

2019 JAPANESE GRAND PRIX

10 – 13 October 2019

From	The Stewards	Document	50
To	Renault F1 Team	Date	23 October 2019
	SportPesa Racing Point F1 Team	Time	20:15

Protest filed by SportPesa Racing Point F1 Team against Car number 27, driven by Nico Hülkenberg of the Renault F1 Team

Steward's Decision:

The Protest is upheld.

Car 27 is disqualified from the final classification of the Japanese Grand Prix.

Procedure:

1. On Oct. 13, 2019, after the Race held in Suzuka, counting towards the 2019 FIA Formula One World Championship, SportPesa Racing Point F1 Team ("Racing Point") filed a protest against Car 27 (the "car"), owned by Renault F1 Team ("Renault"). Racing Point claimed in its protest that Renault was using a pre-set, automated brake bias system that does not comply with the regulations. By Doc. 46, published on Oct. 13, 2019, the protest was considered admissible by the Stewards after the parties had been summoned and were heard. With the consent of all parties the Stewards directed the FIA Technical Department to conduct a detailed analysis of the sealed FIA standard electronic control units and steering wheel of the car to prepare for another hearing.
2. On Oct. 16, 2019, Racing Point submitted another document providing further information in support of the claims made. On Oct. 19, 2019 the FIA pointed out that the parties had the opportunity to submit more documents before a new hearing. In a letter dated Oct. 21, 2019, which contained 3 appendices, Renault defended the system used in the car.
3. The FIA Technical Department carried out an analysis of Renault's software and data and reviewed the submissions received from Racing Point and Renault. On Oct. 22, 2019, they presented their written report to the Stewards. This report contained 3 attachments dealing with Renault's software versions, rear brake controller and FIA Standard ECU.
4. All the documents referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3 were made available to the Stewards and parties in good time before the hearings. Racing Point was informed that in both Renault's letter of Oct. 21 and the FIA Report of Oct. 22, 2019, attachments had been added, that contained confidential technical data from the car and therefore could not be shared with them. However, it was added that it remained up to the discretion of the FIA Technical Department how much of that information would be disclosed during the

hearing.

5. With emails dated on Oct. 19, 21, and 22, 2019, the parties were summoned for another hearing to take place on Oct. 23, 2019 by telephone conference.
6. The following persons attended the hearing: Mr. Andy Stevenson, Mr. Oliver Rumsey, and Mr. Charlie Blackwall on behalf of Racing Point; Mr. Alan Permane, Mr. Nick Chester, and Mr. John McColgan on behalf of Renault; Mr. Gilles Simon, Mr. Nikolas Tombazis and Mr. Olivier Hulot as expert witnesses on behalf of the FIA, Stewards and Ms. Claire Dubbelman as administrator to the hearing.
7. At the hearing there were no objections against the composition of the Steward's panel or against the procedure of using a telephone conference call rather than a face to face hearing. The parties set out oral arguments and addressed the questions asked by the Stewards. The experts were interviewed and explained their written comments.
8. At the hearing the parties referred to the documents submitted. None of the parties submitted further evidence or initiated the hearing of additional persons or conducting further investigations.

The claims of Racing Point:

Racing Point claims in essence that :

1. During the race Renault used in its cars a pre-set lap distance-dependent brake bias adjustment system (the "system"). This would be a breach of Article 27.1 of the FIA Formula One Sporting Regulations, which requires that the driver has to drive the car unaided.
2. The system is a breach of Articles 11.1.3, 11.1.4 and 8.6.3 of the FIA Formula One Technical Regulations (prohibition of powered devices altering the brake balance; brake system changes to be made solely by driver physical input; driving controls only affected by driver actions).
3. The operation of the system can be seen in the onboard video footage from the car. It shows the brake balance display on the steering wheel changing without driver input. Thus, they allege the brake balance must have been pre-programmed.
4. The supporting evidence as presented in documentation dated Oct. 16, 2019, leads Racing Point to conclude that Renault must use one of the illicit possibilities described in more detail. However, as Racing Point does not write the Renault software, the options are purely illustrative and cannot be exhaustive.

Renault's arguments in defence:

Renault contends in essence that :

1. Renault did not use a lap distance dependent brake bias adjustment system.
2. The brake balance indicated on the dash display may change due to the operation of a specific Renault system as described in a supplementary document (not shared with Racing Point due to the intellectual property contained therein).
3. There is no conclusive video evidence. However, Renault does not dispute the possibility of a change of brake bias on the dash display without the driver's physical input.

Additional information on that subject is provided to the FIA in a separate supplemental document (marked as confidential) containing Renault intellectual property.

4. Racing Point could not produce any conclusive video evidence. Racing Point have speculated the use by Renault of a prohibited system based on allegations from a former Renault employee who was not aware of all the pertinent details of Renault's brake control system.

Conclusions of the Stewards :

Having considered the various submissions made by the parties and listened to the expert witness statements made at the hearing, the Stewards find the following questions raised, which form the essence of the Protest:

1. Did Renault use powered devices to alter the brake system configuration (prohibited by Article 11.1.3 FIA Formula One Technical Regulations) other than as specified in Article 11.9 FIA Formula One Technical Regulations?
2. Did Renault use a pre-set, lap distance-dependent based system to make changes to the brake balance instead of modulations solely made by driver physical input (Article 11.1.4, 11.9 FIA Formula One Technical Regulations)?
3. Did Renault use in their car only buttons to affect driver controls (Article 8.6.3 FIA Formula One Technical Regulations)?
4. This leads to the ultimate question, does the driver drive the car alone and unaided, as mandated by Article 27.1 FIA Formula One Sporting Regulations and as further supplemented and explained in FIA Power Unit Management Document (PUMD)?

Findings of the Stewards:

The Stewards examined the documents submitted by the FIA Technical Department. The report complies with the order given by the Stewards at the hearing on Oct. 13, 2019. Parts of it are confidential in nature because they evaluate data worthy of protection. The results of the confidential part have been carefully incorporated into the document accessible to all parties. The FIA experts examined Renault's software versions used during the Japanese Grand Prix, offloaded data versions directly from the car and checked the car's rear brake controller, buttons on the steering wheel and the dashboard display. All conclusions of the experts are well structured and explained without showing any weaknesses in their logic. Therefore, after critical review, the Stewards agree with the results of the experts and state:

1. The rear brake controller software used by Renault is an integral part of the control system referred to in Article 11.9 FIA Formula One Technical Regulations. As such, it is used in compliance with Article 11.1.3 and 11.1.4 of the FIA Formula One Technical Regulations.
2. This described control system is not pre-set, lap distance-dependent as alleged.
3. Renault drivers use buttons mounted on the steering wheel to control brake balance in compliance with Article 8.6.3 FIA Formula One Technical Regulations. These are connected to the FIA Standard ECU.
4. Given the above, the Stewards conclude that while Renault used innovative solutions to exploit certain ambiguities in the Technical Regulations and other supporting documents, their system does not breach any current Technical Regulation.

5. However, although legal under the FIA Formula 1 Technical Regulations, as noted above, the Stewards find the Renault system constitutes a driver aid and is, therefore, not in compliance with Article 27.1 FIA Formula 1 Sporting Regulations, which requires the driver to drive the car alone and unaided. The brake balance adjustment system in question acts as a driver aid, by saving the driver from having to make a number of adjustments during a lap. The Stewards note that there is a clear distinction between this system and one which provides actual feedback control, which would be a substitute for driver skills or reflexes. Nevertheless, it is still an aid and, therefore, contravenes Article 27.1 FIA Formula One Sporting Regulations.
6. The stewards acknowledge that the penalty assessed in this case is more severe than other recent cases involving a breach of Article 27.1 FIA Formula One Sporting Regulations. The relative benefits gained under the breaches of Article 27.1 in those previous cases and the two resulting from this race were specifically assessed and the penalty here resulted from that assessment.
7. The Final Classification of the Japanese Grand Prix is to be amended in accordance with Article 12.18 of the ISC.
8. Because of the unique circumstances and timing of the Protest Hearing, the Stewards, under the power given to them by the FIA Judicial and Disciplinary Regulations Article 10.1.1, hereby extend the normal appeal period for this decision to expire at 10:00 AM Central Daylight Time, the local time in Mexico City, on Oct 24, 2019 where the majority of those impacted by these circumstances will be located. This is less than the maximum delay period allowed under this article and therefore meets the requirements of that article.

Gerd Ennser

Dennis Dean

Tom Kristensen

Yasuhiro Yodono

The Stewards