



AUTO+ CONFERENCE

DAILY NEWSLETTER #1
WEDNESDAY 08.07.2015



DRIVING TOWARDS NEW FRONTIERS

FIA President Jean Todt welcomes delegates to Mexico as Juan Pablo Montoya shines on day one

OPENING SESSION

TODT OPENS MEXICO 2015

FIA President Jean Todt yesterday opened FIA Sport Conference 2015 in Mexico City, by telling delegates that motor sport must address five key objectives as it plans for the future.

After thanking José Abed of conference host OMDAI, FIA Deputy President for Sport Graham Stoker and FIA Senate member Carlos Slim Domit, for their efforts in organising the first sport conference to held outside Europe, the FIA President said that the first objective is to work on improved visibility for all the FIA's championships, emphasising that Formula One need to go back to basics by improving the show, promoting technical prowess and the skills of the drivers. He also praised series such as the FIA World Rallycross Championship for bringing new fans to motor sport and the World Rally Championship and World Touring Car Championship for bringing new manufacturers onboard.

He went on to highlight the need to complete the standardisation of competition ladders, referencing the development of F2, which he said is at an advanced stage, and highlighted the need to limit the cost of competition, citing the cost cap being instituted by the World Endurance Championship as a possible model for series to consider.

The fourth objective, he said, is to develop dialogue with drivers, urging event organisers to listen to the needs of competitors at the heart of the sport.

Finally, he highlighted the need for safety, saying that the Accident Data Recorder programme and the Global Institute for Motor Sport Safety will aid in the quest for safer competition.



CONTENT AND ACCESS KEY TO MOTOR SPORT SUCCESS

Yesterday's first plenary session heard how in a changing media environment motor sport must create exciting content if it is to keep pace with rivals in the future

Motor sport must create more interesting content and provide better access to fans than rival sports in order to ensure it remains competitive in the current sports media environment.

That was the message from key motor sport identities at the FIA Sport Conference 2015 in Mexico City today.

In the opening session of the conference, a panel of racing experts featuring Juan Pablo Montoya (Indy 500 Champion), Gene Haas (Haas F1), Alejandro Agag (Formula E), Mark Miles (IndyCar), Joie Chitwood (Daytona International Speedway) and Carlos Slim Domit (Telmex) discussed the future of fan engagement in the sport.

All were in agreement that motor sport has inherent qualities that should translate strongly to the social and digital media age, however most agreed that there was more the sport could do to embrace new media avenues.

While it was accepted that television access is still relevant, the consensus among those present was that focusing on TV alone is not enough.

"From a social aspect, and pushing out content, it's taking your sport and putting it on your lap wherever you're sitting, if you're in an airplane, if you're at home," said Joie Chitwood, President of Daytona International Speedway.

A number of the speakers referred to

a “push” model of media consumption being overtaken by a “pull” model – in that fans now appear resistant to the concept of having content pushed towards them and now prefer to choose when and where they engage with sport.

Embracing new content distribution channels is seen as central to any motor sport maintaining a strong fanbase, while the challenge in such a competitive marketplace is attracting new fans.

“When I think about how people are turned on to motor sport, it’s usually a live experience as a fan,” added Chitwood. “If we can get you there, there’s a good chance you will become a fan because you will never have seen anything like this; it’s truly visceral. It’s audio, it’s visual, it’s all of your senses. And that person turns into the fan that follows it socially, consumes it on TV, and maybe attends other events.

“When we get you to the venue, we have to make sure you’re getting content that you don’t get at home. It’s creating a content-driven live experience. We have, I think, the best content of any sport; radio communications, in-car cameras, slow-mos, timing and scoring data.

“I do believe that the live experience will continue to be important, but when technology continues to evolve I think it could take away from the live experience. I hope that isn’t the case, but you could have a fan out there in the future who never attends a live sporting event, who can consume it through so many different platforms and distribution channels that they can get everything they need... I think you might find yourself stuck regarding who is the next generation of fan, because there is a risk that they will miss out on what’s special.”

Elsewhere, WEC CEO Gérard Neveu explained how the championship has focused on turning races into entertainment events, with no expectation that fans will remain in the grandstands for the duration of an event.

Formula E promoter Alejandro Agag spoke of the series’ unique Fanboost element, by which fans vote to give a driver extra power during a race. He said that the device had been developed to attract a new audience to motor sport and that as a new series it did not have to consider tradition, with Neveu adding that sports car racing, with all its heritage could not consider such a move.

Indianapolis Motor Speedway boss Mark Miles, meanwhile, spoke about the value of sponsors as new content creation partner in the quest to drive engagement.



CONFERENCE Q&A

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA

One of day one's major stars, the two-time Indy 500 winner talks about safety, the state of Formula One and the lure of the 24 Hours of Le Mans

Q You won the Indy 500 this year for the second time in your career, how much has the sport changed in the 15 years since you won it first time round?

A It has changed a lot in terms of the safety aspect of the cars. It's kind of funny when you think about it but when the HANS device came out, I was really against it – it just felt so uncomfortable. I remember even in Formula One when it was made mandatory, they had a problem with mine and said 'we'll just do an installation lap without it, take it easy' and I did, but I felt so insecure driving without the HANS, like something was missing.

Those kinds of things are important but I think the biggest difference is probably that the horsepower has come down over the years but at the same time the grip level has got better and the brakes have got better. That's changed a lot.

Q You've had so much success in so many different disciplines and you've always been able to go straight into a new category and win straight away. How did you get the confidence in the cars to be able to do that?

A I think I adapt pretty easily. Also, I think I just want them badly enough that it just makes it happen. I just want it more than anyone else.

Q Are you proud of the fact that you have won in so many different disciplines?

A I think it's cool that I've been able to win at everything I've driven but that's kind of my job isn't it? It's in the job description – you're meant to win. You don't get hired by a team go and run in P15 every week. You always try your best, you always drive as hard as you can and you always put the effort in.



Q You are one of a handful of drivers to have won two of the three 'classic' events – the Indy 500, the Monaco Grand Prix and the Le Mans 24 Hours. Only one man has won all three, Graham Hill, so how big a piece of unfinished business is Le Mans?

A Five years ago I couldn't care. Today? Maybe if I had a shot to be in the right car I would think about it. But I'm so happy at Indycar right now. I love running for Roger [Penske] and I'll tell you the truth: I've been lucky enough to say that I've driven for the best teams in the world. You talk about America and you talk about Team Penske and Ganassi, [in Formula One] you talk about McLaren, Williams. You look at the history of them and to be able to say that you've raced with all of them and won with all of them – that's pretty damn cool.

Q What are your thoughts on today's Formula One?

A The cars need to be a little bit quicker. But I think we need to start from the beginning: it's amazing technology. The problem is I don't think the fans understand what goes into that technology

and a lot of it gets lost in translation. The idea of the smaller engine is good.

I think they are also correctly limiting how the young drivers get into the series. The reason you have all these ladders and series is to build you as a driver so that when you get a chance you're prepared for it. Now people are jumping in really young, when they've done a year of racing. They don't find Formula One cars that hard to drive. When we did it a Formula One car was 10 to 12 seconds quicker than a GP2 car so that jump was massive.

Q There is currently a lot of discussion about how to change F1 cars from 2017 on, if you had to pick two or three things that you would love to see F1 pursuing for 2017 what would they be?

A A lot more grip, but grip in a way that you can follow people. I think the biggest struggle in Formula One always is that the cars are so efficient that it's very hard to follow people. The racing is not close enough.

For the full video interview with Juan Pablo Montoya visit FIA.com



FIA MOTOREX MEXICO THE BUSINESS OF SPORT

Yesterday saw the opening of FIA MotorEx 2015 at the Banamex Centre, with FIA President Jean Todt on hand to launch the industry-focused partner event of FIA Sport Conference.

This second edition of the event features more than 40 exhibitors across a 6,500 square metre space with each displaying and demonstrating motor sport products and services targeted at the effective organisation motor sport worldwide.

As well as industry stands the exhibition also features a number of

historic racing cars, including the last F1 car to win the Mexican GP, Nigel Mansell's Williams FW 14B.

A number of guests will also attend the event. On July 13, Formula E promoter Alejandro Agag will be in attendance, while on July 14, it will be the turn of two-time F1 champion Emerson Fittipaldi. On July 16 the guest will be Ferrari F1 Team Principal Maurizio Arrivabene and on the closing day, July 17, Force India F1 driver and local hero Sergio Pérez will be in attendance.

PERFORMANCE PLUS ELEGANCE

The opening day of FIA MotorEx 2015 played host to a unique event – a Concours d’Elegance exhibition of classic road and racing machinery, with delegates invited to vote in three categories – racing cars, American cars and cars from the rest of the world. Following the 30-minutes allowed for inspection, the top prizes were awarded to: a 1957 Ford Thunderbird in the American car category; a rare 1955 Mercedes-Benz 300SL in the sports car class and a Mercedes-Benz 300D from 1939 in the rest of the world category.





WELCOME COCKTAIL NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

As has become traditional at FIA Sport Conference, the opening day's sessions, and the launch of FIA MotorEx 2015, were followed by the first of the week's social events, with Carlos Slim Domit hosting delegates and guests at the incredible Soumaya Museum. A private museum named after the wife of Carlos Slim, the Soumaya houses a staggering 66,000 works of art, including sculptures from Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, 19th- and 20th-century Mexican art and an extensive collection of works by artists such as Auguste Rodin, Salvador Dalí and Tintoretto. Guests were invited the collection, while being serenaded by operatic voices and music echoing through the stunning interior of the iconic building.





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