the political instability that Brexit has caused there are a lot of businesses out there that are going to have to wait and see what they do particularly with their marketing spend and that of course could have implications for us as an independent team. As much as we were having great conversations prior to the referendum, those conversations are slowing down now and people are waiting to see what's going to happen. That's a real concern for us and I think a concern for a lot of sports teams out there. But again, I'm not going to worry too much. I think we'll wait and see what happens.

Dave?

Dave RYAN: Well, I think it's early days yet. Everyone seems to have an opinion but we don't know what's going to happen. The government doesn't know what's going to happen, so for us to speculate is just a bit too soon I think.

And Eric, as a Frenchman working in England, with a Japanese partner?

Eric BOULLIER: Just a few visa issues maybe in the future, but I doubt it's going to be that complicated. I think everything has been said. Nobody knows. We are definitely not the right experts to predict what is going to happen. It's a concern just to know where we go, exchanging, travelling, our money currency but so far nobody knows, so we just monitor what's going on.

And finally Maurizio, obviously you employ quite a few Brits.

Maurizio ARRIVABENE: Concerning Ferrari we are at the early stage. We have some employees they are coming from the UK. We are at the early stage now to evaluate how the situation is going to evolve. The big problems need to be solved at the European level with all the member states to better evaluate the impact of this decision. At the right time we will see how it's going to impact the guys working in our company but at the moment it's more important to have a clear vision and a clear view on the global situation in the EU and I think that the problem is even bigger than what could be related to us.

Thanks for that. Coming back to you Eric, obviously a positive result in Austria and news that you have another update from Honda. Are you getting towards your performance targets for 2016 and how is the second half of the season roll out for you?

EB: Let's say the development is going as per to plan. As far as targets are concerned we have much more ambitious targets, but this is as per plan going so far. There are some more upgrades coming this year and we believe if it's like today, we have validated all our upgrades as per planned on the engineering side and I hope that the other ones will be as the one we had before. But we keep working hard and keep under-promising and slowly, little by little we are getting there.

Thank you. Vijay, we haven't seen you for a while. You said a few weeks ago in an interview that your circumstances mean that you are devoting much more time these days to the Formula One team. Tell us about that?

VM: I am. First of all, I'm absolutely delighted and over the moon to be here in Silverstone. Apart from the fact that Silverstone is a very special race track for Force India, I am personally delighted I'm here, because all the other races I have virtually experienced in this virtual world. But sadly, currently I am unable to travel. That has to go through due legal process. And since I am now spending my time in England – far more regulated, less hectic – I am doing what I am passionate about. And one thing I sure am passionate about is Force India and Formula One and I spend a lot more time, I get a lot of pleasure out of it and the team is delivering results.

Absolutely. Okay thank you for that. Dave, in the points in Austria. You've had a very long career in Formula One and I'm sure you've had many more important results in many ways, but how much did that result mean to you and the team ?

DR: It was a big moment for the team. I think more than anything else it put a bit of a marker down that we are serious players and we are working very hard. Yeah, it's one point and we need a lot more points, but it's one step at a time. So a great moment in the development of the team.

Maurizio, you've confirmed Kimi Raikkonen today for the 2017 season. Was that mainly due to his performances and podiums so far this season and did you have any other candidates under serious consideration?

MA: We confirmed Kimi because first of all he deserves it. Having said so we are looking for the interests of the team and the interest of the team was not looking for another driver but concentrating on car development. We have two good drivers so that was not an issue for us, so we remove all the pressure from the shoulders of Kimi in taking this decision, that actually was confirmed yesterday in a phone call from the President, and a couple of hours [later] we are with Kimi. We turn the page and we look forward to work very hard where the problem is.

Picking up on that Claire, where are you at with drivers for next year?

CW: We are evaluating our options. We still feel it's quite early in the year to be making our decision. We have some performance issues at the moment so we really need Valtteri and Felipe to be concentrating on their track performance rather than worrying about what's happening in 2017. As you'd expect those conversations are going on behind closed doors and when we're ready to make an announcement we will, but I don't foresee that being the next few races.

Just picking up on what you said there, it's clear that Williams haven't been able to build on the performance of 2014 and 2015. What effect is that having on your thinking about strategy for next year and beyond?

CW: Running a Formula One team you have always have to evolve don't you and you have to look at your performance and if you need to make changes, whatever those changes may be, then you have to do that. We don't want to be going backwards. At the moment we seem to be having to look over our shoulders more than looking ahead to Red Bull and worrying about the Force Indias. That's a problem and that's a real concern for us and we need to address it. Fortunately, we've done quite a lot of analysis over the past few races to identify those areas of weakness and put them right. For us, that work is going on behind closed doors. We have some upgrades coming to the next few races, we have a new front

wing here, which we hope is going to deliver a bit more performance to us, but there are other areas, structural areas of weakness in the business that we're addressing at the moment.

Q: Toto, obviously you delivered the ultimatum to your two drivers after the collision in Austria. You called it a final warning: are you satisfied they have 100 per cent got the message? And why did you choose to make this whole process public rather than do everything behind closed doors?

TW: The whole story obviously brought a lot of narrative for everybody and as a team we have always communicated in a transparent way because we believe this is the DNA and the more you try to hide things, the more suspicious you become, the worse you can actually be in control of the situation. So, a lot has been said and I think at that point we should stop and look forward. We believe we have the best driver pairing in Formula One. For sure one of the best driver pairings in Formula One and we have confidence these kind of incidents can be avoided in the future.

And you're satisfied they 100 per cent got the message, yes?

TW: I am satisfied they 100 per cent got the message, yes. But at the end of the day they are behind the steering wheel, they drive the cars and they are in control.

And just quickly, an update on Nico's situation. We saw he had to climb out of the car early in the session.

TW: Yeah, we had a water leak, which at the beginning looked like we can solve the problem and then we figured out that it was meaning to take more risks on the engine if we were to go into the session.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Joe Saward – Auto X) Question for Vijay. You say you're passionate about the sport, and you are the FIA representative of India. You don't want to go back to India to solve the problem, what would you say to people who say that you're doing the sport damage?

VM: Nobody has ever said that I'm doing the sport any damage. Irrespective of where in the world I physically am present, doesn't affect my contribution in any part of the world. Certainly in India. I have been used to managing a multinational group of companies for the last 30 years and I couldn't possibly be physically present in each territory in which my business interests operate but yet I was able to guide and contribute and that continues.

Q: (Abhishek Takle – Mid-Day) Question to Vijay. You said things have to go through the due legal process but you expect to be able to go to more races this season and as you mean you are able to travel, would you consider returning to India to fight the allegations levelled against you there? Thank you.

VM: First of all, with respect, this is an FIA press conference about motorsport and not about my ability to travel. Having said that, when the due legal process follows its logical course, your questions will be automatically answered. Until then my job is to make sure that Force India continues to perform and closes the gaps to my dear Claire in front.

Q: (Marc Surer – Sky Germany) Question for Toto. Is this the race engine that had the problem today?

TW: No, it's not. It's a Friday engine.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Question for Toto. Toto, there's been an awful lot of controversy around your team, the last lap accident, meetings, final warnings, threatened race suspensions, a non-executive chairman making comments whether in a casual context or not which have damaged the relationships. Are you really confident that you and your team are strong enough to control this monster you seem to have created?

TW: We have won eight of nine races this season so far, two championships in the last two years. Nobody speaks of boring racing. There is stories and headlines being created. The spirit within the team is really great. We haven't lost people and we are very much looking forward into the new regulations for next year. So, you as a journalist, you should know that headlines are important for the sport, that headlines are sometimes being blown out of proportion. We contribute with these headlines. Not more, not less.

Q: (Graham Harris – Motorsport Monday) Question for Vijay. Back to racing and next year's car. Are you working exclusively on the 2017 Force India and how are you coping with wind tunnels? Are you still booking, or having to pre-book a Toyota or are there any plans to upgrade your 50 per cent wind tunnel here on site?

VM: To be honest, 2017 we see as a great opportunity, we have already shifted to the 2017 car development. We still continue to use the Toyota wind tunnel facility and for the first time in this team's history we actually have a 60 per cent model in there. So that's the focus. Brackley is an old wind tunnel with a 50 per cent model. In any event, according to the rules, there is a restriction on wind tunnel usage so we obviously like to maximise our time at Toyota.

Q: (Joe Saward – Auto X) You're all looking so miserable I'm going to ask a question. I want an honest answer from all of you. If you could hire someone who's not one of your drivers right now, who would it be? To drive racing cars.

You've just committed Maurizio, so why don't you start with this one?

MA: Why me? I give you a hypothetical answer. The two drivers I have they are fine. And if I have to make a choice it is these two.

Claire?

CW: I would have Nigel Mansell and Juan Pablo Montoya.

Toto?

TW: I like Pascal Wehrlein, Valtteri Bottas, Esteban Ocon. I like Sebastian Vettel also. So a couple that are quite good...

Eric?

EB: Same answer as Maurizio. I'm happy with my drivers. I've got Stoffel on the wing as well. So, Stoffel.

TW: I like that one also!

EB: You can't!

MA: Go back to your motorhome afterwards!

EB: The driver market is now all over the place thanks to Toto.

Vijay?

VM: We are very happy with Nico and Checo. Both are signed for 2017. And really I haven't thought about it beyond that. In any case, we're pretty early, much earlier than normal. We used to wait almost to the onset of winter before we announced our driver line-up but this time we signed both for 2017 well in advance – and of course today's announce by Ferrari put to rest a lot of speculation that has been taking place in the last several weeks.

And finally David.

TW: Well if Toto, if either of his drivers jump ship we'll obviously take either of them.

Q: (Ralf Bach – Sport Bild). Question to Toto. Concerning the background with all the love your drivers feel to each other at the moment. Can you confirm 100 per cent your driver line-up next year will be Lewis and Nico?

TW: Well, you know that we are in discussion with Nico and hopefully these discussions will come to a positive end soon. I have no doubt at the moment that they will so absolutely yeah, this is going to be the line-up next year. You can never say 100 per cent because you don't know what happens tomorrow and after tomorrow. If one gets food poisoning he will not be driving – so you can never confirm 100 per cent. But I am very, very confident that will be the line-up.

Q: (Graham Harris – Motorsport Monday) Claire, Austria saw you take the pit stop win yet again, undefeated all year, something Williams has revelled in and you've actually made yourself the pit stop kings because you concentrated on that. Are you now picking a different aspect to work on as the next phase in the development of the team or were the pit stops just something that was unique that you had to concentrate on?

CW: It's not a case of – with any Formula One team – that you just pick one area of weakness that you need to focus on, obviously, as you will all well know, but last year we had the weakness in our pit stops but it was nothing to do with the performance of our boys, it was more because we had an issue with our wheelguns and our nuts sticking. We've resolved that issue and we're now seeing the performance, and I am personally so proud of the job that our guys are doing. To record the fastest pit stop in every race this year is phenomenal but we need to get every area right in our team and as I said earlier, that we're looking at all our areas of weaknesses, we do, as every team does throughout the course of the year, and try and improve upon on them.

I think it's very clear to see that the car struggles in slow speed corners, the car isn't competitive in the wet, the two key areas and we're currently struggling to understand our tyres. The tyre science is definitely an area that we're looking to build upon.

Q: (Mike Doodson – Auto Action) This is for Vijay: let's stick to sport, Vijay. You're a sporty chap, you've got your interests in Formula One and in Indian cricket. We hear that you

now own a team in the Caribbean premier league. Will this require you to spend time in Barbados and while you're there, do you think you might see any potential for motor racing out there in the Caribbean?

VM: Well, yes, my son does own the Barbados Tridents cricket team and they're currently playing in the Caribbean premier league which requires me to be up from 2am to 6am every morning because of the time change, if I want to watch the games. I've been to Barbados several times, I've been to Bushy Park which is the race circuit. The FIA representative from Barbados is a very dear friend of mine, Andrew Mallalieu, who is absolutely passionate about motor sport. They organise karting events, single-seater events, saloon car events almost every weekend. I can say that the Bajans are very keen on motor sport which is something fantastic to see and witness. So whenever I go to Barbados, I make a point of visiting Bushy Park as well. Now whether my interests are going to go beyond that in Bajan motor sport we will have to see. Right now I'm sticking to cricket.

Q: (Dieter Recken – Racing Lines) Dave, the point scored a week ago ensures that your FOM money going forward is guaranteed for an additional year, which wasn't the case beforehand and particularly now there are eleven teams. Does this mean that you're able to make proper investment plans and if so, how are you aiming to develop the team?

DR: The plan was always to make investment in the team, that was always going to happen and it's an ongoing process. If you were party to what was going on in the team you would see that we're looking forward, we're planning not just for 2017 but beyond that and we plan, our goal, is to be a solid midfield team so we're working towards that and that's what we're gearing up to do.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Maurizio, talking with the TV you said that to explain why you signed a contract with Kimi so early in the season that he signed a little bit the pressure you wanted to take off the pressure from his own shoulders. Could you explain us how a driver show you that the pressure, that he's under pressure about the contract please?

MA: The story of the pressure was at the end of my answer because I said something more interesting before and I said that our main interest, our issue, was not related to the driver. We were very proud and very happy about the work of Kimi since the beginning of the season. He was asked to show his commitment, his results so he deserved the confirmation for next year. Then I was talking about the fact that we needed a kind of good atmosphere in the team and the drivers could help to keep this atmosphere and due to the fact that the team is still quite new and we need to keep the same commitment for everybody without inserting into the team elements that they can disturb or something new that could break this balance. Having said so, I also said that we confirm Kimi not very soon, because we are in July but normally the tradition of Ferrari, this is probably what you refer to, it was to do a press release in Monza. We are a new team, we have changed the tradition and we are confirming now because I think we would like to be, as I said, focused and concentrated on car development and not about confirmation or non-confirmation of the drivers. So it's a message of stability.

Relating to the pressure, you know better than me that in the last three or four races every time that Kimi was sitting in a press conference somebody would ask what about his contract, what about your contract? I asked many many times for a bit of respect for a driver that was a World Champion with Ferrari. I know that his nickname is Iceman but he's a

human being. Sometimes in Formula One we need to be conscious that we are talking, not with cars because actually the computer talks with the car but the cars are driven by human beings so even Iceman is a human being with his emotions and I think he could feel the pressure. That's it .

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Dave, back to my previous question to you when you said that you've got various plans in place and in progress and whatever else. It's no secret that your facilities are fairly modest so what are these plans? Are you going to build a wind tunnel, are you going to get cfd in or a gearbox shop? What are the plans?

DR: We're quite happy being a modest facility to be honest. We've got great partners with Mercedes, with Williams Advanced Engineering so that side of it is good. We are expanding our capabilities and you will see that in due course.

Q: (Graham Harris – Motorsport Monday) To all six of you, given the crash by Checo in Austria last weekend where the team couldn't let him know what was going on with the brakes situation due to the FIA's clampdown on radio communication, has there been any talk amongst you as the strategy group or amongst team principals in talking to the FIA about perhaps relenting a little, perhaps a joker or two during a race for each team?

EB: Well, there were discussions between the teams and the FIA and seeking either some more freedom on this or clarification and the FIA has been clear that they will not change their position.

Q: (Silvia Arias – Parabrisas) Maurizio, I would like to know which is for you, do you think, which is the main factor you have to work on to try to catch Ferrari or Red Bull?

MA: Mercedes, you mean? Because Mercedes is here, Red Bull is there. No, Red Bull is not in front of us. I think the main area – I said so last time – we need to improve in areas, mainly, and we need to understand the tyres a bit better. That's what we have to do to catch them.

Ends