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PART ONE: DRIVERS – Felipe MASSA (Williams), Daniel RICCIARDO (Red Bull Racing), Lance STROLL (Williams)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Felipe, let's start by talking about your future. This time last year you knew what you were going to be doing, or not doing, in 2017....

Felipe MASSA: No, I didn't know anything last. What I decided didn't happen.

Well you weren't going to be racing in Formula One, that was the plan, but there seems to be some uncertainty now. Where are you at in your head, how much do you want to stay in Formula One and how much do you want to stay at Williams?

FM: To be honest in my head I'm pretty relaxed, so I'm enjoying and trying to do the best I can in the last races this year and I don't know what's going to happen next year. But I'm quite relaxed. I'm quite keen to do maybe another season. I think I can do it in a great way. I can give a lot to the team, like I did already and I think maybe I can do another year. But I don't decide; the team decides. Yeah, I'm pretty relaxed, trying to enjoy the races, trying to do the best I can in the car, trying to give the best to the team, and that's the most important thing. I'm talking with the team definitely for next year and we are in discussion. So everything has some directions around, so I have my direction as well to follow, like a professional driver, like I was always in my career in Formula One and I am very happy for that. That's the way it is and definitely I can do a good effort for the team but we need to find a good solution to carry on in the right way, that everybody is happy. But anyway, I'm quite relaxed and definitely gave a lot to the team, to Formula One as well. If people are happy that I stay, I stay, and I will do everything I can to stay at the top level. But I'm quite relaxed and I'm trying to do my job in the right way in the last races and we'll see what's going to happen.

When do you need to know by? Have you given the team a deadline?

FM: Well, we don't have a deadline. Definitely I think it would be good for the team and also for myself that we know what's going to happen before the race in Brazil. We'll see if this will be possible but I really hope so.

Turning to matters on track now, you hold the pole position record here at Suzuka, for your Q3 time in 2006. Tell us a little about what's the secret of stitching together a good lap here and indeed is there any advice you can give a rookie, like your team-mate Lance Stroll?

FM: Yeah, I remember it was 2006, it was around 29.5 lap time. That was pretty amazing. A long time ago, many things change from that time to now. If you see also that the car we race now is one hundred and something kilos heavier than how it was the car in 2006. But maybe this year it can change. Maybe this year we can see some records around this track and I'm sure it will be great to driver the car we have this year on this track, which is definitely one of the best tracks in Formula One. I'm sure Sector 1 will be quite fun, but also quite difficult for all of us in terms of our neck and in the race and also to do one lap in qualifying will be pretty interesting, to see that feeling. Lance knows already the track, but definitely it is a different car so I think it will be nice for him to drive the car this year.

Thank you. There is clearly a good dynamic between yourself and Felipe, and there's a lot of speculation around who is going to be your team-mate next year. Do you have a preference?

LS: We've had a really good relationship this year and we've done a good job to help the team score as many points as possible, between the both of us. But, at the end of the day, it comes down to the team, who are the drivers. I've just got to focus on what I'm doing, but definitely we have a good relationship this year.

Is there one particular thing that you have learned from Felipe this year?

FM: Many!

LS: That's it.

FM: We should say, no?

LS: No. It's between the two of us. All in all, he brings a lot of experience to the team and I've been able to use him as a benchmark throughout my rookie season. He's really helped to develop the car in many ways, with these regulations, and as well I think I've been able to pick up a few details along the way that I could apply into my work at the track, so all in all there have definitely been a lot of things I've picked up throughout the year.

And you've now scored points in six of the last nine races. You're looking very assured in the car. How much more confident are you now compared to Melbourne at the start of the year?

LS: I'm a different driver to where I was in Melbourne at the beginning of the year. It's just experience that you soak up through the year and every race there is always something that I think I could do better. I just feel that I'm getting better every single race and that's just experience and time in the car.

Thank you Lance. Daniel, can we start by talking about what you've been up to since the Malaysian Grand Prix last weekend, have you been having fun in the Land of the Rising Sun?

Daniel RICCIARDO: It can be a dark place... the sun doesn't always rise (laughs). It can get emotional in Tokyo. But no, it's been OK. A more positive experience in the last few days, was actually with this man here [Felipe Massa]. We went to the famous sushi... I'm going to get it wrong now, Sukiyabashi Jiro, and it kind of became more on the map to let's say the western world after there was a documentary 'Jiro Dreams of Sushi' and I was told about it a couple years ago and I was like 'oh, we'll just call and get a reservation for tomorrow night', but you've got to book like a year in advance, so two years later we finally made it. It was a good experience. Yeah but... well, anyway...

FM: It was good to see his face, when some fish that he is not really keen to have...

DR: I only started eating seafood a few years ago, like properly, like raw fish. I like some of it, but some is still new to me, but you don't want to disrespect.

FM: There was no salmon.

DR: There was some different stuff, but anyway, it was a good experience for sure. And you're in and out in 30 minutes, so it's bang, bang, bang, but it was good. I did some Kendo as well, a Japanese martial art. That was quite cool and I enjoyed that. So two good experiences this week.

You've been having a good time! Thanks for that. Well, let's just cast our minds to the race last Sunday. Can you describe your emotions on Sunday night, because on the one hand you had scored your eighth podium of the year, but was there a sense of what if? What if, for example, you had got past Bottas sooner, what might have been possible?

DR: I guess there was a small what if. If I had got Bottas or he hadn't got me on the start I guess then my chances of having a battle with Lewis would have been higher. But I still didn't look back on the race like 'aw, it was a missed opportunity'. After the race I thought the start, I was like 'if only I went to the outside I could have braked later and held my position', but I think if I had pulled out early of Max's slipstream to the outside, I think Bottas would have probably just gone through the middle of us. So in hindsight it would have been difficult probably to do anything better on the start. I was still happy, another podium. Although I won there last year it's actually never really been a track I've... I wouldn't say enjoyed, but had much success on, so to finish on the podium there in the last year I was going to take that, so it's OK.

Well, the car has been competitive on three very different tracks now, Monza, Singapore, Malaysia. Would you agree with Helmut Marko that it's now the best chassis in Formula One?

DR: We have to be close. If it's not then we're certainly close, and a lot closer than we were in the first handful of races this year. Like Monza, you surprise yourself on Sunday but then in Singapore, Seb puts a few tenths on us in quali. So you're like 'we do and we don't, we do and we don't'. Obviously, in Malaysia we were quick. If Ferrari has started at the front they would have been tough to beat. But we're certainly close. If

we're not the best, we're certainly close and I think this circuit is another chance for us to show that and I'm looking forward to it very much.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Daniel, Dr Marko has been quoted this week as saying that you are already on the market. Could you elaborate on that, are you aware of that, have you discussed anything with them and what does your future look like within the Red Bull family?

DR: I mean the only thing I'm aware of is that my contract with them is at an end next year. I guess he's referencing that. He's not referencing next year, I guess.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) You hope!

DR: Ha, ha! I'm 100%, well 99.999% sure I've got a seat with Red Bull Racing next year. But I guess he's talking about beyond that, but nothing's been said between us beyond next, so I guess he's more stating facts than... I don't think he has a plan yet beyond '18. But yeah, I should be racing next year! He wasn't too disappointed after Malaysia; I think he was OK, so I think I'm still OK.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Daniel, in the beginning of the season you were not that close to Valtteri's pace but in the last four races you have overtaken him twice and beaten him three times. Are you surprised at this change?

DR: I think it's been... we've been getting stronger. So, we have been able to compete more regularly now with Mercedes and yeah, since the summer break he hasn't had as many – I guess – good performances compared to Lewis at least. I think it's a combination maybe: he hasn't performed at his best the last few races and we have got better, so it's given us a chance to steal some points from him. Obviously my chance of winning the title is very, very, very little but there's still a small chance at least to get top three again. Valtteri still has a good gap but if I can keep closing on this, then I'll be pretty satisfied.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports F1) Daniel, Red Bull are really good at developing through a season and getting better and better, as you've just said. From your perspective isn't it about time they stopped developing through the season and started developing in the winter and gave you a car to win a championship from the outset. If that doesn't happen next year, is that make or break for you with the team?

DR: It's certainly our plan. It has been obviously... I still don't know why the last few years we've had slow starts and then found a way to come back. So I guess the idea is again what we learn, because there's not many changes next year, what we learn hopefully from this year hopefully we take to next year and we start stronger. So yeah, that's obviously the plan, that's everyone's wish and yeah, I guess we go from there. Look, if next year's not a very competitive season at all then, of course, that will then, y'know, be addressed. At least... I feel I've said it every time this year but where we are now this year, you'd think next year we should be competitive. Hopefully as competitive as y'know, I would like to see. So, yeah. Mercedes has been winning for too long. We'll try to change that.

Q: (Abhishek Takle – Mid-Day) To Felipe. It's been reported that Williams are going to be evaluating Robert Kubica and Paul di Resta for next year. Knowing that, how does that factor into your plans for the future?

FM: I think it doesn't change anything for me. So... it doesn't change anything for me. Williams know 100 per cent what I can give to the team and, even if you do a test with a car that is four years before, completely different. You cannot evaluate too much, as well. So, doesn't change anything for me, to be honest.

Felipe, will you attend that test?

FM: No! I don't know. I don't know even if it's true, that test, or not. I don't know. To be honest... I don't know.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Lance, on the topic that Felipe's just mentioned about a four-year-old car, you've done a lot of testing with a four-year-old car and you're obviously driving the current car. What comparison is there between the two? Do you believe that one could really evaluate a driver that way?

LS: Well, the cars we drive today are really quick. Back then, in '14, the cars were, I believe, the first year with the new regulations, so there has been a lot of development, obviously the rules have changed this year, so lot more down downforce, different tyres and all that. So, they are very different, yeah, we'll see what the team thinks about it. It's not up to me to decide whether it's a good evaluation or not.

PART TWO: DRIVERS - Stoffel VANDORNE (McLaren), Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes), Pascal WEHRLEIN (Sauber)

Q: Valtteri, if we could start with you, it hasn't been the easiest for you since the summer break and you said on Sunday evening in Malaysia that this might now be the most difficult moment of your career. Can you elaborate on that? Why is that?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Well, I think the main thing is just because, the only thing I want to do is to perform and to try and meet my goals what I set for me personally. I definitely haven't been achieving those lately, so that's why the feeling wasn't so positive after the race. So, for sure it's tricky because now, y'know, having such a good car and with potential for such good results, I just want to perform. So, that's why.

Q: Has the car become harder to drive than it was earlier in the year when you were winning races, getting pole positions?

VB: I think the compromises we've been needing to do in some circuits to get it into the right window has been quite a challenge sometimes to drive around. I think Lewis has been able to extract a little bit more sometimes with a more tricky setup. Some things with the driving style always makes a difference and to understand those, you always kind of need that bad weekend to learn from it – otherwise you don't know these differences. It's not massive things, it's small things but this sport is all about details and changing some things in your own driving, then it can sometimes be a bit of a challenge and then that way the driving maybe doesn't feel quite natural at times – but that's how it is. I see things positive because I think from all those difficult weekends we've had there's been so much to learn from, so much to get better from. Like the race in Malaysia. I've had so many answers to my questions from that race. We've been trying to work out every single detail with the engineers and trying to understand, so I've learned massively again from last weekend. That's why there's always a positive.

And talking about those details, is there anything when you look at the data that you can learn from a guy like Lewis Hamilton?

VB: Yes, of course. From every team mate you can always learn something. From every single one. From every circuit there's always a thing or two you can pick up, especially from an experienced, extremely quick driver.

Q: Stoffel, tough times for Valtteri at the moment but you've had a cracking couple of races, seventh in Singapore, seventh last weekend in Malaysia. You must be feeling pretty good about things.

Stoffel VANDORNE: Yeah, lately everything has been going very well for me. I think it shows all the work I've been doing with the team – with the engineers, back at the factory as well – is paying off. And yeah, obviously feeling more and more comfortable with the car. It was great to have those two seventh places in Singapore and Malaysia – I don't want to get used to being happy with seventh but I think considering the package we have it was definitely the best result possible, so very pleased with that and, yeah, five races left this year, which is hopefully five opportunities to make something good of it, so shows we have to keep pushing, keep working as hard as we can and who knows what is possible for the last couple of races.

Q: You're now ahead of Fernando Alonso in the World Championship. Can you share with us just some of that work you've just referred to. What have you been doing? What areas of your job have you had to focus on to turn things around?

SV: It's only my first season in Formula One so there were a lot of things I had to get to grips with, learn. I think definitely the troubled start to the season didn't help with that in terms of the amount of track time we missed and, yeah, lately everything has had a much better run. The relationship between my engineers has developed massively as well and yeah, I think we go into every weekend very positive, very comfortable as well, knowing the areas we have to focus on. It's very nice to see the results are paying off as well.

Q: You won a Super Formula race here at Suzuka last year. How important is local knowledge? Is there something you gain from your year in Japan last year that might help you this weekend? Is there a trick to this track that you might know that the others don't?

SV: I think it's always very good to know a circuit. Like you said, I have a lot of experience around this circuit. Done a lot of testing, a lot of racing in Super Formula here, and obviously have a win around here as well – which was a special moment. So looking forward to this weekend again, to discover this circuit in Formula One. I think with these cars especially it will be a very exciting track for everyone to drive around.

Q: Pascal, now unlike these other guys, you don't yet know what you're going to be doing in 2018 yet you've outqualified your teammate, Marcus Ericsson, nine times, you've scored all of Sauber's points this year. Are you confident that that will be enough to keep you in Formula One next season?

Pascal WEHRLEIN: I hope so. My focus is on driving. This weekend – or every weekend - is another opportunity to show something. The previous races have been quite difficult for us and Malaysia was a bit better so hopefully we learned something from there and can have a better weekend this weekend.

Q: How dependent on Mercedes are you to place you somewhere next season?

PW: I am a Mercedes Young Driver so of course Mercedes is doing all the talks for me.

Q: And looking ahead to next season, specifically with Sauber, obviously it's been a tough time for the team this year but judging by what you've seen of next year's car, how do you rate their prospects going forward?

PW: For Sauber, you mean? So definitely a step forward is the engine, that they are running the current engine next year because now, especially, in the second half of the season we are struggling a bit with the performance there and definitely this is going to be better next year and then also hopefully with the car they are doing some steps forward.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Tatsuya Otani – Car Graphic) I have two questions for Stoffel. How do you look back at the development of the car during the season, for the chassis and the power unit respectively? And question two is: you raced for Honda last year here in Japan in the Super Formula championship; after your experience in Formula One Grands Prix, your image or your feeling of Honda has been changed or not?

SV: As a team, I think we've progressed a lot since the start of the season. Obviously everyone knows the situation, how it was back in Barcelona during winter testing, when it was obviously a very tough time for everyone, even getting the car out on track was difficult. The first few races were complicated as well and I think every weekend there were positives to take; every week has been going better and better. We're still not at the point where we are happy about our performance. We still know it's a very long way to go but I think lately we've been able to score a couple of points which are definitely very valuable for the team. But like I said, there's still a long way to go to compete with the top guys so plenty of margin.

Q: And Stoffel, the second question, can you relate the two experiences of Honda last year and this year?

SV: Well definitely my year in Super Formula helped me to work with Japanese people. I think the culture especially was very different so to come out here and discover something new, to work in a completely Japanese environment was not the easiest in the beginning, but I think it was a big challenge for me as well to kind of transform a team around me, to teach them some European lessons as well and to guide the team in a certain direction and then seeing the results of that was a nice challenge for me to do.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Hallo Valtteri; you have been very open and honest, talking about your current problem. Aren't you afraid that at that the same time you have been playing yourself down in public?

VB: I don't really... I'm not really interested about what people say in public. I know, like I said before, I know just my own targets, my own goals and if I don't meet those, if I'm far away from those I'm not happy and then it's tricky. I'm always very honest with myself and if there's any single little bit I can improve myself and if I can look in the mirror and I can say I can improve something, normally I will improve it, one way or another. It's been a very difficult few races that I need to learn massively from and especially from Malaysia but that's now history. I'm now here and I'm looking forward. There's been weekends when I've learned massively so looking forward to the next one.

Q: Valtteri, to go public on those thoughts as Heikki just referred to is a surprise to some people.

VB: Normally I just say things how they are and how things were. I was not happy, that's it.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Pascal, this weekend will mark the ninth race since the big management changes earlier on in the year, so effectively almost half a season ago in terms of race count. How much has the team changed in that time and in what areas and does it now have a proper foundation for the future, do you believe?

PW: About the foundation, I don't really know. But definitely it has changed in the team, with Fred coming we have a very experienced guy and also some other guys joining the team so for next year's car everyone can expect a good step. Then one of the first things he did of course was to re-sign the Ferrari deal and to put the current engine in the car which will be better.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports F1) Valtteri, you've talked about what's happened since the summer break but whilst your teammate's been on the podium, you haven't got within half a second of him in qualifying, it's been a bit difficult. You said the compromises you've made but is it time to ask for a new chassis? Would that actually help some of your problems?

VB: Well, if the team would find a problem with the chassis, with nowadays technology, before going just changing the chassis, you can find out if everything is alright and I trust the team as always, doing everything to make sure the car is in a good condition and well set-up. I trust the guys on that and who knows, maybe I've already asked before.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports F1) I'll take that as a yes, you have.

VB: Erm, no, not really, directly. I think... what was the first one after the summer break? It was Belgium. I had a poor performance in the beginning of the race and also the qualifying wasn't great so I asked a lot of questions, you know, I just wanted to kind of take off any things that could affect... I always want to make sure the machinery is good as well. So, like I said, I completely trust that the team is giving me a good car.

Q: (Shigenori Ogura – Tokyo Sport) Stoffel, welcome back to Suzuka. I would like to know how do you feel now to be back in Suzuka and racing in front of your supporters in Japan?

SV: Yeah, obviously very excited to be back in Japan in general, back in Suzuka. Obviously some very good memories from last year, racing here. I always had a lot of support from the Japanese fans and this weekend will be no different. If anything, it will be more. They always turn up with great surprises, great presents for all of us and it's just great to see the atmosphere so I'm looking forward to this weekend. It's a great circuit and just a great event for all of us.

Q: (Gaetan Vigneron – RTBF) Stoffel, could we say that your improved results in so few races could be related to the fact that at one point you could chose your own set-up with your engineers?

SV: Yeah, I think - like I said before - I think it's just the way I'm working with the team, working with my engineers has developed a lot. I think having had the opportunity to have a bit more track time enabled us to kind of see what I needed from the car, for the engineers as well to understand exactly what I needed from the car. At this point we're perfectly up to speed with that. There are no doubts any more. I'm very very comfortable as well. Every time I go into a weekend I'm just confident that things will work out, things will go and that's a nice feeling to have when you jump in the car, to feel comfortable and the car will do what you want it to do.

Ends