



Press Information

2019 Azerbaijan Grand Prix Friday Press Conference Transcript 26.04.2019

TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Claire WILLIAMS (Williams), Christian HORNER (Red Bull Racing), Otmar SZAFNAUER (Racing Point), Toto WOLFF (Mercedes), Cyril ABITEBOUL (Renault)

Q: Claire, if we can start with you and the incident in FP1. What's your reaction, and what's the state of the car?

Claire WILLIAMS: I knew you were going to start with me! My reaction is probably not a surprising one, I'm pretty annoyed. However, we have had it explained to us, the circumstances around the manhole and what's happened. I don't necessarily believe it's probably anybody's fault, but still it's pretty disappointing for us. It just seems like it's one thing after another for our team at the moment. However, it's happened, we've got to repair the damage. Our chassis is cracked so we have got to revert to chassis three, the floor is a write-off, and we've got some other small bits of damage around the car. The guys are obviously working pretty hard to make sure that we deploy chassis three; we clearly won't get out for P2 and George will just have to get all his learnings in tomorrow.

Q: As you touched on, it's been a difficult season for Williams so far, but you drafted Patrick Head back into the fold on a short-term consultancy basis. What impact has he had so far, and what's the plan going forwards to turn around your fortunes?

CW: Ahead of this weekend I was kind of feeling there was a bit of light at the end of the tunnel and then this happens this morning, but I'm not going to worry too much about that. It's one of those things. So Patrick coming in, obviously for us is a great thing. He's acting as a guide for our team of engineers at the moment, just making sure that they're doing everything that they should be doing. We haven't had the best year, clearly everybody has seen that. It started with not getting our chassis to testing, and we've had to really play catch up off the back of that. So we are now in a position where we have all our race quantities, we have the quality on those race quantities that we needed, and now we're looking to bring the upgrades that have literally been sitting on a shelf as we've cleared the backlog out of manufacturing. So there is some light at the end of the tunnel, I think China demonstrated that we've brought a little bit of performance to the car, but we're still far too far behind the ninth-placed team at the moment. We're doing a lot of work back at Williams. If anyone thinks that we're just hoping for a miracle or that things will just go our way at some point, that's not

the case -- a lot of work has been going on to make sure that we put ourselves in the right position. Obviously Patrick is playing a role in that as well.

Q: Otmar, if we could come to you next. Baku's been a pretty good hunting ground for you in the past, and you've scored points in each of the three races this year. What are your expectations looking ahead to this weekend?

Otmar SZAFNAUER: Well, we hope that we're a bit more competitive here than we have been in the first three races, but we've managed to score points in every one, which is good. We want to continue that trend and maybe pick up a little bit more than we have in the first three.

Q: The mid-field battle's once again a closely fought affair. What have you made of that battle and how hard is it going to be for you guys to get on top?

OS: Well, I believe this year it's even tighter than years past, and for us to get on top means we have to do everything right. And you know the margins are smaller, so pit stops have to be quick and precise, the drivers have to do a great job in qualifying and the race, you know it's just all the details you have to get right if the margins are that tight -- the little details matter all the more.

Q: And you've had fresh investment in the team this year. Can you talk a little bit about the developments that are coming and the updates that we can expect from Racing Point?

OS: Well, that's the other thing. You know we had a big regulation change, so the way I view this year and probably next as well is it's going to be a development race. The fact that we have funding now to bring the developments to the car as quickly as our internal procedures will allow is a big benefit. We won't be hampered by not having the funds to actually buy the components. So that will be a benefit, but the real issue is bringing developments to the car that make a performance enhancement, a performance difference, and that's what we're focusing on doing.

Q: Christian, if we could come to you next. Honda have brought an updated engine to Azerbaijan this weekend. How impressed have you been with their reliability and performance so far, and how encouraged are you about what to expect for the rest of the year?

Christian HORNER: Well so far, the engine's run absolutely problem-free throughout testing, throughout all the races to date. This engine's been introduced based on an issue they saw with the Toro Rosso engine, but it also enables us to run slightly more aggressive modes in the race as well. It's been hugely impressive, the effort and quality of stuff that's been coming through from Honda.

Q: Red Bull took four wins last year. How optimistic are you that you can add to that tally this year?

CH: Trying to specify an amount of wins is always going to be extremely difficult; our goal is to converge to the where the current benchmark is, which is currently Mercedes. I think we're doing that. Obviously we grabbed some opportunistic opportunities last year, and by the end of the year we had a car that was genuinely capable of winning on merit of its own and wasn't circuit-specific. The whole team's focussed very hard on getting development through on the chassis, obviously engine bits are coming through as well. It's a long season, we're at race three, so we've done three races and we're on race four obviously now and we're confident that hopefully we can continue to close that gap to Mercedes and Ferrari ahead.

Q: Just a quick word on Pierre – it's obviously been a difficult start to life at Red Bull, but he seems to be getting more comfortable with the car. Where is he struggling in particular, and what can the team do to help him get on top of those issues?

CH: He had a tough pre-season, two incidents in the pre-season put him on the back foot and also probably confidence wise as well, but each grand prix we've been through so far he's got stronger and stronger. I think China he'll take a bit of confidence from, getting the fastest lap at the end of the race there as well. And yeah, I think just more seat time is extremely beneficial to him, and as we come back to circuits that he's more and more familiar with I think we'll see him make significant further progress.

Q: Cyril, if we could come to you. Renault were really positive ahead of this season; it's then been a difficult few races for you. How would you assess how the opening three races have gone?

Cyril ABITEBOUL: I think it's fair to say that it's not exactly the start of the season we were willing to have, that we've been working for. I think that it's important also to take a bit of distance of the emotions and of the constant drama we are living for in Formula One. We are already sitting P4 into the championship. It's a tight championship, but we are already sitting P4 with only two cars finishing out of the six cars that have started the season so far. So if with two cars we are capable of doing P4, that's already an encouragement. Last year we had to do everything extremely right to be able to secure that position, so I think it does say something about the step that we've done. It's not enough, it's never enough for sure. As a starting point we clearly need to improve the reliability of the engine; as you know over the winter we have been very vocal about the expectation but also about the ambition in terms of power gain on the engine. I think we've accomplished that, but in order to secure that we had to on a number of occasions to fast-track some of the internal processes because it's a Catch-22. You're running against time, and sometimes also running against limitations in resources, and clearly every single time we could, we biased our

internal processes towards performance. So we are paying a little bit for that, but I hope that it's short term pain for long term gain. On the chassis side, I'm extremely positive about the rate of development, which is stronger than it's ever been, which is saying something about also the new Renault that we are starting to see in action.

Q: And just a quick word on Daniel Ricciardo, he had a tough couple of opening races but got on the board. How much of a relief was it to see him score points in China?

CA: It's always good to score his first points, you know, and the sooner the better. But I think more important, he now has a car in which he has more confidence. In the first race in Melbourne we finally had the capacity to understand what he wanted. We've made changes, we prioritised the changes that he wanted to have, in particular on the systems that are related to drivers, so that he has more confidence in the car. Not exactly yet to the level of competitiveness that we want, but so that he can attack and wait for the upgrades to come and hopefully pay some dividends.

Q: Toto, thanks for waiting, and welcome back to the press conference again. I think that probably shows how successful Mercedes have been this year. When you look back on those opening three races, how pleased are you with what's gone on, and how much confidence does that give you going forward?

Toto WOLFF: First of all, it's always nice to be here. It was a great start of the season; we had a difficult Barcelona testing where we started to understand how to set up the car toward the end of the test only, and then we came to Melbourne and we had a very positive surprise. That was met with a little bit more scepticism than in the second race, where clearly the Ferrari package was the quickest on track. Charles, I think it's clear, would have won the race if it wouldn't have been for reliability, but reliability is part of the equation and part of performance. We came back in China very strong, and that is very pleasing, but three races out of 21 is very early and we mustn't be carried away with a great start.

Q: And a word on Lewis Hamilton, who was back to his dominant ways in China. How impressed have you been with him this year and the way that he continually re-motivates himself?

TW: It's always impressive to look at sportsmen who have been very successful in the past, been setting benchmarks that they're always able to start a new season very motivated and very energised. Certainly the Lewis that I have seen is in a great place, he's eager to perform at the highest level, and that is good for him and good for the team.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Claire, I know you've got more pressing short-term problems at the moment, but last week it was reported that there was interest in

serious investment in Williams from Dmitri Mazepin, and I just wondered if you could clarify that from your position and tell us whether or not the team is for sale?

CW: Yeah, I saw those stories; I paid little attention to them. I haven't met Mr Mazepin to talk about that. We had a brief conversation in the mid-part of last year, but subsequent to that there have been no conversations. I'd just like to be really categorical about it: Williams is not for sale. I have no intention of putting Williams up for sale. I don't see why we would. I think certainly in times like this, that the team is going through at the moment, these rumours always come up, but with a business head on, when you're team isn't doing well selling at this juncture wouldn't be the right time to do so. I think you would only investigate that opportunity if you are doing well. That's the right time to sell. But Williams is in this sport and has been for more than four decades and we've never wanted to sell. This is what we do; we don't have anything else to do. So, it is not on the market. I don't want to sell it to everybody. I want to go out and prove that we can do what we are in this sport to do – and that's to get back on the podium and to win races again. That may take us a long time, but it took Frank more than 10 years to do it when he first started in this sport, and I'm sure we'll have a lot more stuff thrown our way, like we've had today, like we've had this year, like we had last year. But you don't give up when times get tough. For me it's a test of your character that you continue and to prove to everybody that you can do it. That's certainly the belief everybody has at Williams: that we can do this and we're not going to just give up because the moments have got a bit hard for us.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines/racefans.net) Claire, sorry to hone in on you again after the first question. However, there's been a report floating around about gender gaps and Williams didn't come off particularly well. As the only female leader of a Formula 1 team, this was rather surprising. Could you substantiate some of the comments or where do we stand on this please?

CW: Yes, another stick with which people are beating us at the moment. For me, certainly, the regulations by which we have to report our gender pay gap, which we have to do now in the UK, are misleading or they can bring about misleading results. Certainly, for me, the means by which you test how well you are doing to ensure gender equality within your business is firstly by the number of women you actually have and year-on-year we have more and more women coming to work at Williams and I'm pleased to say not just in the more female-dominated roles we've had in motorsport in the past, of admin and marketing. More women are coming up now in engineering roles; we've got more women in our aerodynamics department, in vehicle design, development etc. But it's about how you support that talent as well. We've just recently launched, about four months ago, at the start of this year, a women at Williams network, and I think we are probably the only team to do that. It's about not only encouraging talent to come into our team but it's about how you support them when they are there. And secondly, the most important number for me when we are looking at gender equality is how much you pay your female staff versus your male, and we went through a big analysis on this two years ago, before we even had to report on gender pay, and we made sure that every woman that was doing the same job as a man was paid the same amount as that male employee for doing that same job. For me, those are the three greatest measures of gender equality within a

business and so I have absolutely no qualms knowing that the women in our organisation are treated on an equal standing as our men.

Q: (inaudible) A question for Toto and Christian. Toto, you said after the Chinese Grand Prix that managing the two drivers might be quite tricky for Ferrari. Do you guys think that this could be an advantage for you and as team bosses how difficult is it to manage these kind of situations and how difficult is it to explain to the drivers the different circumstances and decisions?

TW: From my standpoint, we've been quoted a lot about the Ferrari situation and I don't think it's right. We are not in the right place to comment from the sidelines about what is happening in Ferrari. What I can say is that we have been in a situation with Nico and Lewis that was tricky to manage at times, and equally not easy with Valtteri and Lewis, because two drivers that want to win races and do have the potential to win championships, that can be conflicting interests sometimes, and you just need to talk about it. And it's not trivial. It's a situation that certainly has an advantage for the team, because drivers are pushing each other and extracting more performance out of the car, but equally in managing personalities and strong characters is never trivial, whether it's drivers or engineers or managers in general.

CH: Yeah I think different teams have different philosophies. Arguably having a very clearly defined number one and number two driver is almost easier to work with. That isn't our philosophy at Red Bull. We allow the drivers to race and sometimes that can be uncomfortable, as we saw 12 months ago here in Azerbaijan. But the philosophy that we've always had is to give both guys the same opportunity and let them establish who is the lead driver on track. I think so long as you have clear rules of engagement then we've been, I would say, 90 per cent successful with that. I think in the three years that Max and Daniel raced with each other there were only ever two incidents, which considering they were starting next to each other at 90 per cent of the races is a pretty decent ratio. But each team has its own philosophy. It doesn't make one right or one wrong, it's just unique to each team, how they choose to racing.

Q: (Christian Nimmervoll – motorsport-total.com) Cyril and Christian, maybe we can create a little bit more fun for the Netflix people here. I recently listened to Natalie Pinkham's podcast with Adrian Newey and Adrian basically admitted that there a bit of strategy in the criticism you did towards Renault in terms of a) making them invest more into the programme or b) making them exit altogether – I assume to get a new engine manufacturer. Christian, do you want to put any more context to that? And Cyril, obviously asking for your comment too.

CH: Well, I read with interest Adrian's comments about that and I think what he is referring to is actually back in 2015, where we'd had several conversations, we'd been to Paris, we'd seen Carlos Ghosn, we'd presented what our concerns were and I think by 2015, when the engine was arguably worse than it was in 2014, then frustration boiled over to the point that it was like 'OK, if we are more open about what our frustrations are, maybe it will force a reaction'. It didn't! I don't think you were even involved at that stage were you Cyril?

CA: I was just on my way back. I don't know if that was a good thing or bad thing!

CH: So Cyril came back into the full brunt of it. You were a customer the year before! So yeah, it was one of things that you try every mechanism that you can to try to generate competitiveness and at that time it was felt that maybe Renault couldn't possibly afford the embarrassment of these engines not being competitive and not being reliable and not delivering, but yeah, unfortunately it didn't work.

CA: How to respond? It was very good until the last word – it didn't work. One thing we can give credit to Christian and Red Bull is that they are fantastic at communication strategy and communication is part of this world, it's part of Formula 1, it's part of your strategy and your tactics. It's not the first team and it's not the last team to use all the weaponry of this world, and frankly you guys, to influence what is going on. I was reading yesterday that Max is happy to take an engine penalty – amazing! You know, that's part of this world, but I don't want to lose sight of the fact, and I would concur with Christian in relation to that, our engine was not at the required level in 2014 and 2015. There are mitigating circumstances. You know, we were extremely happy and Renault has contributed to making Red Bull what it is today by winning four championships in a row – from a financial perspective with sponsors, from a technology perspective with talent, recruitment – Red Bull is what it is today thanks also to Renault. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to say that. But then, later on, indeed we lost a little bit the momentum and sight of what needed to be done for 2014 regulations. The rest is history and we'll see what the future is holding.

Q: (Julien Billotte – Auto Hebdo) A question to all five please. What's the latest on the 2021 regulations? There was a big meeting one month and ever since we haven't heard much more. Do you have any more details and generally how pleased are you with the way F1 is moving forward?

OS: Well, I think with every meeting we iterate what the regulations are going to look like. I believe there is a deadline of mid-year for something to be published and I think we're getting closer now. The FIA have asked the teams for feedback, which we've given. There are still some outstanding issues on some components that will either be supplied or not and when we know more information then I think we'll get closer to that but mid-year something should be published.

Q: Christian?

CH: Yeah, it feels like we're converging. There are still a few elephants in the room but yeah, it feels generally like on all front we are converging in the right direction, so hopefully over the next few months something can get sorted.

Q: Toto, do you have anything to add?

TW: Yeah, as Christian said, it's difficult because there are so many important balls in the air, whether it's prize fund redistribution or the cost cap, technical and sporting regulations and it is progressing slowly. We'd like to have it done sooner rather than later and this is the joint objective of all stakeholders involved – the FIA, Formula 1 and the teams.

Q: Cyril?

CA: Nothing much to add. Maybe just on timing, we really see the end of June as the deadline. That is a necessary deadline for the sport, for the OEMs and for all teams really, to know what the future is holding and to start to make plans accordingly.

Q: And Claire, anything to add?

CW: Yeah, I would agree. I think that the versions that FIA and FOM presented to us a few weeks, we were really pretty happy with. I know that there are a few things still being discussed at the moment, to clarify, but we'd be very happy when they come out to sign them.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines / racefans.net) Further to my question to Claire earlier on about the gender pay gap, how comfortable are the other four teams that you're actually fulfilling the moral obligations in this regard as well – not only the legislative ones. And then Christian, I see you were asked to comment on Adrian's comments. Would you like to comment on Dr Helmut Marko's comment that he didn't think a women driver was up to Formula One?

CA: I think frankly it was extremely well put by Claire and there is little that I can add. I think those indicators are good, because we live in a world of indicators but there are quantitative and we live in a Formula One world which is much more qualitative. Statistics are, in terms of quantity, pool of resources is much lower. I think really what matters is that, for a given position, there is equality and parity of treatment for a given position. And that's basically, the hurdle. As far as we are concerned, we are obviously very keen. We go up massively in terms of resources, that's given us the opportunity to attract with equality – but also our executive committee, our management committee is almost 50:50 between men and women, so I think it's a clear demonstration that we are serious about that. And I will leave Christian to comment on Dr Marko's point...

Toto, do you want to give a Mercedes standpoint?

TW: I think a lot has been said within Daimler. Within the Daimler board there is more female representation and when you look at the motor racing side, Britta Seeger who is on the board for sales & marketing and Bettina Fetzner, vice-president for marketing, they were strongly behind us going into Formula E and they are very engaged, also they are at Formula One very often and they are there on merit. The same in small is within the F1 team. I'm really happy to see that, from the young ones that are going us, it looks like the proportion of young ladies is much higher than it was in the past. Being an engineer, technician or mechanic is more of a career route than it was in the past. As you know, my wife has done a programme that was called 'Dare to be Different' and has joined forces with the the FIA now, in order to promote young women into the sport, so I'm the first one to have seen how powerful that can be and I think the proportion of females in our organisation will grow, or is growing as we speak – and that's good.

Otmar, do you want to answer that question?

OS: Well, at Racing Point and Force India before, we don't really differentiate by gender at all. So, we differentiate by the ability to do the job. There are many – well, not many – but a few departments that I can think of now where we have both men

and women and they're led by women and that's just because they're better at what they do. I think if that's the philosophy, the gender pay gap should naturally become zero, so that's how we go about things. The only other thing I've got to say is that, in my household, there are more women than men. You've got to try to treat everybody like you would want another boss to treat your daughter. So, if that's the case, I think you get to the right place.

Christian, thanks for waiting, and to deal with Dr Marko's comments as well.

CH: Well, as you all know, I'm all for Girl Power. I think it's quite obvious that Claire should be paying herself significantly more than she obviously is. But, again, within our team, somebody that performs a role, it's irrelevant whether they're male or female. They're paid the same for the role that they perform. We have some great engineers, some great designers, a growing contingent of more and more females coming into the business, which is great to see. Quite often we have a strategist on the pit wall that's currently on maternity leave, in key and prominent positions. As far as Helmut's comments were concerned, I think they were off-the-record comments, I think they weren't... maybe they've been converted slightly. From a Red Bull perspective we'd be delighted to see more girls coming into the sport; we'd be delighted to see a girl get into Formula One and ideally be competitive. I think what he was alluding to is that there is nobody in a position to be competitive in Formula One at the moment and I think what that needs is for more girls to get involved at the grassroots, to get involved, to go karting and there needs to be a bigger pool of them coming through the sport. I think that way more opportunities will present themselves. There's obviously a Formula W category now that starts shortly but again, where will that lead on to? They need to be able to move on from there. I think from a Red Bull perspective, we'd be totally in favour of seeing girls in motorsport come through – but I think it needs more involvement, and to appeal more as a sport where girls can get involved at a grassroots stage.

Q: (Rebecca Clancy – The Times) To Claire. I appreciate it's only a couple of hours old but do you have an idea of the scale and the cost of the damage, and will you be seeking compensation as Haas did when Grosjean hit a drain in Malaysia in 2017?

CW: We obviously know what damage has occurred. To actually quantify that cost, it's a little premature to do that but we will be doing it and we clearly will be discussing that with the FIA.

Q: (Christian Nimmervoll – motorsport-total.com) Toto and Cyril, the two of you came forward last year with the suggestion of, in terms of the race calendar, probably doing less races rather than more. The idea, I believe, being more exclusive events and probably promoters paying more. Cyril, you also mentioned something about being fresher. Maybe the two of you – also anyone else who wants to comment, can elaborate on whether that has gone any further, and add your opinions to that at the end?

TW: The balance you need to strike is between understanding that Formula One is a very aspiration and glamorous sport and obviously less can be more. But equally, as a company, we want to grow our revenue and the obvious revenue trigger is doing more races. I think FOM is pretty clear that, if more races are being added to the calendar,

they need to be creative and they need to make all the way down to the bottom line or be very attractive races, tapping new markets. I think the mix at the moment and the discussions we are having is right.

Cyril, do you have anything to add?

CA: No, I think it's that balance between quantity, quality, being aspirational, being something special but still being capable of existing enough in that world that is full of content and proposition in terms of sports properties. We need to make sure that we are different in the space that exists right now, and the media focus for Formula One. In the current business model the only way to grow the revenue indeed is to add up more races – or at least to keep the current number, so if we really think that it needs to be changed in future, we need to change our business model, so that we don't need to keep on growing the revenue – and that means reducing the costs, reducing the necessity to spend to be competitive. That's maybe one of the positives for the budget cap. Maybe not for the next cycle but maybe one cycle from now, have the ability to reduce that cost so that we can think a bit more strategically, rather than being a slave or revenues.

Claire, how would affect an independent team like Williams?

CW: I agree with what Toto and Cyril have said around striking a balance, and maybe wanting to go to fewer because of the aspirational side of Formula One. I think you add more races and if you don't get that balance and don't get the necessary income in for going to four or five extra races, the pressure that it puts on our team... our guys are already going around the world 21 times a year, plus the tests. That's a long time to expect people to be away from home. Great if you're a team that can afford to have a support team, or a support structure that you take personnel in and out, or if you've got a second race team that you can send around the world – but clearly for smaller, independent teams, that's a much harder piece of work and just puts far too much pressure on the system. Not just from a personnel perspective but also from how many additional parts we're going to have to manufacture etc., So there's a whole series of considerations around it.

Christian, do you have anything to add from Red Bull's perspective?

CH: I think it's been pretty well summed up. I think what you have to appreciate is that a grand prix weekend. Not for us but the people down in the garage, it's a week-long event and for many other functions that are involved in going to grands prix. 21 is already a big ask. Going beyond that is, I feel we're a tipping point. You then have to look at the construction of the grand prix weekend. Do we need to do as much testing as we do? The duration of the season. All those factors and what impact it has on cost and budget caps and so on and, is ultimately it going to make a better show? A book can only have so many chapters and we want to make sure as many of those chapters are as entertaining as possible and it crescendo's to something. What you don't want to have is saturation. And I think it's finding that balance of what is the right number and what is the right construction of a race weekend.

And Otmar, Racing Point is obviously a team that's growing, new factory is coming on. How does it affect your team?

OS: We are growing and we're recruiting now – but not at a pace where we'd take a half-step backwards. We've got to really be careful that the new factory that's being planned now as well as our recruitment drive and some other things that are changing don't affect the performance at the end of the season. So it's a fine balance to strike but it's one we're conscious of and working hard to make sure we get right.

Ends