



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2017 FIA Formula One World Championship

Malaysian Grand Prix

Friday Press Conference Transcript

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PART ONE: TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Frédéric VASSEUR (Sauber), Christian HORNER (Red Bull Racing), Otmar SZAFNAUER (Force India).

PRESS CONFERENCE

Christian, let's begin with you and the announcement of the Aston Martin deal. Tell us the scope of that, the ambition and whether there is an engine dimension to it going forward?

Christian HORNER: Well, it's great news for our team. We have been working with Aston over the last 18 months now on a project, starting with the Valkyrie road car, and out of the upturn there has been within the Aston business over the last couple of years, they have decided that Formula 1 is the right platform to invest in and have taken up the title sponsorship of our team for the next three years. That collaboration will not only see an on-track, with the team being named Aston Martin Red Bull Racing, it also sees behind the scenes a collaboration on future products that Aston are working on and then producing some of those cars in Milton Keynes, producing more jobs in Milton Keynes – over 100 new positions are going to be created in the future – to hopefully produce some great looking cars.

And the engine dimension?

CH: There is no engine dimension at this point in time but what we await with interest is what will the regulations be, what are Liberty's plans regarding engines and chassis from 2021 onwards. So in an ideal world it would allow an independent manufacturer such as an Ilmor or a Cosworth to be able to compete with the big guns. But until we can see what the scope of those regulations are, it's difficult to make any assumptions.

And on the subject of engines, your sister team Toro Rosso has the Honda engines next season and you collaborate technically with that team, so how closely will you be monitoring the progress of Honda?

CH: I think it's a really exciting development for Toro Rosso. It's an opportunity for them to move forward. It keeps Honda in Formula One, which I think is also a positive and we'll certainly be keeping an interested eye on how things are developing in Italy.

Otmar, you've kept the same two drivers for next season – a very exciting pairing – how are things working out between them since you had a talking to them in Spa and do you feel you have got on top of their issues without blunting their competitiveness?

Otmar SZAFNAUER: Yeah, they've always gotten on. They have their on-track incidents, like you mentioned in Spa. That event kind of focused both their minds and now they have a good understanding that if they come together you never know who the winner or loser is, but for certain the team loses. We all work for a team, we all pull together, we're all team members. They understand that and they'll be working for the team going forward.

You're a clear fourth in the Constructors' Championship now, and likely to stay there. Obviously next year with Renault likely to move forward, with McLaren pairing up with Renault and all the other

moves going on, will it be an achievement to just stand still in fourth next year, or are you pushing the team to get third?

OS: Well, it will be difficult next year. Like you say, Renault have shown great steps forward this year from where they started to where they are now. I think it's no secret that McLaren have a lot of resources and are also capable. It will be difficult for us to remain fourth, but we always set our sights on achievable goals and we will push hard next year to at least stay fourth and someone makes a mistake ahead of us, you never know what can happen.

Frédéric, you ran Charles Leclerc in FP1. How did he do? And how do you rate him, given that you've had so many great young drivers pass through your hands – the Hamiltons, the Hulkenbergs, the Rosbergs – how do you rate Charles against them?

Frédéric VASSEUR: I won't rate Charles, only on the FP1 this morning, and it was a tricky session. He did very well this morning. He had not so many laps to do but he was at a good pace from the start and he did a very good session, even on the technical feedback everything went well. If you look on the global picture, he did very well in the junior series, he is doing very well in Formula 2. So far I think he had to be focused on the last part of the championship, to win the title and then you will see for next year.

It looks like Sauber could be more closely linked to Ferrari next season. You're obviously an expert in bringing young drivers on, as we've just discussed. Is that the best direction, you believe, for Sauber to take?

FV: For sure there is a huge gap today between Sauber and the top teams and we need to find a way of collaborating with a top team if we want to improve and if we want to improve quickly. Because the most important thing is to bring the team back into the field and then to be able to compete. OK, with the Ferrari deal we will improve and we will improve a lot and then we have to build up our own project to be able to fight with the guy in front of us.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) To all three of you: there has been a resignation this week from a senior member of the FIA's technical team. He has three months' 'gardening leave', which would then allow him to go to another team in a technical capacity. Does it concern you that he could be taking some secrets from teams with him?

CH: Well, we take major issue with that if he does end up with another team. Obviously in these individuals you place an enormous amount of trust. In the role that Marcin has been responsible for he has been in an extremely privileged position and extremely recently he has been in people's wind tunnels and looking at intimate details of knowledge of next year's cars and I think three months' notice period for him to then turn up in a competitor team in Formula One is entirely inappropriate. I certainly hope that isn't the case and I'm sure it will get discussed quite seriously at the next strategy group meeting. It's an important and vital role and it's vital that the teams have trust and faith in the governing body that they can discuss their technical know-how, their technical secrets in many respects, which cost millions and millions of pounds, in confidence that that information doesn't have the ability to end up in a rival team.

FV: First, we need to know where Marcin will go but I agree with Christian, it is a big issue, because the FIA is fully aware of all the teams' project and at the end of the day if we can't be open with the FIA it's a tricky situation. But first we need to know where Marcin will go.

OS: I do agree and it would have been nice to know the notice period. Three months I don't think is long enough and had we known it was three months earlier, perhaps we would have hired him. But I think three months is nowhere near long enough.

What is?

OS: I think a year. I mean, it has to be long enough such that the technology that he is aware of becomes, if not obsolete, then not leading edge. There are some sporting regulations as well that prohibit us from selling current-year cars for exactly the same reason. The cars have to be at least one year before we can dispose of them and it's for that reason and I think notice periods should follow along the same lines.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and Speed Sport) For the other two gentlemen: what do you think would be an appropriate time, one year or more?

FV: For sure, one year would fit with the spirit of the regulations but three months is really too short.

CH: I think industry standard for the type of role that Marcin has been performing would be anywhere between 12 and 18 months. We would look to place senior personnel within our team on at least 12 months.

Q: (Jake Michaels - ESPN) To all three of you: How can concerning was what we saw at the end of the session, with Romain Grosjean going off?

FV: For sure it was a huge crash. I am not an expert on the drain cover but I think we have to find a solution for tomorrow because it will be very, very risky, but I think that the FIA is focused on this point and I hope that we will be able to find a solution for tomorrow morning.

Christian you have experienced this before.

CH: Yeah, we had an incident quite a while back similar to that. The good thing is that nobody was hurt. Obviously the session was stopped and I'm sure all the covers here will be inspected rigorously before tomorrow's running. I'm pretty confident and hopefully we won't see a repeat issue.

Otmar?

OS: I think it just teaches that in future we should do it before it happens, have good inspection before something like this happens.

Q: (Ysef Harding – Xiro Xone News) This question's for Christian, since your announcement with Aston Martin for 2018, social media has been very creative coming up with some liveries for next year – would you be considering taking some of those ideas from social media, maybe getting the fans involved – because Red Bull's very good at fan engagement.

CH: We enjoy the work we do on social media, we have great interaction with the fans and followers of the teams. The livery is pretty much decided for next year but it's great to see people's interpretations and ideas and they should keep putting them out there.

Have you seen anything that's on the right track?

CH: No!

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Christian, your team has recently published its financial results – or rather submitted them, filed them with Companies House. When I look at them, first of all, there's about a £40million contribution from the parent company, but apart from that your budget's about two and a half times the size of Otmar's. Do you actually get 250 per cent the value compared to theirs or is this not really proof that there should be some form of budget cap in place?

CH: Well, I think what you have to look at is what are the cost-drivers in Formula One, and they are absolutely the sporting and technical regulations. We see costs spiralling out of control. We're not by any means the biggest spender in Formula One as you're well aware. And I think what's going to be fascinating to see, hopefully over the next month or so, is what are Liberty's and FIA's plans regarding the future – because a budget cap becomes far less emotive if it goes hand-in-hand with sporting and technical regulations that absolutely deal with the costs, because they are the cost drivers. So I think, if the sporting and technical side are dealt with, some form of cap will be easier to bring in but if you put all of the pressure on the cap, then it becomes an accounting world championship and I think that some of the issues we have today with disparity of performance, with the amount of spend that's going on, with the situation that's regarding... Red Bull Racing is the only British registered team to be registering a profit, albeit a moderate one, and that shouldn't be right in this level of sport.

Otmar?

OS: We welcome a budget cap or some cost controls within the sport. I mean, even with a cap I don't think we'll have the resources to spend up to it but I think it will help reduce some of the disparity in performance and that can only be good for the fans.

Fred?

FV: Yeah, we spoke about this in Monza, as I told you, I think the cap won't be an issue for me.

CH: Just coming back on Dieter's point, I think one of the key things within Red Bull's cost is how much goes into promotion, and promotion of the sport as well, that are contained within that budget. I think Red Bull does

more than any other team on the grid with its running show car activities around the world, with the way that we try to promote not just the team and the brand but obviously the sport in general as well.

PART TWO: TEAM REPRESENTATIVES - Mario ISOLA (Pirelli), Toto WOLFF (Mercedes), Guenther STEINER (Haas).

Q: Mario, let's start with you. We're three-quarters of the way through the 2017 season on these new, wider tyres. We can all see what the lap time improvements have been but can you give us an idea of the increase in things like the cornering speeds and any other things you've noticed – apart from 'don't' run over drain covers'.

Mario ISOLA: Yeah, we have seen on the corners that are grip-limited, we had an increasing speed that is 30km/h – 40km/h. We made an analysis on the quickest and most famous turn in Barcelona, in Spa, at Silverstone and it was impressive to see that Copse is now 290km/h and it is 30km/h quicker than last year, or we have Pouhon in Spa that is 40km/h quicker, so it is, in terms of performance, I believe we reached the target. Lap times, as you said, are visible for everybody. We are also analysing the data because this additional grip is generated not only by the wider tyres but also by the increase in downforce and, as an average, we have 100kg of downforce more on each tyre, as an average obviously, it depends on the circuit and layout, type of configuration and setup – but it's quite a lot.

Q: What can you share with us about the plans for 2018? What are you going to do with the range? Are you going to go a bit softer? What's the plan?

MI: We have defined the construction and we released the data to the teams on the First of September. We have a new construction front and rear, we will give some additional information soon. Obviously we are now working on our compounds – because the target is still to go one step softer compared to this year. We know that this year we have been quite conservative – but last year it was not easy to develop the new sizes with the mule cars so we decided to be on the conservative side. So the current Soft will be the new Medium next year, and we also intend to increase the number of compounds. It is still not defined but we have probably next year more compounds to give us more freedom in the selection during one event, because there are no modifications in the sporting regulations, so it still three compounds per event and the target is to have more flexibility.

Q: And just a comment from you on the Grosjean incident. We all saw what happened but from your point of view.

MI: Well, the tyres are not made to resist such a big impact so I cannot add anything else other than what we have seen on the television.

Q: Guenther, coming to you, talking about Romain's accident, we all saw what happened, what can you tell us from his point of view, and also the state of the car.

GS: I think from his point of view, he is OK. Thank God he didn't get hurt or anything. The car is damaged, in my opinion, things like this in 2017 shouldn't happen on a permanent circuit, they shouldn't happen on any circuit. This is, in my opinion, not acceptable. This is not up to the standards. So, I haven't spoken with anybody. The next thing we need to make sure is how we can prove that it doesn't happen in the race? Because in the race this would have been a little bit of a bigger disaster. If a few cars go over it, then the cover comes up. I'm still not through... to think completely through what happened to end up in this situation. In a few hours hopefully we know more. The damage is very big on the car. I don't know exactly what it is because the car just came back five minutes before I had to get here, so they hadn't taken the parts off to see if the chassis is damaged as well – but once we know that we see what we can do for tomorrow. We need to be sure that all the drain covers stay in place tomorrow.

Q: You dropped down to eighth in the Constructors' after the race in Singapore – big result for Renault there, of course, but it's so tight in the midfield, it's still possible for you to finish fifth in the Constructors' this year – even though you're pulling a face – are you throwing development resource at finishing 2017 as strongly as you possibly can, given the battle you find yourself in?

GS: No. I think fifth is a little bit ambitious from your side. I think we can not finish fifth but we try to finish seventh. I think at this moment in time we would be happy with that. We stopped developing the '17 car quite a while ago to concentrate on next year's car. We have limited resources. We need to focus that we

stay stable year-to-year, not just one year up and down because then you create a wave-effect and you never get a grip of what you're doing. We try to do our best. We will bring a few more developments but they are small. The last one comes in Austin. We hopefully can score some points. I hope also that our worst circuits are behind us, like the slow speed, high downforce ones. Our car doesn't like them. It's tough, as you said, in the midfield. We just need to try to do always a perfect job – and not hit drain covers.

Q: And a final thought. We asked Fred Vasseur in part one about the idea of a closer collaboration with Ferrari on his side, particularly on the driver aspect. Would that have any bearing on your team? How does your Ferrari collaboration develop from here?

GS: I think our one is stable. We are doing it since now, it's our third year since we started, and we do what we do. I have no influence what they do with somebody else and I don't want to have one. We are happy with our contracts and our collaboration. So, if Sauber wants to work with them, I have no opinion and I'm OK with it. I can't do anything about it any way – so why worry? We get what we want, and we are happy and we continue this.

Q: Toto, you're defending a 28 point lead rather than chasing down a deficit but today things looked a little bit difficult for your cars. Is that truly representative of where you were and is there that much work to do?

Toto WOLFF: The lap time is reality, the stopwatch always tells the truth. The lap time today showed that we are not quick enough. The car seems to be unbalanced and that triggers an awful lot of consequences and it was certainly one of the worst Fridays I can remember.

Q: Now you renewed Valtteri Bottas's contract but only for one year rather than longer term; what does he have to do next season to stay on, or is it more about what happens with other teams' drivers and whether they look to move?

TW: It's all in his hands, he just needs to drive fast and score good results. The dynamics between the drivers and the drivers and the engineer team is great so that is positive and it's about competing on track and being fast.

Q: It's the final Malaysian Grand Prix, obviously, but F1 has announced the contract with China has been extended for another three years. Your thoughts on both?

TW: It's sad that we're leaving Malaysia because of our partnership with Petronas it has become like a second home Grand Prix. We spend five or six or seven times a year in Kuala Lumpur and therefore I will be missing the race. On China, China is an important market for us with huge potential and insofar as extending their race there is good, good for Formula One.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) To all of you, certainly the two team principals: a senior member of the FIA's technical department has recently resigned. He's got three months' gardening leave, he's obviously worked pretty closely with the teams during his tenure. How do you feel about the fact that he could possibly be joining an opposition team within the next... certainly by the start of next year?

TW: Do you want an undiplomatic answer or the diplomatic answer?

GS: They were sandbagging today just to promote comment but anyway... I was not involved in the strategy group meeting this morning but I know that a senior member has left or is leaving the FIA but I'm not sure where he's going in the end, so I cannot accuse him of something, that he's going somewhere if I don't know. I guess somebody's taking him so it's as much as who is taking him's fault as the guy who is going. I think a little bit in between. But first of all, we need to know if he's going to a team and then where he's going but I don't know that yet, Dieter.

TW: I don't think it's correct because he's had access to a lot of information, especially from Mercedes so he will tell everybody else, so I think for sure they are not happy. It's like Guenther said, we don't know where Martin is going. It's just a rumour. We've received an e-mail from Charlie saying that he will be leaving the FIA and he will be on gardening leave for three months. I personally get on well with Martin and we wish him success for his career, that is clear, but we need to look at the timings, we need to be transparent with the FIA and give them access and therefore, in order to have the full trust of the teams, it's important to have a certain stability and understanding how quick somebody can leave the FIA and join another competitive team.

MI: I don't think I'm involved in that. For me, I was working very very well with Martin, we were co-operating on a number of things on tyres, future regulations and so on so it's a pity that he's leaving the FIA. I agree with Guenther on the fact that Martin obviously has a lot of knowledge and going to another team creates an issue for them but we don't know where he is going so...

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Toto, if we put aside the fact that your son was obviously a member of one of the F1 in Schools winning teams on Wednesday night, you were there, very enthusiastic about it. Could you tell us from a pure Formula One team principal perspective what you think of the project, the initiative and how you think it can help Formula One overall?

TW: I didn't know anything about Formula in Schools before I was actually surprised to hear that my son was joining it two years ago and it was his own initiative. I find it a really nice competition because young teenagers are creating a mini Formula One team. They have to raise sponsorship, they have to make a garage, create a marketing proposition, develop a little car. They are using tools such as CFD and mini-wind tunnels and then they put it on track and it's very competitive and the best 52 teams made it to the world final last Wednesday and out of every corner of the world. And seeing them, how capable they are, and how enthusiastic they are for the sport, it's really nice to see, so I will be cheering for Formula One in Schools, independently of whether my son is involved or not.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Toto, it would be fair to say that it would be one of the worst Fridays in your career. I would like to know if it's just a question of lacking of grip, it's just a question of heat or there is some other reason? And Ferrari put a lot of effort with new aerodynamic parts here. It seems that Mercedes is not at the same level at this event. Is that because you are thinking of bringing something more in Japan or in America?

TW: As I said before, it feels like one of the worst Fridays. We have brought some new parts to the cars as well and now we need to chase back why it didn't go today, independent whether it was in the wet or in the dry, on the long runs or on a single lap, we just lacked pace today and we have twelve hours to understand and then hopefully have a car tomorrow that is more stable.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and Speed Sport) There will be a triple header next year; Formula One has this tendency that if they get away with it once, they will do it again, so how keen are you to see triple headers and know that if it happens, everything works out once, it will happen again?

GS: OK, I think it is... if you plan it well, I think the crew for sure are the most stressed out but the triple header is in Europe so at least we have got that advantage. We don't have to fly from continent to continent. I think let's see how it is but again, we need to get organised for this stuff and if it doesn't work or if it is too stressful or if you can change something – you have to learn from it and change something for the year after because... I'm with you there, if we do it once, we will do it again. If we get spectators in front of the TV or some factor out of this, it will happen again. It's just one of those things that you need to do and then come out and analyse and see if it is worthwhile to do again and how to deal best with it.

TW: I think Guenther summarised it pretty well. There will be other factors such as important events in other sports or outside of sport that need to be considered and I think making a calendar is not easy so we need to wait and see how we can cope with the three races and then learn the lesson.

MI: Yeah, we are like a small team so we have the same problems so we are organising our people and we need additional people of course to cover all this because also if it is in Europe, we have trucks moving with the new tyres or bringing back the used tyres. For overseas it will be more complicated and if it happens, we need to make a proper plan in advance. Everything is possible if it is an advantage for the sport obviously we will be ready to do that but it will have an increase in logistics and people we are obliged to use.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Toto, today we saw an Instagram movie – if I can say – something about Trump that was posted by Lewis. Are you worried that there can be some effect coming to the USA Grand Prix for him?

TW: This is a very controversial and polarising story. I wouldn't want to get involved in politics. We all have our opinion. Lewis's feelings about human rights are very strong and I think he wanted to show that and probably Instagram as the communication channel is something that he needs to rethink but I can relate to his feelings.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Are you worried for the United States Grand Prix?

TW: No, I think one of the most important things in the US is that you have the right to express your opinion and I would want to leave it there and not comment any more. I think we are here as sport teams and sports should unite and I'm not sure it is happening everywhere in the world so I would rather lead by example and not comment on politics.

End