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Thursday Press Conference Transcript

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PART ONE: DRIVERS – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes), Brendon HARTLEY (Toro Rosso), Carlos SAINZ (Renault), Marcus ERICSSON (Sauber)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Lewis, five-time US Grand Prix winner, three-time F1 world champion, US Grand Prix always a big one for your, personally and for the team, no doubt many commitments in the run-up to the event, but I just wondered how much you enjoyed your hours spent at NASA yesterday?

Lewis HAMILTON : Good morning everyone, super happy to be here of course and had an incredible day yesterday, having a bit of a comedown today. I was just buzzed all day yesterday because it's always been something I've wanted to do. It's always something I've been fascinated about, space and space travel particularly. So to actually go there... and I had a million questions. I'm sure the guy got fed up with me. I asked a lot of questions and I got to see a lot of great things, some of the new technology they are working on and yeah, I want to go back.

You stand on the threshold of your fourth Driver's world championship this weekend, but does a part of you regret that the fight has sort of gone out of it now with all the misfortunes that Vettel and Ferrari suffered on the Asian leg in Singapore, Malaysia and Japan?

LH: No I don't feel any type of way about it.

But obviously you've got such a massive margin now. There was such a tension throughout the season up to September but there's much less tension now from your point of view, approaching the races?

LH: Nothing has changed for me, man. Everything is exactly the same as it was going into the last race, going into the second half of the season; it's exactly the same mentally for me. Maybe it's changed from your perspective, but for me it hasn't.

Fair enough. Thanks for that. Marcus, the seats are filling up now for 2018. Are you comfortable with the position you are in and do you have any guarantees about next season?

Marcus ERICSSON: I think in Formula One when you don't have a contract signed you can never be comfortable, so it's important for me to push hard now in the last few races to show that I should be on the grid for next year.

You've never been outqualified I believe by a team-mate here at Austin, what do you like particularly about this track?

ME: I didn't know that but that's good. I enjoy this track. I think it's the best one of the new tracks on the calendar. It has a good mix of very fast corners. The first sector is really good fun to drive and really challenging and I look forward to driving it with these new cars as well. I think it's going to be quite impressive. It's a good mix of corners on this track and it's enjoyable to driver.

Turning to Brendon Hartley, 2017 Le Mans 24 Hours winner, welcome to your grand prix debut. Tell us, who called who, what part did Porsche play in it all and where is it all leading?

Brendon HARTLEY: Good questions. Actually, when it was announced that Porsche would stop endurance racing in LMP1 for next year, I called Helmut Marko and I said: ‘Look, I’m a different driver than I was 10 years ago, I’ve learned a lot, and if there is ever an opportunity I am ready.’ He didn’t say much, he just said he got the message, and three months later he made the call. This happened very quickly. I didn’t know about it much sooner than the press did. It’s been quite a whirlwind of a couple of weeks to arrive here. Yeah, I’m pretty relaxed at the moment, all things considered. Really looking forward to getting out on track. Obviously I’ve had quite a bit of time to chat to the engineers, to go through some data, a little bit of time on the sim. But I’m looking forward to free practice one and see how comfortable I feel and working towards the race start on Sunday, which is a big moment for me, so yeah, really excited.

When you say you are a different driver from 10 years ago, what was wrong with you as a driver 10 years ago that made it go wrong with Helmut and how have you changed?

BH: I guess I wasn’t ready. I had some success in the early days, I won the Formula Renault championship, I became the reserve driver, had my first F1 test at 18 years old and I guess I just didn’t deal with the pressure. I stopped enjoying it, I wasn’t happy; I was pretty young and away from home. When the Formula One dream, so to speak, stopped in 2010, I picked myself up, I found endurance racing and yeah, I have learned a lot from that experience. Being in the LMP1 programme, a high-profile category, where there is a lot of pressure, probably not that dissimilar to Formula One in some ways, in that respect, in development of the race car, and working with team-mates has been great. I’m a lot stronger than I was back then, basically. I wasn’t ready at 18 years old. I like to think I’m ready now. I’m not very prepared for this weekend, I haven’t the car, I haven’t driven a single-seater since 2012, but I like to think that Porsche LMP1 has hopefully prepared me well.

Excellent. Thank you very much for that. Carlos, splendid in yellow. You’ve made your move to Renault this weekend. Why? Why is it important to do four races at the end of this season, to get your head around the new team ahead of next year? In what ways will you benefit from this?

Carlos SAINZ: First of all, I think that 2018 cars will be an evolution of this year’s cars. So every input I can have regarding this year’s car, every feeling I can get from every single area of the car, I’m sure it will help me for next year. On top of that, it’s always better to meet engineers, PR people, team bosses... start working along together with all of them four races earlier that gives us a bit of an advantage for 2018 rather than going straight into winter testing in 2018.

So I think the thing we all want to know is how close can you expect to be to Hulkenberg’s pace in qualifying, your new team-mate this weekend, given the amount of time you will have with an unfamiliar car on Friday and Saturday in practice? What’s your goal?

CS: Let’s wait and see, no? I think my main target has to be to go session by session. I’m the first one who wants to be on the pace straight away, but I cannot get too excited about that. I need to cover all the procedures, all the steps that I want to take, little by little, to get to know the car. I need to adapt myself to the car and I need to adapt the car to myself at the same time. That takes a bit of time and I’m going to go step by step and hopefully get there as soon as possible.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Frédéric Ferret – L’Équipe) Lewis, do you have any explanation of your strengths in qualifying, even when your car is not as good as you would like?

LH: I think it’s just about know the car and knowing where you can push at those areas. Of course there are weaknesses but still you can find a way to exploit those weaknesses and just about get by. It’s been a fun car to drive because it’s not been perfect. So it’s then relied on a lot of your ability to balance it in uncomfortable scenarios or situations, which is something that I’ve always loved doing. It’s how I started in life, with not such a great go-kart when I was young, so that’s about it really.

Q: (Joey Barnes – Motorsports Tribune) Lewis, the fun exchange with Takuma Sato on the podium got a lot of buzz here in the States. Talk about your interest, potentially, in the Indy 500 after getting a chance to have that exchange with him?

LH: Honestly, it hasn't inspired me to do the Indy 500. I've always respected it and appreciated it and I got to watch part of it when Fernando did it, which was super exciting. I love the idea of drivers being able to do more than one series. Just the other day I happened to get to drive a Formula One car on an oval, which was interesting. I have a huge amount of respect for those drivers; it's quite scary when you approach those banks at the speed that they do. But I personally don't have any particular desire to... maybe one day I'll day I'll have some fun and go out. Obviously I get lots of opportunities to do those things but I have no plans to go there and do anything serious.

Q: (Chris Medland – Racer) Brendon, what have the team have said to you about their expectations for this weekend and longer term what may come after this weekend?

BH: Actually, there have been no expectations set. To be honest, some of the team members I'm just meeting for the first time today, and yesterday during the seat fit. I made the seat yesterday. Nothing has really been said yet. Obviously I want to do the best that I can. I'm trying not to put too many expectations on it. In some ways I'm underprepared but obviously I want to do the best job I can. Nothing has been said by the team, and also, going forward nothing has been said yet.

Q: (Andrew Benson – BBC Sport) Lewis, you've talked about being on another level since the summer break. I was just wondering, what's changed for you within the team, and maybe for you personally, over that break and into these races that's allowed you to operate on that higher level of consistency?

LH: I think it's really just been that confidence of understanding the car a lot better this year, particularly in the second half of the season; knowing its strengths and weaknesses. Then, I would say that we are constantly evolving the process in which we work together, myself and my engineers. So we'd often hit the ground running with a balance I'm more comfortable with, which then naturally helps you easily step forward throughout the weekend in the right direction. And otherwise, just on my driving side, I don't know, I think there are a lot of positive things happening in my life. There are a lot of interesting things forecast over these next 18 months, so I guess that's an exciting and uplifting thing. So I'm arriving at these races, generally, with an abundance of positivity; it helps keep your mind in the right place. Obviously, Toto and the team, Mercedes, have been incredibly supportive of all the different things that I'm into and the things I do and the way I move, which enable me to be in that position, and which are much appreciated.

Q: (Alan Baldwin - Reuters) Lewis, there are reports in some of the media that you might be considering taking a knee on Sunday during the US anthem. Can you clarify that? What is your position?

LH: I don't really have a position and I don't have any plans.

Q: (Joey Barnes – Motorsports Tribune) Brendon, looking at this track, in 2013, I go back to your event in the Grand Am endurance race. How fitting is it to have this F1 start here and how critical is it to come here to a place where you have all this track time?

BH: Yeah, it's definitely nice coming to my Formula One debut at a track I know very well. Like you say, it dates back to 2013 and I think I've driven here almost every year since. Actually, as a racing driver, learning a track, when you have enough experience, it can happen quite quickly. I think learning the car will be the bigger challenge. The big tyres, the big downforce that these Formula One cars have at the moment, obviously they are setting lap records at every track they go to. Yeah, I'm going to have a bit on my hands tomorrow and the track is only a small part of it. But yeah, looking forward to it.

Q: (Andrew Benson – BBC Sport) Brendon, what have the team told you about the chances of you continuing for the rest of the season?

BH: Not much, actually, so I'm trying to just focus on the weekend and see how that goes and see what comes from it.

Q: (Frédéric Ferret – L'Équipe) Brendon, have you asked Sébastien Buemi or Mark Webber for some advice on how to drive a Formula One?

BH: Yeah, I've obviously... all the friends I have in the sport I've been asking for a bit of advice. I saw Mark this morning for breakfast. I saw Daniel, who is one of my best buddies as well, Daniel Ricciardo, I saw him two nights ago, I asked him for all the advice I could manage to get out of him regarding tyres. Yeah, some of

it is going to come down to, like I say, driving free practice one, seeing how I go and then asking some of those questions. A lot of them aren't really relevant until I've actually experience the car.

Q: (Phil Duncan - PA) Lewis, just following on from the question about the protest take the knee, I'm just wondering if anything had changed, you'd spoken to anyone, or anyone had spoken to you about not doing it, because you said you have no plans to do it on Sunday?

LH: Of course there has been a lot of mention of it – not of the kneeling, but just of the whole situation here in America, so I get to speak to a lot of... I know black and white people that live here in America, so I get quite a view of what's happening here in the States and opinions from Americans here about the movement, which I think is pretty huge, and which you've seen that I've posted about it, because I respect it highly, and I found that the movement that [Colin] Kaepernick started is awesome and I'm very much in support of it. But I'm here to win and that's the top of my priorities at the moment and I'm not really focused on anything else at the moment.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Question for Lewis, Ferrari seems to have fallen into a technical crisis in the last few races. Do you expect them to react here? Sebastian could be a strong fighter at the end of the season as well?

LH: I think he's been a strong fighter all year and just because he's obviously had a few issues technically, but I think still the car is as good as it's always been. For sure they'll have some sort of upgrade coming into this weekend. They've definitely had a couple of hiccups but I anticipate they'll be very strong this weekend and for the last four races – so that's why nothing changes for me. I've still got to continue to keep the pressure on and there's no reason to back out, just got to keep pushing forwards.

Q: (Ysef Harding – Xiro Xone News) Lewis, you've been a sheriff here the last four years. How would it feel to take this win, this Championship, a fourth World Championship here in the United States again, for the second time, in front of many children who look up to you or are inspired by you, by your story and would love to see you win here?

LH: Honestly I think the talk of the Champion win this weekend I think is silly really. I mean, Sebastian is going to be... you can't expect them to have a difficult weekend again. They're going to be quick, they have an opportunity to win. The Championship, as long as it's done in the next four races, that's my focus. I honestly couldn't care less if it's here on the last race, as long as it's done. I think winning here is the most important thing for me, particularly in the midst of all that's going on in the country. I think that is a priority for me. You know what I'm talking about.

Q: (Oliver Brown – The Daily Telegraph) Lewis, you spoke quite tantalisingly just then about exciting things happening in your life over these 18 months. I just wondered if you could flesh that out at all, whether there was anything in particular helping to lift your spirits for race weekends at the moment?

LH: I can't tell you what it is, all top secret stuff but just positive things. When you're a racing driver often you're put in a box and there's talk of you not doing much but being a racing driver and there's a lot more to me than being a racing driver and I have a lot of great things that are happening. So, it's just, after a lot of work, a lot of trial and error, a lot of pushback over the years, to see positive things starting to happen, things starting to move in the direction I was hoping it would eventually move – which you'll see come to fruition in the next 12 to 18 months. That's allowing me to take the pressure off and enjoy what I'm doing here, more than ever before.

Q: (Kevin Lyttle – Austin American Statesman) Carlos, I wanted to ask you, your thoughts on COTA as a race track, and also on Austin as a Formula One city.

CS: I'm actually particularly excited to make the debut with the Renault car in a circuit like Austin because you have every single kind of corner that you enjoy in Formula One in this kind of track. You have a long straight and then a big braking zone, you have a lot of long high-speed corners, high-speed changes of direction, medium-speed, high-speed. Because of that, I think it's a great circuit for me to get to know the car in all these areas. Apart from that it's one of my favourite grands prix of the season in the end. You know you have great vibes surrounding the whole grand prix, with the concert, with the fans here are particularly special and I'm going to enjoy the weekend because of that.

Q: (Rebecca Clancy – The Times) To Lewis, two things to clarify. There was a bit of a smile then, you said winning is the most important thing and you know what I mean. I'm not entirely sure I understood the end of your answer to that question. If you could just explain what you mean. And, forgive me if I'm reading too much into this but you said winning is the most important thing, and when we spoke in Malaysia you said about taking a knee, it wasn't your anthem, there was plenty to consider. So would you therefore consider maybe staging a protest during your own anthem if you do win?

LH: Like I said, I wasn't even looking far away into it. I've not given it that much thought. And when I said 'you know what I mean', it wasn't to everyone, it was to the gentleman at the front here. Yeah. As I said, I'm here to win. That's my focus. I don't really plan on allowing all the BS that's surrounding the topic pull me down in my strive to winning this world title. I've worked hard to be where I am today and whilst I do have opinions and feelings towards the whole situation, as I've said, at the moment, no plans on doing anything.

Q: (Mariana Jiménez – Récord) Lewis, you've said that you don't have the title in your head right now but wouldn't it be nice to wait until Mexico and get your first title there in front of the crowd?

LH: I'm looking forward to going to Mexico, as I always do every year, I have a lot of support out there, I have a lot of love for Mexicans and... yeah... it's just an awesome event to anyway, so to go there again, particularly after the last couple of years. I think every year it seems to grow in its attendance. I guess the organisers learn so much about how the event goes and improve it for the following year. Winning the World Championship is obviously the goal and of course I think about it every day. I think my drive naturally is to winning that World Championship so every bit of my energy goes towards that mission. Honestly, wherever it happens, I don't mind if it happens in Mexico, I don't mind if it happens here, I don't mind if it happens in Abu Dhabi, as long as it happens. But definitely Mexicans know how to celebrate so, if it does happen there, hopefully I'll get one of the sombreros and be in a party.

Q: (Simon Lazenby – Sky Sports) Lewis, if you're to win this championship, would you say Ferrari have blown it. They've handed it to you on a plate.

LH: If I was to win this Championship I think I would say that I've earned it.

Q: (Phil Duncan – PA) Another question for Lewis. You're going to be the only British driver on the grid this weekend, which is the first time in your career. I was just wondering what you thought about that, the state of play in motor racing in Britain and whether you're quite surprised you're the only guy racing from Britain this weekend?

LH: I don't know how it is for the other drivers here but when you arrive you don't think I'm here surrounded by members of... from where I'm from. So it makes no difference to me. I still work to raise the flag, and you do it as an individual, not as a team with other racing drivers, so yeah, that's how it is.

Q: (Jim Vertuno – AP) Brendon, there's been a lot of expectation, speculation, that you were heading to Indy Car next year. Does this weekend change your plans there? What's your future look like.

BH: Nothing's been confirmed for me for next year, so yeah, like I said before, I haven't asked too many questions and have just been focussed on trying to do the best I can this weekend because I've got a fair amount on my plate to figure out and do a good job. So, I'm trying not to think further forward. But yeah, I was looking at Indy Car and I still am. Nothing confirmed for next season yet.

PART TWO – DRIVERS: Fernando ALONSO (McLaren), Kevin MAGNUSSEN (Haas), Romain GROSJEAN (Haas), Nico HÜLKENBERG (Renault)

Q: Let's start with Fernando Alonso. Two-time Formula One World Champion who's just announced a new deal with McLaren that I think will take you to 17 seasons in Formula One. Tell us your feelings, and also what remains for you to achieve here?

Fernando ALONSO: Well, the feelings are great, obviously. It's a good day for me, announcing next year, I will be back here with McLaren and obviously happy and proud to continue this relationship. It has been three difficult seasons for us, we are not as competitive as we wanted and now I think it's time to change this situation and hopefully next year to be back in the positions that McLaren belongs and hopefully give something to our fans that have kept supporting us for the last three years. That will be the main thing for next year. As I've said, happy to arrive to this agreement at the end.

Q: On that topic, obviously you're switching to the Renault engine for next year which has this season so far won two grands prix and had ten other podiums. Is that the kind of thing you have in mind from McLaren-Renault next season?

FA: We'll see. I think every years the projects are a little bit different. You never know what you can achieve with the new cars. Sometimes you go to the first winter test and have a nice surprise and are quicker than you expect; sometimes you have bad surprises and you are a little bit slower and something is not according to plan. Let's see what we can do next year – but definitely very happy again to have a Renault engine on my car. I have a very strong relationship with Renault from many, many years now. I've been working with them since then, even on my karting school etcetera, so extremely proud to also drive for a Renault engine.

Q: And a final comment on the colour of your cap, all part of the Susan Komen initiative this weekend.

FA: Yes. Obviously I think the whole of Formula One is given big support to all the women that are fighting constantly with breast cancer. I think we want to pass the message that they are not alone, they have a lot of support. With all the necessary things and controls they can make in advance, I think there are many, many hopes and they are not alone.

Q: Romain Grosjean, on home soil – kind of – with Haas, off the back of a double-points finish in Japan that moved you up in the Constructors' Championship as well, what's the mood like in the team at the moment, going into this weekend.

Romain GROSJEAN: The mood is pretty good. It has been since the first day, to be fair, even through the highs and lows. It was really good to have a double-points finish in Japan. Japan and Monaco, which are two very difficult tracks. So, it shows the team is doing great progress. We're coming here of course very motivated as always. Pretty special grand prix because it's the home race for the team. We just need to keep our feet on the ground and start from zero every weekend and build up from there but you know it's only the second year of the team and we are fighting with Renault, Toro Rosso, Williams in the Constructors' Championship – and they are teams that have been here for a very long time, so you can be very proud of that. We know where are our strengths, we know our weakness and we are working on that for the future – but I think there is a lot of potential in the team to move up the ranks.

Q: On that subject, Fernando's planning on moving up the grid next year, Nico's definitely planning on moving up the grid next year. How are Haas and yourself going to move up the grid in the face of that competition?

RG: Well who isn't? That's the real question! For sure McLaren is going to be a competitive team next year. We have less experience than others. I think that year was a really good test for us and knowing that we were coming with a change of regulation, to see what we could do. We've done pretty well. I'm thinking that, I'm hoping that next year we go up another level, which everyone obviously does – but I think, as I say, we've got more potential to unlock and we're going to try to do that. We know where we've been good, we know where we haven't been good and obviously now the key is to work on where we've been weak.

Q: Nico, a new teammate in Carlos this weekend and going forward. Do you expect him to give you a hard time this weekend in Austin, or indeed in the last four races or is that more likely to come next season?

Nico HULKENBERG: No, definitely a harder time probably than so far this year. Obviously he's got a few challenges on his plate, changing team at the back end of the season is not the easiest situation. There are a lot of new things that he has to get used to: car, team, people but I'm sure he will be on a decent level straight away. I look forward to working alongside him. Obviously four important and intense races now ahead of us so yeah, we need to focus and do a good job.

Q: Do you know him much already?

NH: I've known him obviously from this year and last year, the time that he's been in Formula One but probably get to know him a lot more in the next couple of weeks.

Q: Obviously the Renault's been quite an interesting story, the way it's developed this year; pretty much since Silverstone it seems to me you've generally been the fourth fastest car in qualifying at most venues; where has that come from?

NH: Well, it's come from hard work, good development, everybody back at the factory has done a good job during these last couple of months and that's it pretty much. We've brought updates for the car and

transformed the car into a much better performing car on all sorts of different tracks so we're in a good position. As we say, we still obviously have quite a bit to do this year. We want to not finish where we are now, in terms of team championship position, so it's important for us to do a good job in the last four races.

Q: So based on the growth that you've seen this last few months, obviously you think you're going to be able to race Mercedes, Ferrari, Red Bull in 2018? Is that too much to expect?

NH: I think that's asking a bit much if you see the gap and the advantages they have at the moment. It's a pretty difficult task to close that gap. I think if we can halve that gap, we've already done a very good job. It's not that they're not doing a fantastic job so TBC but obviously we will make up as much as we can.

Q: Kevin, four points finishes in 2017 with a best of seventh, how would you sum up the season so far in terms of your own satisfaction?

Kevin MAGNUSSEN: I think it's been an up-and-down season with a lot of potential and perhaps also some missed potential at times this year but we've still had some good races and the potential seems to be good in the car. When we're quick, we're very quick and competitive but our lows have perhaps been a bit too low. That's something to work on for next year, consistency, and getting the car more regularly at its best. I think we can move towards that; whether we can be constantly fourth best team, I don't think so. It's not realistic at least but we will do what we can and see.

Q: Now you and Romain are now noticeably more close together more often, starting to become a bit of a Force India scenario. How much are you enjoying that?

KM: Well, we haven't crashed into each other this year so it's not like that but we're enjoying it and it's good that we're both getting the most out of the car and just shows that we're fighting hard and doing our best.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Chris Medland – Racer) Fernando, I believe it's a one year contract extension you've signed; is that correct and if so what's the thinking? Are you looking beyond next year, do you want options open?

FA: We don't talk too much about the contracts, the inside but no, it's not one year.

Q: (Andrew Benson – BBC Sport) Fernando, just following that up, I'm told it's a multi-year contract but presumably that's got options in it. Do you then foresee potentially at McLaren if things go well next year and then maybe into the future Le Mans, Indy 500? Are these things that you're talking about with McLaren as well?

FA: We'll see, I think it's just talking too much ahead. We have enough to do for next year, to put McLaren again at the top of the grid and that's the first priority right now. I think on my personal side there are no other priorities than Formula One at the moment but with a door open for different series and different goals that I always believed that you need to win in other series if you want to be a more complete driver, a better driver, because motorsport is not only Formula One. Even if it's still the priority, we will see what the future brings.

Q: (Ysef Harding – Xiro Xone News) Romain, you and your wife recently worked on a cookbook together, Cuisine and Confidences. Can you tell us a little bit about the book and what went into it, the journey that you take because it covers two things you love aside from Formula One, cooking and your family?

RG: Yeah, it's been great fun. It was just through meeting people and we met a guy called Patrick Rougureau and he's been voted best culinary photographer in the world last year and he actually made my plate look pretty nice which it wasn't always, so it was a good job. And it was basically... it was basically just a way to share my passion for cooking and every recipe has a story behind it for which my wife writes the text, so it's all cooking that we do back home, either with the kids, with friends and so on. It was just a great thing to do and I thought it could be fun to see that a Formula One driver can actually do something a bit different than an autobiography and having a cookbook that can give a bit of an inside of our lives through recipes.

Q: Do any of the other drivers have a passion for cooking? Nico, do you enjoy cooking?

NH: No.

FA: No

KM: Just eating.

Q: (Lennart Bloemhof – Volkskrant) Fernando, as somebody who now has experience in Indycar and also Formula One, how do you think F1 can win over American fans? Is the passion for racing different around here?

FA: I think here it's a little bit more relaxed; you know the atmosphere in the race, in the weekend... The races here are much more unpredictable, what the result can be on Sundays so that is quite attractive from a fan point of view. In Formula One, we know the starting grid on Sunday, we can write a paper now and sign and we will maybe miss one or two positions, maximum, and that's the worst thing that we have and hopefully we can change that.

Q: (Geoff Gluck – Geoff Gluck.com) Fernando, you've seen a lot of teams come in over the years but Haas F1 team has had pretty good success in their first couple of seasons. Have you been surprised at how well they've been able to do as a start-up team?

FA: Yeah, definitely, it definitely has been a very good thing for the sport. I think what Haas has managed to do in the last two years is quite impressive. I think the first year we could argue that with the help of Ferrari or the agreements that they had, we will see a competitive team already from race one but I think with the changes of regulations this year etc I think they did an amazing job again, so two consecutive years in a very demanding sport like F1, competing at a good level is a great achievement so hopefully we will see more teams coming with this commitment and with this kind of result and also with Haas with better results in the future will be great as well.

Q: (Joey Barnes – Motorsports Tribune) Fernando, five months ago, you running in the Indy 500 got a lot of people's attention obviously. When you reflect back at that time, what are the biggest moments you take with you and are you looking to potentially doing something like that again in the future?

FA: Well the moment was... it's difficult to pick up one moment of that month. If I had to chose one, it would be Sunday: the drivers' presentation, the drivers' parade ten minutes before the race. That was an amazing moment: 250-300,000 people in one venue was very impressive, the atmosphere there. But I think the whole month was very unique and opened the eyes a little bit of what I said before: Formula One is just one more series in motorsport, probably the most mediatic one, it's a fantastic show and we all are very proud to be Formula One drivers and we dream from a very early age to become Formula One drivers but there are other motorsport series that are as good as that and you know I'm a fan of this one, so that was a good discovery for me. Obviously now, with the new McLaren deal for next year I can confirm that I will not be at the Indy 500 next year because there is Monaco Grand Prix on the same weekend and priority next year will be to perform well in Formula One but at the same time I can confirm that I will be in the Indy 500 in the future. I don't if it will be '19 or 2020 or whenever but it's a race that I definitely will experience again.

Q: (Louis Dekker – NOS) For all drivers: Austin will stay on the Formula One calendar probably but if there will be a second Grand Prix in the US, what circuit or what city would you like?

NH: I'll say Miami, because I think it's a fun, cool town and to host the Grand Prix there would be quite cool and spectacular I think.

RG: Well, I think there would be many many places to get a great Grand Prix. Laguna Seca is a pretty cool track, I love Long Beach, Miami would be nice. Why not Las Vegas, so I think it's such a big country that there are opportunities in a lot of cities.

FA: Yes, the same. There are many places that could host a race. Even Indianapolis on the old circuit.

KM: Yeah, Laguna Seca would be awesome, Watkins Glen, a city race in Miami or New York would be cool as well, so more races would be good.

Q: (Jim Virtuno – Associated Press) Romain, you've driven for Haas now for two years; what's your sense of Gene's patience or impatience of the development of the team and do you sense that he's in this for the long haul?

RG: I think he's the best team owner I've ever had. He's passionate about racing and really loves it to a high extent and that makes the whole team just very enjoyable to work with. I think Gene was initially surprised how competitive and how complicated Formula One is but he's now got it and he knows that what we're doing is pretty good. Of course we always want more and if Gene is in Formula One it's not too... I believe in the long term fight for eighth or sixth in the Constructors' Championship but try to go for podiums or one win. We know the gap is big right now but that's where the patience is. But again, as I say, he's super passionate about the team, the racing, the whole Formula One and that love that he's got for the race just goes through

the whole team and makes it, as I say, a very very good team to work with and I believe a very successful team in the future.

Q: (Chris Medland – Racer) Nico, you've obviously got used to having Jo in the car next to you throughout the season and knowing your own strengths and weaknesses against his. Does it refocus you at all when you get a new teammate, that sort of fear of the unknown change your approach at all?

NH: You probably would have thought a little bit but then I think then on the other side I've done pretty well this season so far so I think I just need to keep doing what I've so far this year, that worked pretty well for me and I'm in a good spot, I'm confident, I like where I am so I won't get distracted too much. I just need to focus, to get the best out of myself and my car and my crew and I think then I will be fine.

Ends