



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

## **2018 FIA Formula One World Championship**

### **Japanese Grand Prix**

#### **Friday Press Conference Transcript**

**06.10.2018**

**TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Christian HORNER (Red Bull), Franz TOST (Toro Rosso), Frédéric VASSEUR (Sauber), Masashi YAMAMOTO (Honda)**

#### **PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Q: Yamamoto-san, you introduced an engine upgrade in Russia. How much of a step forward is that? And in more general terms, how much progress have Honda made this season?**

**Masashi YAMAMOTO:** Regarding this season, we were not as quick in the development as we would have wanted to. However, recently, everything has been much better, especially regarding the combustion chamber. We have upgraded it, and it's finally complete, and very successfully complete. Regarding Russia, and the problems we had with the other engine, it had regard to the calibrations but we have fixed it since Russia, and within this one week before the race in Suzuka, we have fixed that issue and so I suppose Mr Tost can look forward to great weekend.

**Q: How are preparations going for 2019 with Red Bull Racing? Do you feel a big pressure to deliver top results?**

**MY:** Yes, regarding 2019, we are very pleased to also work with another top team. We believe Red Bull is a top team in Formula One. We – me and Christian – we have had great communication throughout the year, and obviously there is pressure, however this pressure, we turn it into good energy, and this good energy will bring us fantastic and fabulous results. Of course, with Team Toro Rosso, Team Red Bull on both sides, pressure into great energy, great results for 2019.

**Q: Franz, you had a busy week leading up to Honda's home grand prix. I believe Sakura on Tuesday, Wako Wednesday, Suzuka factory yesterday morning. Just tell us what you found in each place and about your experiences this week.**

**Franz TOST:** And Tochigi! You forgot another company. No, it was fantastic, the visit with the two drivers, all the different factories here, the research and development factories from Honda. The people were very enthusiastic and they liked to talk to us, to ask questions and I must say the Honda employees are really Formula One fans and I hope that we can provide them with good results, so they can see all the hard work which they have done in the last months come to a successful end.

**Q: It was announced recently that Daniil Kvyat is going to return to Toro Rosso next year. After a year with Ferrari, what kind of a driver are you expecting back in the Toro Rosso fold?**

**FT:** I was with Daniil Kvyat out in Sochi, we had a fantastic dinner together, he is relaxed, I have the feeling he is much more measured than the year before. I expect a competitive Daniil Kvyat. We all know he is very fast, that he has a very high level of natural speed and he just has to sit in the car, push the right-hand pedal and you will see he will show good results because he can do it. We all know this.

**Q: Christian, we've just heard from Yamamoto-san about Honda's preparations, their hope for good results next season, can we just get your take on how things are going with Honda. How are advanced you are.**

**Christian HORNER:** We've been very impressed with the progress that Honda have been making during the course of this year. Obviously, we're now working closely regarding... incorporating the engine into RB15 for next year. I have to say the communication has been excellent between both companies. We're hugely impressed by the effort, commitment, desire, determination to succeed that there is in Honda. Certainly, when Yamamoto-san talks of energy, we're not lacking any energy within Red Bull Racing, regarding the 2019 season.

**Q: Bringing it back to this year, you're now 101 points ahead of Renault in the Constructors' Championship, so you're pretty much nailed-on for third place. How has that affected your preparations for next year? Have you started work on the new car earlier than would be normal?**

**CH:** Well, we have a regulation change coming for next year, the front wing changes the characteristics of the car quite significantly, so we're effectively in no-man's land in the Constructors' Championship, so obviously, a large amount of resource is already being placed into next year's programme – but of course any updates we can introduce and learn from, we're bringing trackside.

**Q: When did you start work on next year's car?**

**CH:** It becomes a transient process. So, obviously as soon as the regulations are released, you start to look at kind of impact that there is and then that ramps up through the summer months. So, pretty much all the design team now are obviously focussed on 2019.

**Q: Fred, excitement is building about Charles Leclerc and his move to Ferrari in 2019. We saw another great race from him in Sochi last weekend. Just wanted to ask you how much Charles has changed as a driver, and as a person? The driver who turned up in Melbourne, compared to the driver that's now racing in Japan.**

**Frederic VASSEUR:** Compared to Melbourne, for sure he's got a lot of experience. He struggled a little bit on the first event of the season with management, mainly due to the fact we had a very short winter session in Barcelona due to the weather. The first week. The first races were a bit difficult for him but then step-by-step, after second or third race he was able to put everything together and he improved consistently. I think he's still improving.

**Q: Let's throw it ahead now to 2019. Kimi Räikkönen was at your Hinwil factory a couple of weeks ago. What sort of work was he getting on with there?**

**FV:** He's not designing the next car! We tried to sit him into the car. The next year car. It went well!

**Q: What about Giovinazzi? How excited are you about him joining the team?**

**FV:** For the whole team it's a huge push that we have still a couple of guys who were there when Kimi drove for the team, and the reputation of Kimi at Sauber is still huge. When we did the announcement, that it was a great push for everybody and I think it will be helpful for the team.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Question for Franz, Christian and Yamamoto-san. Regarding Honda's upgrade and the progress we've seen so far. Franz, what are you expecting the difference that will make in the midfield battle? Christian, do you agree with some of the comments from last weekend, that it puts Honda at least level, maybe ahead of Renault, and Yamamoto-san, how do you feel about the comments, the positivity the upgrade has had from Red Bull and Toro Rosso?**

**MY:** Regarding Spec-3, which we have brought in Russia, well, actually, obviously as you know, it hasn't raced yet, so it will be the first opportunity to race with the new spec. According to the results that we'll have after the race, it will be more comparable. We can start comparing data with the other

ones that we have used before. So, not only the engine but of course the entire performance with the car.

**CH:** Well, it's obvious that progress – and good progress – is being made and that's really encouraging for us. Our focus is not on where our current position is. It's where the lead position is. That's the same goal that Honda share. In-roads are being made to reduce that gap to the benchmark in Formula One. You need all elements to be performing to win in this sport, and of course the engine is a key element. We're looking very much forward to 2019 and starting this relationship with Honda.

**FT:** With the spec-3 engine we must be in Q3 and we must stay ahead of Sauber because they put a lot of pressure on us in the Constructors' Championship. That's the target.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, Racefans.net) A question to Christian and Franz. In the past the Red Bull group has had very close relations with the VW group across various categories – rally, DTM, etc. I believe that: a) you are reducing your DTM involvement and secondly, the relationship you now have with Honda covers two Formula 1 teams and MotoGP. Does this supersede your previous VW relationship or replace it or what are your plans going forward?**

**CH:** Obviously there was a historical relationship with VW across different elements of motorsport. The withdrawal from DTM coincides with other movements going on within DTM. Obviously it's a growing partnership with Honda. And of course Red Bull, who operate in many categories of motorsport, work with many different manufacturers but of course this relationship in Formula 1 is extremely important. There has been a long and successful partnership within MotoGP and we hope some of that success will be mirrored in our Formula 1 activities.

**Franz, anything to add?**

**FT:** There's not much to add. Toro Rosso was together with Volkswagen at the beginning and we had a real good co-operation also with them, especially on the sponsorship side, but then we changed the engines to Renault and now to Honda there was not any more the possibility to work together with Volkswagen and we are now with Honda for the next years and we are very happy about this.

**Q: (Luke Smith – Crash.net) A question for Yamamoto-san. Could I get a progress update on the Honda young drivers, Makino and Fukuzumi, in Formula 2 for 2019 and your plans to keep them there? And how important is it for Honda to get a Japanese driver on the F1 grid in the coming years?**

**MY:** Yes, obviously to have a Japanese driver on the Formula 1 grid is very important for Japan and for ourselves for the future of this motorsport in Japan. Regarding Making and Fukuzumi. As you know he has won in Monza. Regarding the series that they run in, as you know, the teams have been working with the new regulations, a lot of changes, trying rolling starts etc so it hasn't been a very stable series this series itself. But they are both very good drivers and we are educating them for a bright future.

**Q: (Edd Straw - Autosport) A question for all four, please. There is a lot of talk about the longer-term future of Formula 1, 2021 and beyond, and there are a lot of competing objectives: cost reduction, making sure the on-track competition is close, the look of the cars, road relevance, driving technology. How do these competing objectives get balanced up, particularly with the fact that technology and road relevance often tend to drive up costs and sometimes have made the racing worse?**

**CH:** Formula 1 ultimately is a show, it's an entertainment, and to be entertaining the racing has to be good, the drivers have to be the heroes and I think we need to improve the spectacle of what we currently have. I know a lot of work is going into trying to create cars that are easier to follow or promote better racing. Of course technology has a role to play in that but it shouldn't be the predominant factor, it should be a complimenting factor, and I think if you get the ground rules and

the shape of what the product should be and then the other elements will fit in with that and so we're relying very heavily on Ross Brawn and his group and the experience that he has, together with the FIA, to come up with a set of regulations, both technical and sporting, that deliver the product, that deliver the spectacle and obviously the commercial terms that are allied with that will follow.

### **Yamamoto-san, your thoughts?**

**MY:** As Christian has mentioned, Formula 1 is the top motorsports platform for the future and it is very important for us as a car manufacturer also to develop, an important platform to develop the latest technology. Also not only the technology itself but thinking about the world environment, so the future in all these different perspectives is very important and this is the perfect platform for us, so as Honda and Formula 1, branding, the fans, the entertainment point of view is very important, as well as the development of the technology of the future that will be released to the world.

### **Franz?**

**FT:** Formula 1 is entertainment and currently, fortunately thanks to Hamilton and Vettel, we have two drivers who keep this entertainment on a higher level. But generally speaking there are three teams and the rest are far behind. That means that the FIA and FOM must come up with a regulation from a) the sporting side and b) the technical side, and they must also look that the costs come down. The cost cap is I think an idea that can be realised, that a minimum of five or six drivers are able to fight for the championship, because this is what the spectators want to see. In addition to this, there is always enough space and room for the manufacturers to develop, for example, the power unit or whatever, and that Formula 1 stays at the pinnacle of motorsports. Once more FIA and FOM has to come up now with solutions, because time is running away. We are talking about 2021 and we still don't have a 100% fixed regulation a) for the chassis, and b) for the power unit and this needs to be clarified as soon as possible.

### **And Fréd?**

**FV:** Yeah, for sure it's quite obvious that we need to improve to improve the show. That Sochi was a race with less than five overtaking, if I don't consider the two red Bulls, but you won't start from the back very single weekend and now for the target for the second part of the grid is to avoid to be lapped, more or less. Even when you are the first of the second pack, success is when you are not lapped. I think that we would have to find a solution to allow talented drivers in a small team to be not too far away from the podium in exceptional circumstances, and today we are far away from this. We saw last weekend that even though Ricciardo and Verstappen started from the back, after 25 laps they were five and six or something like this. We are not racing in the same competition.

**Q: (Scott Mitchell - Autosport) A question for Fréd, Franz and Christian. You all respectively have experience of working with drivers who are either F1 rookies or new to the team and in a high-pressure situation. What do you need from your driver to get the most out of them in that scenario, how important is their attitude and approach and how important is the team environment to helping them succeed?**

**FT:** First of all, the driver must be skilled. Second he must be passionate – that means 365 days Formula 1. Then he must be disciplined and he must be, I call it innovative. That means he must think about how best he can improve himself and then he has to be integrated into the team and of course with a young inexperienced driver the team has to take much more attention to him, take much more care of him and preparation, nutrition, physical preparation, then simulator work, then all the technical stuff. A young driver is many times during the winter months in our factory, sitting together with our engineers, discussing all the different topics regarding setting up the car, regarding power unit management from the steering wheel. It's a lot of stuff. It's a lot of work and therefore you need a 100% committed driver to bring him to the front.

**FV:** For sure, the pace is the first skill. If you do not have the pace then you can forget about it. On the top of this we have a lot of guys with good pace who are not able to achieve in F1. Mainly for the same reasons. There is a huge step between the junior series and F1; you have much more things to manage. You have not so much test days. We spoke about it before but with the four days you have in Barcelona, it's quite short and when two of them are under snow it's a nightmare. Then they

have a huge pressure from the press, from you mainly, at the first events, when it's not working well. I would like to remember to everybody that after two races I had in the press conference questions about Leclerc, if it was not too early, it was a mistake to take him in F1. We have to be patient, because it's a huge step and we have to take it step by step and to let them work. But they have to be fully committed and I think that when we are speaking about the young kids that we have I am convinced that that they are more than committed.

**CH:** For us it's very simple. We send our youngsters to Franz. If they can survive his 365-day training programme and graduate with that then they might make it into Red Bull Racing, so we're very grateful for the education that Franz gives these young drivers and it's obviously proved successful over the years.

**You've got Pierre Gasly coming into the team next year and Max Verstappen is still young. What do you have within the team to help these young guys?**

**CH:** Well, what annoys me about those two drivers is that their combined age, for the first time, is younger than my age. I think, again, it's about creating the right environment, about creating an environment in which the drivers feel confidence, they feel heard, but they also know what their side of the deal is, what they have to deliver, because the expectation in Formula 1 is extremely high, especially in a front-running team, where you're not just driving for yourself, you're driving for the aspirations of 800 people within a team, all the partners and the shareholders that they represent as well. So the pressure is significantly higher. I think it's finding that balance, that they still can enjoy what they do, but they still recognise the responsibility that they have.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, Racefans.net) To the three team principals: it's just a little over two years since Liberty acquired Formula One's commercial rights and just under two years since they formalised it. Obviously there were great expectations, great hopes. Have they actually managed the rights up to your expectations so far after two years?**

**CH:** I think Liberty have obviously gone through a learning process. They've had to understand what they've bought, what is Formula One and I think that there are many aspects that are easier than previously. They've invested heavily in marketing the sport, they've put on promotions, roadshows. They've opened up digital platforms, social networks etc to bring new eyeballs into the sport. They've introduced e-sports, so they're exploring new territories with Formula One and I think the key element for them going forward is not so much the promotion, which they are proving to be well-equipped with, it's what the product is and I think that's what the key part now to the success moving forwards is, what are those regulations for 2021 going to be? What does Formula One look like over the next ten years? And obviously there's a responsibility on Liberty and the FIA to get that right.

**FT:** OK, up until now, they took over something that was very well organised from Bernie. There are contracts until 2020 and that means their influence was not so dramatic but nevertheless they've done a good job in promoting Formula One with all these new ideas, especially on the media side with social media and so on. But their decisive job is, as already said, to create the new regulations and to bring Formula One into this new period and then we will see how good they are working from 2022, 2023 onwards when the new regulations are really on top. They are quite well organised, they are very experienced people within FOM and together with the FIA they should be in a position to sort out all the smaller problems which Formula One, especially on the starting field that everything is more on an equal level and also on the money distribution and of course, also that the revenues stay on the level which was the case in Bernie's time. These are the main topics they have to face and I'm quite convinced that they will do a good job.

**FF:** Yeah, for sure they very open, they are investigating new projects, launching new ideas, opening new doors and so on but I think at one stage we will need to get results, that everybody will need to get results and we will see what will be the next step.

**Q: (Oleg Karpov – Motorsport.com) To all four gentlemen: Cyril Abiteboul and Toto Wolff recently said that Formula One should maybe think about reducing the number of races to 15 or 16, so the product is more exclusive. First of all, do you agree with that and secondly, if you do how could we achieve that? Should we reduce the number of races just like that or should we rotate races like Hockenheim and Nurburgring, something like that?**

**MY:** Well, as you know, we are not constructors so we will accept what FIA and FOM decide.

**CH:** Well, we are a constructor. 21 races, I think, is about saturation point. I think that there's only so many chapters you can have in a book and I think at some point you go beyond what's relevant. I think to go as low as 15 or 16 I think is too low – maybe Cyril was looking at grid penalties or something – but I think that 21 is the upper end. It's tough. It's tough for the guys in the garage, for the travelling staff, it's tough for everybody involved and I think for the spectator and fans as well, beyond 24 races it reaches saturation, so I think it's finding that balance. I think the really encouraging thing is that there are some great venues that want to host Formula One races and events and I think that that should provide natural competition for the venues that are already on the calendar.

**Q: Christian, what's the ideal number?**

**CH:** I think we are it, I think 21 is max.

**FT:** I think it's not the number of races or the size, it's the show which we offer and the level of the entertainment. If you have 15 boring races people will not watch any more. No, I think we should have around 20, 22 races and I think this is a good number and the exclusivity once more depends how good we are and we also should not forget that we are a global player and therefore we need a certain number of races to stay a global player. And I would absolutely refuse to go below 20 races. The year has 52 weeks, therefore we have a lot of time.

**FV:** For sure we will never go more than 21 because that is, from my point of view, far too much and we have to keep...

**CH:** If we could keep Christmas it would be good.

**FT:** We should prefer a race at Christmas and New Year, far away, in New Zealand or...

**FV:** I think at one stage also we are losing the exceptional of the event; the more races you are doing, everybody is used to and at one stage we have to keep the exceptional side of the races and for me it's a bit too much but I will follow the calendar for sure. I won't stop after 18 next year.

**Q: Fred, what's the magic number for you? How many races?**

**FV:** Magic number? I think that below 20 would be fine but between 18 and 20 would be fine for me.

**Q: (Kazuki Kasahara – Car Watch) Question for Yamamoto-san: this Grand Prix is a Honda supported brand name (title sponsor)? Could you tell me why and also give your motivation for another 30 years?**

**MY:** Yes, well, as you well know, Honda started joining Formula One in 1964 and it has developed along the years, along with Formula One, so Honda has developed, F1 has grown and so it's been a mutual development throughout the 30 years. In honour of this relationship that we have had for 30 years, we've decided to sponsor the title of the event in Japan here this year, just to thank everyone, including the fans, I know, for this great support and collaboration.

Ends