



Sunday press conference

It was the smilest post-race press conference in recent memory following the first grand prix of the 2014 Formula One season.

Present were Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull), and Kevin Magussen (McLaren).

Q: Well Nico, wel done. I couldn't think of a better start to the season. What a great start to the 2014 championship. A great start to the new era of Formula One.

Nico ROSBERG: Yes, I mean, already it's been an amazing time here in Melbourne. Thanks to all of you, you've made it all the more special, all your support has been fantastic this weekend. Even though Daniel got a little bit more support than us. Anyway that's normal. It's been an amazing day. I'm just over the moon really. It's incredible, everybody has worked so hard over the winter and now to have such an amazing Silver Arrow to drive is just unreal. This thing was unbelievably quick today and the reliability was good also, so it was just the perfect start to the season. I'm really thankful to Mercedes, they have done an amazing job over the winter.

Q: Well, all your hard work has paid off well and truly.

NR: Yeah, for now yes. Today, definitely.

Q: Daniel, g'day. You were thinking you may not even finish, let alone be on the podium.

Daniel RICCIARDO: Yeah. Two or three weeks ago I would have bet pretty everything I have that we would not be standing up here. Full credit to the team for an unbelievable turnaround. I don't understand how they did it but they did, so thank you guys. And, of course, the Aussie fans. Wow, completely overwhelming. No words. I'm trippin' balls right now.

Q: There's a bloke up in Noosa that'll be very happy too.

DR: Yeah I thought I'd do a stack just to commemorate Mark as well. It's an Aussie thing, but yeah, really pleased to be up here. First Aussie on the Aussie podium, so that's really nice to have. Thanks everyone.

Q: Well you've done us all proud. Good on you, mate. Kevin, well done. First Dane on a Formula One podium.

Kevin MAGNUSSEN: It's hard to believe really. It just seems so unreal. What can I say. The car was so much better than it's been at any point. We just keep improving the car. I had just exactly what I need the whole race. The preparation we've done this winter has been fantastic. I've never done a Formula One and testing is so limited, so big congratulations to the team for doing such a good job.

Q: Well, your father is racing on the other side of the world this weekend as well, so he's got something to live up to.

KM: I think they did the race already, so I'll need to see how it went. I wish he could have been here. It's a great day.

Q: So you're looking forward to the next one obviously?

KM: Yes I am – great things ahead.

Q: Nico, what are you going to do now between here and the next one?

NR: We'll definitely evaluate everything that we've learned now from this weekend because for sure there's some way to go. We still can improve a lot. We must, because our competitors aren't going to be asleep. Definitely they are going to try to catch up quickly, So just try to learn as much as we can, improve the car, go on holiday a little bit next week and then get ready for Malaysia.

Q: Nico, what a start, what a race, what a win.

NR: Yeah, the start was just... off like a bullet – or off like a Silver Arrow – thanks to Evan he did a great job on my start – my engineer who's responsible for that. And then after that the car was just really, really quick today and the whole team did such a good job on it. Engine: really good engine, not much of a problem with fuel consumption, didn't have to worry much about that, pretty much as usual. It just all worked perfectly. Reliability was great. So, fantastic. I'm just so happy for everybody. They work so damn hard, I don't think people can really imagine how hard everybody works in my team and I'm sure in other teams too – so that's just the best reward possible. To dominate in such a way the first week, the first race out.

Q: Big winning margin, obviously a lot of pace in the car and there was a lot of radio communication about extending that middle stint – which you seemed to be able to do quite comfortably.

NR: Yeah, got into a bit of a strange situation in that middle stint because I got graining on the front and then somehow I was losing temperature and somehow it started to get really difficult out there. So, I thought I was going to have to come in soon and they just said try to stay out, try to stay out and I did and then the graining cleared on my tyre and I was off, I was able to go again. It was a bit of a strange period but then it was fine again after that.

Q: Dan, as you said on the podium, what a turn around – does this exceed your wildest expectations of your first race with Red Bull?

DR: Definitely. If I look back at where we were three weeks ago – or however long ago it was, definitely. We've never done a race distance up until today, so we didn't really have much confidence we'd see a chequered flag, let alone see it in a podium position. Obviously, as Nico said with his team, the same for ours. They really worked hard over the winter and really clawed back a massive margin. Obviously we still don't have the pace of the Mercedes but it's a result that we will definitely take today and we can make a lot of progress from here. So, pretty happy. It's a bit overwhelming for now but an unbelievable day.

Q: I think we could hear your smile over the team radio at the end there but talk about the support from this Australian crowd here today – and the whole weekend.

DR: Yeah, it's been a lot. It's been a crazy amount. The support for Formula One in general. They've been really behind this event and always when the drivers rock up at the circuit, everyone's cheering for everyone and wanting autographs. Obviously there's been a bit more for me, being the only Aussie on the grid this year and that's just been more than I could have possibly expected. At times a bit embarrassing. Everyone knows who I am now

- but it's cool. Very positive.

Q: Kevin, no podium for McLaren in 2013. You go on the podium in your first appearance in Formula One. You were pinching yourself in the press conference here on Thursday to be in the company of world champions and race winners and stars. You're a star yourself today.

KM: Yeah. Nico was just saying, 'Mate, you're on third!' I can't believe it. It's not a win but it definitely feels like a bit of a win because, as you said, the team is coming off a difficult season and they really wanted to come back and they've worked so hard over the winter. And working with a rookie as well who hasn't got experience. It's been tough for them, for sure - but they've done such a good job, made me feel really at home and made me feel comfortable with everything. Yeah. I couldn't have asked for more.

Q: Just talk us through the final stint because you started closing up quite a bit on Dan, then you started pulling back a bit, then it was a bit erratic.

KM: I think me and Dan had pretty similar pace but obviously you can do stuff with the engine to try and push for a few laps and then you have to back off because you have to harvest the energy again. And you're fuel saving as well and then stop for a few laps and then you begin again and you have to do more and catch that up. I guess it makes it exciting from the outside because it creates opportunities for overtaking but it just wasn't enough today. I didn't have enough pace to get past Dan.

Q: (Heikki Kulta - Turun Sanomat) Nico, congratulations. How does it feel to lead the championship for the first time in your life, and actually be the first Rosberg in front since Keke in 1982?

NR: Mr Statistics! It feels... I don't think about that. I'm really just in the moment. I have an unbelievably quick car or I had an unbelievably quick car today. That gives me a lot of... you know, it's such a pleasure to drive. It's such a great feeling and I really look forward to the next races so much now, having this.. it's so fast, it's great. Of course, it's still going to be tough and reliability is not 100 percent sorted, there's still lots of work we need to do and there's a lot of work ahead of us but it's a great start and I'm just excited about the result today and sharing it with the whole team. It's just fantastic.

Q: (Dan Knutson - Auto Action) Daniel, naturally you've always believed you could do this, but now you've done it, you've got the podium, you've run at the front. Tell us how this gives you confidence and momentum going into the championship and running at the front for the rest of the year?

DR: Yeah. A lot, I guess. Yeah. It's nice to be up here. Even yesterday during the post-qualifying press conference, that was already a nice little boost, to be up in that top three and now to be here. It's strange, because I guess it's expected to see Nico up here but to have Kevin as well, feels like we're back in World Series by Renault or something. So it's a bit surreal still, but I'm sure tomorrow it will all sink in. Yeah, a lot of confidence, I'm really happy with how the whole weekend has gone. Dry and wet conditions, showed a lot of confidence and some good pace. Obviously I've got to continue this now but the team has to be pleased with what they're seeing at the moment.

Q: (Ian Parkes - Press Association) Nico, you talked about the reliability of your car but obviously a different story for your teammate in what happened to him in first practice and also at the start of the race today. Does that bring any concerns for Mercedes, for yourself going forward as well, that the car isn't as bullet-proof as we perhaps saw during testing?

NR: Yeah, I'm not sure what happened to the other car but for sure it's a fact that we're not 100 percent sorted yet. We know that and the team did a great job to get my car working so well in the race today but there's still work to be done. We have two weeks now. We need to identify all the things that we can still do better because even leading up to this weekend, there were still a lot of changes on the car and you don't really want to be doing that just going to the first race. And also in testing there were still a couple of problems at the end there, so great job, but still things to get sorted.

Q: (Jacob Polychromis - F1Plus.com) Daniel, in a weekend where the AFL season started in Melbourne, you still managed to outshine it - perhaps our international guests don't appreciate how huge that really is but we do. What does that mean to you to essentially become Australian sporting royalty?

DR: Obviously there's been a lot of support for me this week but the support everyone has shown for Formula One, it's made headlines every day in the papers, I think. As I said, the crowd was amazing, not only for me but for every other driver this week, they've showed incredible enthusiasm for the event and if there's any doubts that the Oz Grand Prix won't last, I think they definitely put a stamp on that this year and I'm sure it will keep kicking for a while now, so really pleased to be a part of that.

Q: (Leonid Novozhilov - F1 Life) Kevin, can you say if you had any problems with your car today?

KM: If I had a problem? No, no issues with the car that we weren't expecting. We didn't really know what to expect but luckily we didn't have anything really that came up that we couldn't handle so again, big congratulations to the team and to Mercedes for providing such a reliable power unit. It's quite impressive in the first year.

Q: How about the fuel, was that ever a concern?

KM: No, I probably saved a bit too much in the beginning which turned out to be alright because then I could give Daniel a little bit of pressure at the end and I didn't have to save fuel so much which was good. It's something I will certainly learn more about and get into a rhythm with.

Q: (Michael Schmidt - Auto, Motor und Sport) Nico and Daniel, that was the first start with a V6 turbo. Has it been any different to the starts you have been used to with the V8s?

NR: There are some small bits and pieces that are different, yeah, and then getting away, upshifting through the gears, getting that right, but in the end it's not too far apart. I think my start was spectacular today, it felt great, felt like last year.

Q: Dan, you hadn't done too many practice starts before this weekend.

DR: No, not too many. Yeah, it wasn't perfect but I think probably Nico was the only guy that had a good start from what I saw today and the rest were pretty average but definitely upshifting through the gears with the torque we have with the V6 turbos this year, it is a bit more difficult to manage the wheelspin but as we saw, I don't think everyone really has it right yet. We managed to do a sufficient enough job today but there's still a lot of progress to make with launches.

Q: (Frederic Ferret - L'Equipe) Daniel and Nico, how difficult was it to manage the fuel during the race? Was it easy?

NR: Yeah, yeah, honestly our engine I think even there, they've just done a power unit not just engine, they've done a great job because it's not much different than last year, a little bit more than last year but it's really straightforward and quite easy and this being the most difficult track, it's really impressive.

DR: Yeah, I think at the start of the race it was a bit of guessing. Some laps I would try and push and not really conserve and then when I felt I had enough gap then I would start conserving. We were basically learning all the time today. First time that we've done a race distance so I think we'll take a lot out of it but in the end I think the system we have to reach the fuel target is not bad, considering we haven't done too much work on that yet. I think we survived quite well.

Q: (Don Kennedy - Hawkes Bay Today) Nico, a certain Mr Ecclestone predicted that you would win this year's championship. Do you think that favouritism is now justified by this result today?

NR: Of course I heard about that and I'm thankful for such a statement. It's always a boost when it comes from Bernie but other than that, I don't think about that too much at the moment. There's a long way to go and it's just been a great day today, great win, great start to the season and just

leave it at that.

Q: (Tony Schibeci – SEN Radio) Nico, Malaysia is normally the next week after Australia. This time it's two weeks away. Is it an advantage for you to have that two weeks or is it a disadvantage because it allows everyone a bit of extra time to get their cars closer to where you're at?

NR: I don't know whether it's an advantage or disadvantage but for sure we're going to use that time well to further improve our car, make it quicker, more reliable, so it's going to be a very useful gap now in between the two races.

Q: (Sam McClure – Radio 3AW) Daniel, already today you have achieved what Mark Webber couldn't, finish on the podium in his home Grand Prix. You're going to be the new face of Australian motor sport in the papers today, in the news tonight. How does that make you feel?

DR: I don't know. Obviously really nice but even when I flew into Melbourne this week, it was a bit embarrassing to see my face on a few billboards. I don't know. It's obviously nice, all the support is great but I don't know. The fame is something which I guess maybe I will still have to get used to but it's nice, really nice to give the fans what they wanted to see. I know they went crazy yesterday when we nearly got the pole and then to back it up with a podium today is great. I think half of Perth is here as well this weekend. I told all my family to stay away from the pits, didn't need any extra distractions but I'm sure I will catch up with them tonight and enjoy a beer and relax a little bit before Malaysia.

Q: (Silvia Arias – Parabrasas) Nico, today we saw you dancing a little bit to Get Lucky going to the drivers' parade. It looks like you were really confident, in spite of having Lewis on pole position. I want to know if you're going to dance a little bit more to get Get Lucky in every race?

NR: I was very optimistic for the race today because we just prepared really well for it and so I was confident that we could do well and so I looked forward to it and from the start it just all went fantastically.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Kevin, McLaren is leading the Constructors championship, do you think you can hang on there with a rookie and a champion driver together?

KM: Yeah, who knows? We will certainly try our best. I know the team is massively motivated to stay on top and they are a team that should be at the top of Formula One. So, what can I say? I'll do my best and they will do their best. Who knows?

Q: (Chris Medland – crash.net) Daniel, how much of that gap to Nico do you think can be closed just from some consistent running that you've got now?

DR: I think it will definitely get smaller and hopefully not bigger over time. I think there's still a lot to learn today and once it all settles down and I go through the meeting with the engineers tonight I will start to... Now I'm obviously on a high but then I'll start to break it all down and become critical and places where we can improve. I'll definitely try and help the guys out with that. Obviously I would like the gap closed. He was pretty far away in front today and obviously second is great but it would be nice to at least have seen him on the straight and not five corners ahead.

Q: (Ralf Bach – R&B) Kevin, one question: I think Mercedes is a very good engine. Would you like to stay with it next year?

NR: Careful. He's really dangerous so best to say no comment.

KM: No comment.

NR: When he asks a question, no comment.

KM: I'm happy just to be with McLaren. I think what Mercedes and McLaren have done together is amazing and really looking forward to what's coming ahead.

Race report

As had been widely predicted before the start of the season, Mercedes ran away with victory at the season-opening race in Melbourne. But the Silver Arrows proved they are anything but bulletproof, with Nico Rosberg inheriting the win following his teammate's retirement.

Lewis Hamilton was leading the Australian Grand Prix when the Briton suffered an obvious loss of power, passed easily by car after car and unable to fight back. It was not the first retirement of the season – that honour belongs to Felipe Massa, who was punted out of the race on the first lap by a brakeless Kamui Kobayashi – and it would not be the last, with Albert Park claiming an impressive seven scalps on Sunday evening. Eight if you count that of Marussia's Jules Bianchi, who finished the race eight laps down on the leader.

But while eight retirements is not insignificant, what the Australian Grand Prix demonstrated is that Formula One's technological revolution is not going to lead to the races of attrition feared by many. Despite less running than usual over the course of pre-season testing, and concerns that the 2014 power units were too complex for the task at hand, the majority of the cars on the grid finished the race, and the podium showed just what sweeping regulation changes can do to the accepted order of things.

While Daniel Ricciardo was later excluded from the results of the Australian Grand Prix when it emerged that his rate of fuel flow consumption had exceeded the FIA-mandated limits, the Albert Park podium featured a Mercedes, a Red Bull, and a McLaren. One short year ago the Mercedes was quick over a single lap but too hard on its tyres and so lost position in the race, the Red Bull was effectively unbeatable, and McLaren were in a bad patch with podiums well out of reach.

Welcome to the new world order of 2014, where – for the moment at least – race reports cannot be written on a Saturday evening.

The new generation of power units and their whizzing turbos, energy recovery systems, and fuel efficiency may not have led to a festival of overtaking, a legendary race in which the leader changes umpteen times while the field picks over the spoils behind. But anyone who anticipated such a sea change was forgetting that while the technical regulations have changed for 2014, the laws of physics remain the same, and the trials and tribulations of following another car in dirty air are with us still.

It is also worth remembering that the much-loved Albert Park Circuit is not known for presenting us with memorable or spectacular grands prix.

So what happened on track? Rookies Kevin Magnussen and Daniil Kvyat were out to impress, with Magnussen claiming the final place on the Melbourne podium during his first race outing, having run in the top three all afternoon and showing no signs of pressure. Kvyat entered the F1 record books by crossing the line in tenth (later elevated to ninth) and becoming the youngest points scorer in Formula One history, laying claim to a record most recently held by Sebastian Vettel.

It was not a brilliant afternoon for the defending world champion, who retired on the third lap thanks to struggles with his power unit. But however bad Vettel's afternoon turned out to be, spare a thought for the poor souls at RenaultSportFL, who also saw both Lotus drivers retire from the race thanks to failing power units, while Marcus Ericsson's Caterham was sidelined following oil pressure problems. Add to that Ricciardo's post-race disqualification and five of the eight Renault-powered cars failed to make the grade in Melbourne.

Australian Grand Prix race result

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1h32m58.710s
2. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) + 26.777s
3. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 30.027s
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) + 35.284s
5. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) + 47.639s
6. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) + 50.718s
7. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) + 57.675s
8. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) + 1m00.441s
9. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) + 1m03.585s
10. Sergio Perez (Force India) + 1m25.916
11. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) + 1 lap
12. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) + 1 lap
13. Max Chilton (Marussia) + 2 laps

Jules Bianchi (Marussia) – 8 laps
Romain Grosjean (Lotus) RET
Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) RET
Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) RET
Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) RET
Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) RET
Felipe Massa (Williams) RET
Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) RET
Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) *

* Following the race Daniel Ricciardo was disqualified from the results when it was found that his car had exceeded the fuel flow limits set by the FIA.

Saturday press conference

After a thrilling wet qualifying session at Albert Park there was one brand new - and very smiley - face at the FIA's Saturday press conference in Melbourne.

Present were Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull), and Nico Rosberg (Mercedes).

Q: Lewis, a little bit of history on a number of levels today, not least the first pole position with this new formula and equalling Nigel Mansell's 32 career poles.

Lewis HAMILTON: Yeah. It's been an interesting weekend. Today, it made it so much harder for everyone with the conditions. I'm really happy for the job the team did. You know these new cars are so much harder to drive in the wet and it was the first time for me driving in the wet, as I'm sure it was for a lot of people. A serious task and challenge today, but for both me and Nico to be up here is a great showing for the team and it's obviously great to see Ricciardo up here for his first grand prix with Red Bull.

Q: Tell us about the conditions, as obviously it rained pretty hard towards the end. There was a split of decision on which way to go on tyres – you went for the wets. Was that the right decision?

LH: Yeah, it was kind of on the limit. It was very difficult to know what the turnover point was. Do you take a risk or not? I decided not to. Ricciardo, Daniel did a really good job on the inters, so obviously it was a very close call between the two. But the conditions made it extremely difficult. There's so much more power, so you're short-shifting all the way down into fifth, sixth, seventh before you can get the full throttle. But great fun otherwise and I hope the weather is better tomorrow, mostly for the fans, but also for us.

Q: Daniel, I think the cheer from the crowd said it all really, an incredible first Red Bull qualifying session for you and a lot of Australian pride?

Daniel RICCIARDO: Yeah, it was exciting. Definitely the weather added to the mix and the whole session went well. Not everyone was out with options at the beginning but Q1 looked like it was going OK for us. And then when the rain fell, as Lewis said, it's the first time we've all driven these cars on the limit in wet conditions. It was tricky but at the same time, of course, a lot of fun. It was nice to be always up there. The engineer was on the radio saying 'pace is good, P1, P2, P3' it was always in that battle for the pole position. So definitely a really nice qualifying session with the team.

Q: Well your team-mate is down in 13th, so what was the difference today?

DR: I don't know yet what his issues were. I think it was... I saw it was about two seconds or so off my pace at the time. We'll have to see what went wrong with Seb and his side of the garage. But for now, happy for me to at least be up here and just for the team to have a front-row start, I think it wasn't looking like this a few weeks ago, so pretty pleased right now.

Q: Very well done, and Nico, was it all about timing in that last part of qualifying? Was that what it was about?

Nico ROSBERG: I'm not really sure what the others were doing. For sure we didn't get it quite right but you just don't know what's going to happen. So, I don't think we did much wrong. Of course, in hindsight you can always say 'oh we could have done that better or this better' but all in all I think it was a good qualifying session. Third is... I'm pleased with that. Could have been better but third is OK. I know we have a quick race car and from there a good race is possible.

Q: It's been very close between you and Lewis throughout this weekend, so what happens tomorrow?

NR: Of course it's going to be a completely different story than today. Also again depending on weather and things like that, we don't really know what's going to happen, there is a small chance of rain also tomorrow, but I think more likely it's going to be dry. It will be totally different because this year... especially in Melbourne, it's the most difficult track for fuel consumption, so it's going to be difficult to save enough fuel in the race – a big challenge.

Q: You had a reliability scare here Lewis on the first day here, but the pair of you have been very, very quick the rest of the time, so what are you expecting from tomorrow?

LH: Ultimately it's just down to the incredible job the team has done over the winter and through testing and come here... of course we had a small hiccup on Friday morning – it wasn't really a scare, just unfortunate that we missed the session. But it was a quick fix, so no need to take the car apart, and just building on a good foundation and hopefully we can continue to do so.

Q: Lewis, I wonder if you could say a few words, particularly about the achievement of equalling Nigel Mansell? I'm sure he's somebody as a kid you grew up watching racing. Obviously a very flamboyant character in Formula One and you've equalled him

today.

LH: Yeah, absolutely. Another Brit, one of the greatest British drivers we had and to have achieved so much. I've been racing since my eighth year so, to be in Formula One has always been my dream but to get to as many poles as him is... yeah, incredible achievement and I owe that to all the great people I've worked with through my career at McLaren-Mercedes and now Mercedes and the team, and my family and the good people I have around me. I won't be able to put in those laps without those people helping me. It was a team effort.

Q: Question for you Daniel. Obviously you have to go up against Sebastian as a team-mate. It's a tall order but how much confidence are you going to draw just from today's result?

DR: Definitely it's a... not looking at him, I'm sure he had problems of some sort today but just for me to start the season with a front row, yeah, it does a lot of good things for the confidence. But yeah, obviously it's just the start. I obviously have to race tomorrow and obviously finish up the front of the order and then see how the season progresses. The last couple of days have been really positive for us.

Q: Nico, couldn't help but notice at the beginning of the qualifying you and Lewis side by side, wanting to be the first one out on track. I guess you guys just couldn't help yourself, you had to race even there.

NR: No, it wasn't that at all, and there were clear instructions also from the team that Lewis is first. It was agreed like that so that's fine. It's just that I wanted to do a practice start and the practice start position is on the right. That's where we're used to doing it, so I just put myself there for that. To have consistency.

Q: (Mark Fogarty - Auto Action and Fairfax Media) Daniel, can you talk a bit about how excited you must be to put in such a strong performance in your debut with the team in your home race?

DR: Yeah, of course, yeah, really excited but at the same time, still staying calm and collected because tomorrow is what counts, definitely, so there's no point in having a party tonight and not focusing on tomorrow. I guess speaking solely of today, it's a really good day for us. The car was pretty good to drive in the wet. I think at the start of the year we were all fearing how difficult these new animals would be in wet conditions but it was... it's always a bit of a handful but at the same time it was quite nice behind the wheel. Controlling the turbo and all that on throttle was good fun. Pretty excited. I heard all the crowd on the cool-down lap so all I can say is hopefully I will hear that tomorrow.

Q: (Frederic Ferret - L'Equipe) To all three of you: how do you drive without the noise of the V8, does it change anything, the way you drive and the way you behave in the car?

LH: How do you drive differently or...? Without the noise. It's the same, it's the same, it's just you don't hear it as much. You kind of hear mostly wind until you get down to fourth/fifth gear... fifth, fourth and third. It might be different for other people but otherwise the rest of the drivers are saying you obviously have to be a lot more gradual with the throttle, stability with your reflexes and all that stuff is quite important.

NR: It's just that we have less grip and more torque, that's the main thing, and that just makes it more difficult on the exit of the corners, especially now in the wet and the sound, the difference is that I can hear my brake locking which I never used to hear, like in a road car, when it's squeaking (squealing?) in the corner? Now you can hear that because there's not so much engine noise any more and that's really really strange, but also interesting because now I can also hear my rear locking, even though I don't feel it that much, it gives me some extra indication.

DR: I think I agree with what Lewis said, you hear the wind a lot more, especially at high speed. I guess you know when the gusts are blowing.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi - La Gazzetta dello Sport) For all of you: we saw during this qualifying a lot of quick laps one after the other. We understood that in the dry conditions you would do a lap and then a slower lap to recharge the batteries. Does that change in wet conditions?

LH: Well, naturally in the wet your braking distances are a lot longer so compared to a wet (dry?) lap where you get rid of all the energy on that lap, on a wet lap you're braking for almost twice the distance or a little bit longer, maybe a third longer in the braking zone, so you have more time to regain the battery and charge the battery. But naturally it is easier if you do a fast lap and a slow lap, fast lap but it is possible for some of us.

DR: Yeah. What Lewis said.

Q: (Jacob Polychronis - FIPlus.com) Daniel, what particular aspect of the racing requires the most attention going into tomorrow? Nico has spoken a lot about fuel consumption and tyre degradation yesterday being the key areas. How about for Red Bull?

DR: Yeah, it's probably I guess the same for everyone. Fuel is probably the question mark for a lot of teams. We still haven't done a race distance yet so I think it's probably going to be one of those things that we're going to understand... each lap we do in the race, we're going to understand more and more and how we're looking. I think behind the wheel not too much will change, I'll just keep getting information from the pit wall. You know there's different modes and everything to control consumption on the steering wheel and I will just act accordingly. I think tyre degradation probably won't be too bad, I think, normally with the rain now, so the washing off and making the track a bit green - as we call it - will probably be quite kind to the rears. I don't think tyre deg will be a massive issue tomorrow.

Q: (Will Hagon - ABC Radio) Daniel, with all the pressure that's been on you this week, your home Grand Prix and championship team and all the rest of it, how have you been sleeping and how do you think you'll sleep tonight?

DR: I've been sleeping well. I think I've been pretty worn out by the end of the day with all the extra curricula activities I've been doing. I've been sleeping well. I got to Oz over a week ago. I was in Sydney for that Top Gear festival so had time to get over jet lag and I'm sure I will sleep well tonight. It's a pretty late start tomorrow so I don't have to set any alarms. Should be right.

Q: (Dan Knutson - Auto Action) Daniel, the car is much better than in testing. Is it a case of just getting more laps on the core performance of the car or are the new bits that came in helping a lot?

DR: I think it's probably just us circulating more. In testing, unfortunately, a lot of the time we were circulating to learn about reliability and to stop things from overheating so we weren't really focused on what set-up we were running or any of that. I think after yesterday, it was the first time we probably worked on set-up and understanding the car. I think all the aero guys are gathering more and more information and making the car a bit quicker each time we run. It's definitely positive for us now and hopefully the upward trend continues and we can start to hassle these guys in dry conditions soon.

Q: (Mat Coch - pitpass.com (<http://pitpass.com/>)) Daniel, a question close to every Australian's heart: what are you like at starts?

DR: Let's see how we go tomorrow! Bit up and down last year. I guess everyone watched the races. I think they were on the up so let's see how we go tomorrow. I think it's going to be interesting for everyone now, with the V6 turbos. I think it's also a bit of a different animal off the line. Hopefully we get off well.

Q: (Phil Branagan - Chevron Publishing) Dan, you must have had a realistic expectation after practice of where you'd qualify. Have you exceeded that? By how far? And what's your expectation for tomorrow?

DR: I think exceeded it just because if it was a dry qualifying we were expecting Lewis and Nico to take the front row. I think their pace in the dry was pretty impressive so far this week so exceeded that a bit but obviously the wet throws a bit of a curved ball and you've just got to take the session how it comes and see how you go from there. There wasn't too much calculating going on in my head. It was just drive and adapt to the conditions. As I said, it was refreshing to hear my engineer on the radio saying we're fighting all these for the top three. That was good to hear and obviously gives you a bit of motivation as well.

Q: (Mark Fogarty - Auto Action and Fairfax Media) Lewis and Nico, are you at all surprised to see Daniel sitting up there next to you?

LH: Not at all. He's showed some great performances in previous years and he's got a good head on his shoulders, very talented so it's expected, to be honest, plus Red Bull have been up at the top for some time so you have to assume that this year they will be very close to us. But without a doubt they've done an exceptional job.

NR: No, me too, great job, definitely. I hope I manage to pass him tomorrow. For sure. Well done.

Q: (Tony Schibeci – SEN) Daniel, for the last couple of years you've been fighting with the big boys. Now you're one of the big boys. How cool is that?

DR: Yeah, it's cool. I can't get ahead of myself. I've still got a bit to prove. I've still to establish myself at the front. It would obviously be great to be up here for the next few weekends and to cement myself at the front of the grid, so this is definitely a step towards that but yeah, as I said, there still a bit to go but obviously excited for what lies ahead and give it a good crack.

Saturday report

As the pitlane opened for the first attempt at Formula One's new qualifying format in our brave new world of new technology, there was a waiting queue of traffic ready to give it their all in what is now an eighteen-minute Q1.

There were no immediate failures, and all those lining up made it out of the pits. With rain on the horizon, and strong winds, banker laps are more important today than they've ever been.

Sebastian Vettel raised eyebrows when he briefly kissed the wall with his RB10, but escaped without damage. Romain Grosjean had his moment in the spotlight when he ran off track at Turn 13, rejoining the action six seconds off the pace set by early leader Daniel Ricciardo.

Pastor Maldonado mimicked teammate Grosjean's error, while Esteban Gutierrez had an off at Turn 9, the Sauber's brake-by-wire system still proving tricky. Q1 was a catalogue of errors for Maldonado, who managed three runs off track on the same lap.

Heavy rain started to fall with five minutes remaining, prompting fears of another rained off qualifying session to be run on Sunday morning. Only Gutierrez went out in the inclement conditions, more for a systems check than in any real hope making it through to Q2.

The wet weather continues into the second session, with drivers warned that heavier rain was expected before the chequered flag fell. Turn 9 continued to be troublesome, with both Nico Hulkenberg and Valtteri Bottas coming off there in their outlaps.

Bottas and teammate Felipe Massa were the first to set times in Q2, with a benchmark of 1m47s highlighting the difference between track conditions in the two sessions. Nico Rosberg and Ricciardo were the first to break into 1m46s, with the Red Bull faster than the Mercedes. Bottas then crossed the line in 1m45.689s, restoring faith in the paddock's Mercedes-centred pole predictions.

At the other end of the field, Kamui Kobayashi managed a 1m58.216s lap for Caterham, taking the shine off the team's joy at making it to Q2 despite a Friday ruined by engine troubles.

It was a tightly packed field at the top of the timesheets, with the first six drivers covered by less than a second, led by Ricciardo, who was followed by Jenson Button, Lewis Hamilton, Hulkenberg, Rosberg, and the Renault-powered Vergne. Vettel, on the other hand, languished in the dropout zone lapping up to seven seconds slower than his teammate.

With two minutes remaining, six of the top ten drivers were Mercedes-powered, with Alonso the only Ferrari-engined driver in the mix. And with 30 seconds remaining, Kimi Raikkonen ended his afternoon in the wall at Turn 4, at the same time ensuring that Vettel stayed in the dropout zone while Ricciardo soared through.

The longer final qualifying session – clocking in at 12 minutes – started with heavy rain still falling along the pit lane. This weekend is not our chance to see just how fast the 2014 cars can be in qualifying trim.

The early wet laps put Rosberg and Hamilton at the head of the pack, with Hulkenberg and Jean-Eric Vergne just behind. With Daniil Kvyat in fifth, the Toro Rosso looks to be in very good shape in the wet. Ricciardo continued his run of strong qualifying form with a P3-worthy 1m46.107s lap, eight-tenths off the pace set by provisional pole-sitter Hamilton.

With less than a minute remaining and track conditions improving, the fight was to be the last man to cross the line. Rosberg snatched pole from his teammate, who crossed the line with enough time to get in one final lap. Ricciardo looked like securing pole at his first home grand prix as a Red Bull driver, but Hamilton claimed pole with a 1m44.231s lap as the last man standing.

Provisional grid

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m44.231s
2. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m44.548s
3. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m44.595s
4. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m45.745s
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m45.819s
6. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m45.864s
7. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m46.030s
8. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m47.368s
9. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m48.079s
10. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m44.437s

11. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m44.494s
12. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m44.668s
13. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m45.655s
14. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m45.867s
15. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m48.147s*
16. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m47.293s

17. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m34.293s
18. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m34.794s
19. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m35.117s **
20. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m35.157s

* Valtteri Bottas qualified in P10 but will start from P15 following a five-place grid penalty for an unscheduled gearbox change.
** Esteban Gutierrez qualified in P19 but will start from P22 following a five-place grid penalty for an unscheduled gearbox change.

Friday press conference

As was only to be expected, the first team personnel press conference of the 2014 season saw the occasional journalists complain about the sound of the new engines while those more au fait with the sport concentrated on the more important financial struggles affecting F1.

Present were Eric Boullier (McLaren), Stefano Domenicali (Ferrari), Christian Horner (Red Bull), Rob White (RenaultSportF1), Claire Williams (Williams), and Toto Wolff (Mercedes).

Q: A very interesting first day's running. I'll start with you Christian, as the defending world champion team. I guess given where you were two weeks ago in the winter testing, you must be fairly pleased with the way this first day of running has turned out. Tell us what has been going on behind the scenes in this intervening period?

Christian HORNER: Well today has been a very string first day for us. It's been our first proper test day of the season. We've had a very difficult pre-season with numerous issues, which have been pretty well documented prior to us arriving in Melbourne. It was refreshing for the drivers to get plenty of laps in and really get a first proper feel for the car. It's been an encouraging start but we still have an awful lot of work to do we can still see that there is quite a gap to the Mercedes and to Ferrari but we're starting to realise what that gap is and by the end of this weekend that should hopefully have a bit more clarity. But certainly behind the scenes there's an enormous amount of effort of going on both back in the Red Bull factory back in Milton Keynes and of course in Viry-Chatillon with the Renault guys as well. With such a big regulation change and such is the complexity of what is nowadays referred to as the power unit rather than the engine it's not unsurprising that there have been quite a lot of issues to deal with.

Q: Tell us about managing the situation from your point of view. Does being a four-time world champion team recently – focusing on things like teamwork and morale – does it make it easier to rescue yourself from the kind of situation you were in because you've had some success or does it make it more difficult?

CH: Neither of those issues has been an issue. Morale is extremely high and we work very effectively as a team. It's been a challenging winter to design, build and then obviously modify RB10, but the way the team has responded to the challenge has been fantastic. There is a real desire and inner strength within the team. We've achieved quite a bit over the past few years and that's not by accident. As I've said there are always engineering solutions to engineering problems.

Q: Thank you for that. Moving to you Stefano. Obviously Christian thinks you're ahead of his team. Fernando was fastest this morning and third this afternoon. How do you assess the first day of term for Ferrari, and what was the difference in programme between Alonso and Raikkonen.

Stefano DOMENICALI: Today was an interesting day just to see if some of the issues we had during the Bahrain test were solved. We are still not on top of all the things we have to solve and this is something that shows, as Christian says, the complexity of this project. But you know, what we have to do is keep working on the things we know. We need to improve and that's the way it is. For sure there were different things to test and to try between the drivers but that's part of the normal programme we do. In my view today maybe you will see that some teams were a little bit hiding or having some issues for the day. Tomorrow the situation will be different again, we don't know, we will see. If there will also be different weather conditions this will be another thing we never tested with this car so far, so the managing of the car in possibly wet conditions could be another exciting or challenging thing for all of us. But so far, it's important that we were able to run with the programme we wanted even if we had some little issue to solve. But that's part of the game, it's just the first free practice of a long season.

Q: And are you happy with the structure you've got in place now? I know there has been a lot work behind the scenes – technical facilities, changes in the management, new people coming in, appointments and what have you. Is this the team you want now?

SD: I think the basic for sure. We've done a great job in the last couple of years to restructure the team, restructure the facility, that was absolutely and imperative thing to do and I think that now we are in the way that we should be to do the best we can in these conditions. So, so far I'm pleased about it.

Q: Talking about restructuring, Claire, we'll come across to you. Obviously very much a new look Williams team in more ways than one. What steps that have gone on behind the scenes with your team are you most proud of at the moment?

Claire WILLIAMS: I think like you said we've had a lot of effort that's gone on behind the scenes to make sure that we entered this season in a completely different place as to how we ended it last year. So I think a lot of work has gone one behind the scenes but I don't think you can single out one of those efforts. Bringing in the Mercedes engine has had a huge influence on our position this year and our performance. Bringing in Pat Symonds and him heading up a whole new technical team as well has been significant and played its part as has obviously bringing in Felipe Massa to partner Valtteri this season. So there has been a lot of work and we've had a good winter but this is only the first race of the year and we haven't qualified yet, so we'll have to wait and see how we do tomorrow.

Q: You had the fastest time in the Bahrain test, you did the second-highest kilometres in testing, where are you today? What has today's running revealed to you?

CW: Today's been positive. I think the engineers are all relatively happy with what they've managed to achieve. It's been the usual programme of everything you'd expect us to be running on Friday practice. I think Felipe had a bit of an issue this morning which prevented him from going out – but that was to do with his radio software rather than an issue with the car. Valtteri seems comfortable with the car, little bit of understeer that we've got to correct overnight but both drivers are saying that they're happy.

Q: Eric, fifth and ninth this afternoon, plenty of laps on the board. Is it about what you expected from your first day of competitive running?

Eric BOULLIER: I don't know if we had any expectations today, just obviously we had a lot of plans and a lot of tests to do, to go through. Obviously first to put again some laps and miles and setup for the drivers. I think we can be happy, we went through most of the plan today so I think the team did a good job.

Q: You've been at McLaren a few weeks now. What changes do you want to make in the team and how much autonomy are you going to be given to do that by the management group?

EB: The first part of your question, it is still in my head, on my mind, my plan. But it doesn't have to be public. This is obviously a great team, a lot of history, the best facilities, I think, in the paddock. And obviously a lot of great individuals eager to do well and go back where the team should be. So, that's going to be... let's say, most of the work is going to be to get everybody on track on this. For the second part of the question, it's a team effort as always. The idea behind the split in the team principal role is something which we have... I actually had personal experience in Lotus. I think it's good today when you have so much travel during the season and so many people to care about at the factory, it's obvious that you need to focus or get some different roles split over the company. I think it worked well in the past and it should work well in McLaren.

Q: Toto, you came here as favourites, certainly among a lot of pundits, fastest and second fastest on the soft tyre runs, long run looked to be a step ahead of the others. Did it turn out how you expected today?

Toto WOLFF: Yes. If you look after Free Practice Two and analyse that, that was quite satisfying. As you said, on one lap the pace was good and the long run was good as well. But you can see how quickly it goes. In Free Practice One, Lewis went out and after half a lap the car stopped, so you need to be very careful. It's just enough to have a little problem and the race or the qualifying could be finished.

Q: Obviously you've got two top drivers and clearly a competitive package. Have you had conversations behind the scenes in terms of priority, team orders, obviously thinking about what happened last year?

TW: Yes, we had those conversations, and I think it's important to have those conversations. Both of the drivers know each other for quite a long time, they have been team-mates before – back in karting – and we got caught out by surprise last year in Malaysia and we don't want this to happen again. It's just very good discussions we had. They're not only very talented and fast but also very intelligent. They treat each other in a very fair way. We went through some of scenarios and I think we're in a good place.

Q: So it depends on circumstances as to what you decide?

TW: It depends on circumstances, yes.

Q: Rob, two teams getting plenty of laps on the board today, two teams in a bit of difficulty. Obviously your problems going into this season have been well catalogued. How do you feel about what we've seen today?

Rob WHITE: First race weekend is always a testing time and of course this year feeling particularly anxious because we're not as well prepared as we would have liked to have been. So, one of the things that Christian rightly alluded to is the fact that in some ways some of the race weekend scenario still needed to be practiced for the first time in P1 and also P2. So, pleased to be able to run through a normal-looking race weekend programme. That's the big achievement of today.

Q: Obviously you hadn't done too many practice starts coming into this Melbourne weekend. I noticed there were quite a few taking place with Renault-powered cars today. Are you happy where you are on practice starts?

RW: Yeah. There was nothing magical. They were kind of towards the end of the run plan for the testing and we didn't quite get there in the pre-season testing in several cases. We haven't got any particular concern about them. Of course we're now into learning about the setup parameters in order to try to get some performance into the practice starts. It is a very important phase of the race. We're very conscious and all of our teams are very conscious of that. So, once again, we're behind where we would have liked to be and the task now is to try and gain ground.

Q: A quick line from you on that Christian, are you comfortable on the starts?

CH: It's been the least of our problems. We haven't been out on the track doing laps, let alone starts. We're hoping to start the race on Sunday so we'll need a start.

Q: (Mark Fogarty – The Age) Claire and gentlemen, the reaction to the sound of the engines has been underwhelming, to say the least. You people have heard these engines during testing, has it occurred to anyone that we've got a real problem on our hands, just how horrible they sound, and how the fans are going to react?

CW: Personally I like the sound of the engines, but then I love Formula One and I love watching cars go round a racetrack. I think people will pretty quickly get used to what Formula One engines sound like. We've had so many changes over so many decades of motor racing and you very quickly forget what a previous engine sounds like and I think people just want to see a good race on Sunday and I think that as long as we can deliver that then I think that any issues that perhaps... or contentious conversations around that may fade away.

TW: Well, if you like sound of engines, let's go back to V10 and V12, let's not do any hybrid. This is modern technology, this is where road cars are going. Downsizing is the motto and I think we just need to accept that the formula has changed. These cars are going to go quicker than the old ones in a couple of races, we're going to get used to the sounds and I promise next year you will not notice and you will not notice any difference any more.

SD: I think that Claire and Toto summarised the situation very well.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Serra) Stefano, are you worried about the problems that Kimi seems to have had today or are you more satisfied by the performance of Fernando?

SD: I always have to see the negative side of the... or the empty side of the glass, so of course we need to make sure that all the things that are still not solved – not only on Kimi's side – have to be solved or addressed very quickly because the competition is very strong and the time that we have available is not a lot. So I think that for me the most important thing is to address and to solve the issue very quickly and whatever it is, the driver is not really the problem because I'm sure that both drivers will be able to manage the situation in the best way that they can, but there is still a lot of work to do.

Q: (Stuart Codling – F1 Racing) Eric, you've added a new sponsor to your rear wing without much in the way of fanfare. Could you explain the significance of that and maybe shed some light on your quest for a title sponsor. Are you closer to announcing something? I think Ron said the other week that it would be in the next few events. Are we closer to firming something up there?

EB: We lately signed a new sponsor which is good news and we are happy to welcome Asos which is an on-line fashion retailer. I think it's in nine languages delivering to 234 countries – I know my figures. It's obviously very exciting for us. It's a huge company selling clothes and selling all stuff like fashion stuff. Regarding the other part of the question, we will soon announce... we will hope to sign soon a title partner. We are not in a rush to announce it until everything is closed and done but it's going to be done in due time.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action) Stefano, three questions about your power plant: what are the specific issues that need to be fixed? Within the rules of homologation, what can you now do to develop the engine and the third question is how do you rate your engine compared to your rivals?

SD: First of all, we need to wait and see because points are the things that count so the first thing we need to do is to work on the reliability of it, because that is still not clear if it's enough, it's never enough compared to the others. In terms of analysis, I think we need to be careful because when you address only the issue on the engine, I think that's wrong. We need to address if there is the need, of course, to address the things on the entire car, on the efficiency of the car in a global way, not only the engine, on the mechanical side there's also the balancing of electrical power versus the engine power itself versus the efficiency of the car as the car itself. I think the right answer is that we need to work all around the car, full stop, and we will see where we're going to be because I already see a lot of classifications done already but I think it is better for everyone not to anticipate too much. I know that words are easy to fly away but I think we need to be very cautious and careful. That's why I keep this position. I think that we have a good base and we need to develop on that and see when it counts to bring home the points that are the things that are more important for this championship.

Q: (Ted Kravitz – Sky Sports) Christian, your cars with Daniel did more than a race distance today and Sebastian almost did a race distance across the two sessions. Is that the first time you've done a whole race distance in a day's running in the whole of pre-season testing and does that mean that you can do the whole of the race distance on Sunday with a vague confidence that the car will actually do all the laps, especially as we saw a heat bulge on Sebastian's car in the lower left hand part of the side pod during FPI?

CH: Well, I think Sebastian today has covered a third of the mileage of his total winter and obviously Daniel has done pretty much a race distance today, so that's extremely encouraging for our guys and the guys back in Paris at Renault. So hopefully it bodes well for the weekend because the

most important thing is to see the chequered flag on Sunday and that in itself is an enormous challenge. We've learned some valuable lessons today, an awful lot of information to look at and to be honest with you, it's the first real opportunity that the drivers have had to drive the car properly without it being interrupted at any different part of the lap or the circuit. Really, for both drivers it's been their first chance to really start to explore the car and for the engineers to start to look at set-up and so in many respects, this is where we would ideally like to have been at the first test but that wasn't the case. We've got some ground to make up.

Q: (Dieter Rencken - Racing Lines) To all of you including Rob because it could affect your side of the championship, since we last met in Brazil, we've introduced double points at the last race which is arguably the least scintillating race of the season. Given that the structure, the entrants and drivers licence fees are basically a tax on performance, how do you feel about these double points races, possibly for the last three races? Now there's talk about points for qualifying positions, what are your sentiments?

RW: I guess my opinion is more as a relatively independent observer and as a fan of the sport, I think that as long as the points structure is understood in advance, it's an optimisation target like all of the rest and Formula One is a fantastic machine for getting the best out of a given set of constraints. I personally am not in favour of things that are hard to understand and therefore if it gets too complicated, I won't like it.

TW: Yuh. Is it good? I think when it was decided we didn't put too much emphasis on it, we didn't think it was a big drama. It's clear that you have to support the commercial rights holder and if the TV audience is dropping, I think we have an obligation to listen. We got the reaction afterwards, it was not what we expected. You have to honour that. Nothing has changed since then, the last race remains double points and let's see what we're going to do next year.

CW: Exactly the same as what Toto was saying.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Stefano, yesterday your president sent a letter to the fans: could you explain to us the meaning of the letter, particularly the part he wrote about the systems and all the problems that can be grey areas in the rules. Could you explain the spirit of the letter, please?

SD: I'm not the president, first of all. You know that very well. No, I think that our chairman wanted to send a letter to our supporters before the first weekend of another season, as he always does every year, and I think that he was highlighting the challenge that we have this year in terms of new regulations for us and it's a challenge also for the federation to align with these regulations because also on their side, it's a big task to make all the controls that are needed to make sure that everything is running properly, so I would say it's just for him a way to stay close to our tifosi, to our supporters because you know how much he cares about Formula One and that's the way you always are at the beginning of the season.

Q: (Heikki Kulta - Turun Sanomat) Stefano, if it rains tomorrow, does it help your drivers to challenge the Mercedes boys for the top positions?

SD: Good question - the answer is I don't know. We will see.

Q: (Will Buxton - NBCSN) For everybody, there's rumours doing the rounds that there's a move on to try and get a test in Malaysia next week, before the race. Is that something... by the looks of things, it's a surprise. I was wondering if that is something you had heard and if so it's something you would be in favour of.

CH: Well, it's certainly a surprise. It's the first I've heard of it and if it is happening, we won't be there. I think it's fairly unlikely.

EB: I've never heard of it too.

Q: (Sylvia Arias - Parabisas) Monsieur Boullier, I would like to know your opinion about Federico Gastaldi. As team principal, I saw you today saying to him 'good luck'.

EB: Yes, I wished him good luck, obviously, but I have no opinion at all because it's not my matter any more.

Q: (Dieter Rencken - Racing Lines) What sort of progress would all of you like to see made on the cost cap or budget caps or whatever?

CH: What was the question again? You wanted the cost cap or what progress? Forget the word cost cap for the moment. Let's just focus on saving money. I think everybody around this group here wants to see all of the teams save money. The necessity to spend money in order to be competitive is what we want to reduce and I think however we achieve that as a group, it's something we all want to see happen. How to make it happen is obviously something much more complex. Then there's obviously discussions about caps and this and that. You've got to look at the root causes for why are costs the way they are and then in my opinion, address it that way.

EB: I think Ron has maybe said he's not favour of caps - again, it's words. Definitely he's obviously in favour of reducing costs. Obviously competition or trying to be competitive is obviously the nature of any sport, especially Formula One, so we just need to draw the line and make sure that technically we can't spend too much to be competitive and try to have some targets which could be reasonable and suiting everybody.

TW: Maybe Stefano wants to say something.

SD: I think that Christian and Eric have summarised the situation very clearly, so nothing to add. We are always saying the same thing.

Q: (Dieter Rencken - Racing Lines) But there's no progress and that was the question: what progress would you like to see made?

SD: I think that progress is on the way because we are discussing what to do at the level of the strategy group. I'm sure that you're aware of the work that is around that. I think that at this moment it's better to stay quiet and tell you when the thing is done and say we are doing something without going into the details of it.

Q: But it is the case that it's got to be in place by 2015, isn't it?

SD: Yeah.

CH: We've done an incredible job of reducing the costs for this year with the introduction of a new power train that's probably 25 percent more so we're doing a great job so far!

Q: (Chris Lines - AP) Rob, can you tell us a bit about the problems afflicting each of the teams: are they individual to the teams or is it a common problem and do you have a time line when you think this engine will be functioning at its principal level? Will it be KL, Bahrain, China, Europe?

RW: If we take a step back and look at the kind of troubles that have befallen us and our teams, then the first thing to say I think is that we're behind where we should be in terms of time, in terms of our internal objectives, then independent of one's level of competitiveness, then it's completely unacceptable to be coming to a first race as relatively unprepared as we are and without having run through all of the scenarios that we needed to. In terms of where the trouble lies, then we remain confident that the building blocks that we've got in place are the right ones, that we know the level of thermal efficiency that we need for the turbocharged engine to be competitive in terms of power. We know that the regulatory constraints on the electrical machines from the battery and that mustn't be exceeded but in order to be competitive, you've got to be able to be up with those limits and we are up with those limits and where it's tough is delivering turbo to the backside of the drivers to the contact patch between the tyre and the tarmac, the sum of those parts and at the moment we're not yet able to deliver that in a decent fashion. And this comes right back to the heart of these regulations. In order to get the performance out of the cars, the cars are going to be quicker than the old cars in a minute with substantially less fuel, there's a lot more stuff and getting all that stuff to peacefully cohabit in the race car and to make it appear to the driver like it's a different thing to the thing it is is where the troubles are. I guess that's the stuff that is common to all users of our power unit and I don't really have anything much to say about the specific differences between one car and another. We're certainly working hand-in-hand with the teams that we work with in order to fix our problems and if we can participate in solving other ones then that's good too.

Q: (Will Buxton - NBCSN) FOTA, perhaps in the run-up to this season the perhaps inevitable dissolution of the Formula One

Teams Association. How disappointed were those of you that were members of it with the dissolution of FOTA; those of you that weren't, why didn't it work for you? And as we move forwards with this sport and the usual talk of the need to reduce costs, how important is the unity of the teams in progressing this sport?

CW: Yes, obviously we were a member of FOTA and it was disappointing that it did dissolve but I think that from when it was originally established - it set out with a very clear mandate - and over the years that mandate has changed for a variety of reasons. I think the most important thing in this sport is that teams come together to work together to address the issues that we face and whatever those may be. We do need some form of structure around the teams so that we have a platform to have conversations so whether that's FOTA or whether that's something else, that's something that Williams would be keen to be a part of in the future but obviously we, as a team, are now part of the FI strategy group which obviously we're pleased about.

EB: Obviously as McLaren and ex-deputy chairman, we were quite involved in FOTA. I think it's a bit disappointing to see FOTA disappearing but it was expected in the end. First FOTA was created in a different context with a lot of car manufacturers in the paddock and it has survived over the years. There were some defections and it just ended up where unfortunately it should have been. The most important thing is to keep some discussions and some firm places between the teams, as Claire said, to address our issues if we have to.

TW: I think the mandate of FOTA was to represent all teams and that mandate got diluted over the years. Teams stepped back and at the end it was a bit of a struggle for FOTA to keep alive and I think we were either all in or no FOTA.

SD: I think that clearly at the specific moment when FOTA was created it was really a situation that there was really the need to make sure that the teams were all together and if you recall, during that time, there were situations where the championship could have gone through a different part, we were very close to being in that situation but year by year the situation changed and therefore that was the reason why we quit FOTA two years ago, because we felt that that kind of situation was not really needed any more to be effective as an organisation. I think that for sure it is important for teams to agree and speak on a lot of subjects because we are all the actors in this show but we also need to recognise that there are different actors with different weights that also have to be considered. All of us do care about this business, do care about this sport and I believe that this is fundamental to also look ahead in the new way that we are organised, for example with the strategy group, to make sure that we take the right decisions for the future of Formula One.

CH: I think that Stefano has summed it up perfectly. FOTA, when it was created, had some specific agendas. It was at a time of uncertainty over many issues regarding Formula One and then of course, the crisis came in 2008 and FOTA at that time achieved some good things in reducing costs and teams working harmoniously together within critical circumstances. Then the mandate as FOTA changed, and when it suddenly became involved in how you run your team and run your business and trying to police how a team is run, that's not the role of the teams and you're only ever going to end up in conflict when teams are trying to write regulations of how they should spend budgets etc etc. For that reason, we left at an identical time to Ferrari, because we just didn't believe in the direction that FOTA was going. Then it was no surprise to see - ultimately - that it petered out over the last few years.

Friday report

During FP1 at the 2013 Australian Grand Prix, 22 drivers managed 406 laps between them, with Jules Bianchi logging the most at 24 rounds of Albert Park. One year later, at the dawn of Formula One's new era of unreliability and ceaseless chaos, the 22 drivers present completed 329 laps.

But the data set was skewed by the fact that seven drivers managed seven laps or fewer apiece - Jean-Eric Vergne managed 30 in his Toro Rosso, Kevin Magnussen did 28 in his McLaren, and Valtteri Bottas and Daniil Kvyat completed 27 laps each on Friday morning. Not mind-blowing, but far from the dearth of running that had been widely predicted before the pit lane opened for the start of the 2014 season.

The first practice session of F1's V6 era was not without incident - Lewis Hamilton managed roughly half a lap of Albert Park before an erroneous oil sensor reading saw the Briton stop on track at Turn 9. Given that the Mercedes was one of the most reliable cars of pre-season testing, it was an awkward start to the (official) year for the Brackley racers.

Kimi Raikkonen's morning was curtailed by an ERS-K failure that saw him garage-based for half an hour while the team got to work, while defending world champion spent the first 50 minutes of FP1 sidelined with an unspecified issue. Such teething problems were only to be expected, however, and none were particularly dramatic.

The drama came courtesy of Lotus' new recruit Pastor Maldonado, who was unable to run for most of the session, and started his season with a trip into the gravel at Turn 13 in the final minutes before the chequered flag.

The second practice session saw a little more drama, with seemingly half the field making occasional forays into the gravel. The brake-by-wire systems are still proving troublesome for the drivers to get used to, and rear locking under braking is going to be a regular feature of the early races this season.

Particularly worse for the wear was Caterham, who didn't manage to send either driver out on track in FP2, while Pastor Maldonado left the garage but was unable to get the E22 out of the pit lane before the session came to an end.

At the top of the timesheets was the Mercedes driver pairing, surprising no one. But the assumption in the paddock is that the Silver Arrows still have a lot more power up their sleeves, while Red Bull - who managed to get within seven-tenths of the front-runners - were thought to have been running on fumes when doing their high speed runs on softs.

FP1 times (unofficial)

1. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m31.840s [20 laps]
2. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m32.357s [23 laps]
3. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m32.403s [27 laps]
4. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m32.431s [19 laps]
5. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m32.599s [26 laps]
6. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m32.604s [17 laps]
7. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m32.793s [10 laps]
8. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m32.847s [28 laps]
9. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m32.977s [18 laps]
10. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m33.446s [30 laps]
11. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m33.533s [23 laps]
12. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m33.855s [24 laps]
13. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m34.272s [27 laps]
14. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m35.578s [7 laps]
15. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m36.445s [13 laps]
16. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m40.859s [6 laps]
17. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m46.922s [4 laps]

18. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) NO TIME SET [1 lap]
19. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) NO TIME SET [1 lap]
20. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) NO TIME SET [1 lap]
21. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) NO TIME SET [2 laps]
22. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) NO TIME SET [2 laps]

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m29.625s [37 laps]
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m29.782s [31 laps]
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m30.132s [28 laps]
4. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m30.381s [41 laps]
5. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m30.510s [33 laps]
6. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m30.538s [38 laps]
7. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m30.898s [32 laps]
8. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m30.920s [38 laps]
9. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m31.031s [34 laps]
10. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m31.054s [33 laps]
11. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m31.060s [35 laps]
12. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m31.119s [31 laps]
13. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m31.283s [36 laps]
14. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m32.355s [36 laps]
15. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m32.468s [26 laps]
16. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m32.495s [36 laps]
17. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m33.486s [29 laps]
18. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m33.646s [12 laps]
19. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m34.757s [29 laps]
20. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) NO TIME SET [1 lap]
21. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) NO TIME SET [0 laps]
22. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) NO TIME SET [0 laps]

Thursday press conference

The 2014 Formula One season kicked off with the traditional Thursday drivers' press conference in Albert Park.

Present were Fernando Alonso (Ferrari), Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Kevin Magnussen (McLaren), Felipe Massa (Williams), Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull), and Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull).

Q: Sebastian, can we start with you. You're a four-time world champion, it's your 121st grand prix and your seventh season in Formula One. Four times a world champion consecutively but would it be fair say that as we sit here today you're not terribly optimistic about making it a fifth in a row this year?

Sebastian VETTEL: I don't think that's fair to say. It's a long year. Our pre-season testing, our preparation, hasn't been ideal and, yeah, we're probably not in the best position for this race but I think it's a different story when we think about the championship. There's a long way to go. Two years back Fernando was on the grid with 1.5 seconds to pole position but he was very close to beating us to the title at the very last race. Anything can happen. That's why this race is important, just as any other one. But there are a lot of races this year.

Q: Obviously we've all seen from the outside, and you've mentioned now the difficulties you had in pre-season testing but what are you doing to try to put that right - you personally?

SV: It's obviously a tough step for all the teams, all the drivers, a lot of new things to get used to. We know that obviously we're not in the best shape yet. There are a lot of things we need to solve. Unfortunately, you can't solve them overnight. We'd love to but we can't. So you really have to go step by step, together with Daniel, I think just trying to be as precise as we can, trying to give the engineers the best feedback possible about the whole power unit so that we move forward on that and also talking about the car because at this stage it's a bit unknown where we are. It's not a secret: you need very, very strong reliability to be a title contender, so we'll see... I'm looking forward to tomorrow and especially Sunday to get a feel for the new regulations and see where we are.

Q: Thanks for that. Moving on to Fernando: two-time world champion of course, 193rd grand prix this weekend, 14th season he's beginning in Formula One. Ferrari a little hard to read from the outside in terms of testing, you haven't really stood out, for good or bad. From your perspective how do you feel Ferrari is placed with this new technology going into this very different new season?

Fernando ALONSO: I think it's very difficult to tell how competitive we are at the moment. We'll get some answers in 24 hours or 48 hours, we will know a little bit more than we know now. The car itself and the technology that Formula One brought this year are a little bit complex to everyone. We are learning and we are developing the car every day that we work on it. As I said, a little bit of an unknown situation for everybody. We just need to put everything together, maximise what we have, and see where we are.

Q: Some changes have just been announced recently to the qualifying format, particularly in relation to the final part of qualifying. I was wondering if we could get a comment from you on those changes and the impact they might have?

FA: I think it will not be a huge difference, from the outside especially. OK there were some cars that didn't run in Q3 or they only did one run in Q3 and now maybe we'll see an extra lap from everybody but apart from that I think it's not a huge change in approach in the qualifying for the teams and the drivers. Anyway, I think this change is welcome, to see more cars on tracks. I arrive many times with no new sets for Q3, so now I'm happy.

Q: Moving on to the 2008 world champion Lewis Hamilton, who is starting his 130th grand prix. It's his eighth season now in Formula One at the age of 29. Obviously it looks very promising after testing and both you and Nico Rosberg it seems are in a position to take an advantage of Mercedes' competitiveness. I wonder will it come down to which one of the two of you wants it more?

Lewis HAMILTON: Possibly. Yeah, it's very technical this year and we're all in the same boat. We're always trying to find where the advantages can be between two drivers. From race to race I think you'll see... one race he'll be ahead, one time I'll be ahead, same as you saw last year. Obviously the goal is to be ahead all the time.

Q: Can you talk about the feeling of driving these 2014 cars, compared to the cars of the last generation: the pleasure you get from driving them, whether they're more you're kind of car, what's coming through the steering wheel to you?

LH: Well, naturally I think... I probably speak for all of us that last year's car felt better, it was perhaps a little bit nicer to drive, when we had lots more

downforce. But that was a car that was in the fourth year of its evolution. Now we're in a new phase and it's just something that just takes some time to get used to. The sound, for example, is not as impressive as what we had in the past but once you get all the cars on the track, on the grid, I'm pretty sure it will be impressive for the fans still.

Q: Felipe, 192nd grand prix this weekend, your 12th season you're starting in Formula One and certainly from the outside, your decision to move to Williams at this stage of your career is starting to look fairly inspired, judging by the winter testing programme. What do you think can be achieved this year, in terms of results?

Felipe MASSA: I don't know. I think it's new to everybody so maybe we start having some answers this weekend. Not all of the answers but some. I'm really happy to be with Williams. Really enjoying the working with it to now, to feel the car and the working. It's a lot to do. You can never forget that it was a very difficult time for Williams in the last years and it's a lot to do, a lot of work, a lot of development going on inside the factory, inside the team. So many new people arriving – including me. But, I'm pretty motivated. For sure we can be there. I don't know how competitive we're going to be compared to the other teams. Maybe we will see teams better than us – I don't know. Maybe we can see ourselves fighting with them and be as competitive as the top teams like these three guys here – but I think it's just the beginning. It's a lot to do, a lot to understand and the understanding will be very important for trying to make the car better and better all the time. But, feet on the ground, I think maybe this weekend we start to understand a little bit.

Q: Obviously you've got the Mercedes engine which at this point looks to be the one to have, going into the season – but there's clearly more to the Williams renaissance than just that. Can you tell us some of the things you've noticed? Maybe one or two points of things that you've noticed that have changed?

FM: Well, I feel the team is really motivated. They want to grow, they want to get better and they want to be back in the good times. So I feel a lot of understanding for the people. I'm really happy with the people I work with, they're really professional. So many new people are arriving and there are many good ideas inside the team. Me as well. I'm trying to give as much experience, as many ideas as I can from my experience in a different team. So, yeah, I'm really looking forward. I think it can be a nice season for us – but how nice I don't know. We need to see.

Q: Daniel, it looks like you had one really good day of testing in the car. Observers were saying the car looked pretty good when it was going around. Do you share that view.

Daniel RICCIARDO: I think we had one stand-out day. There weren't many, as Seb said but at least one for me was pretty good. I think we're all a bit unsure how good our cars are. Speaking for all the drivers, I think we're just curious and hanging out to get on the track this weekend and see where everyone stands and get a clearer picture. I've had a busy week leading up to the race and I'm probably more excited than anyone else right now to get in the car.

Q: You've got your big break, here you are, it's the big time with the World Champion team. You've got a four-time world champion sitting on the other side of the garage from you. What's your strategy from here? Are you going to just focus on your own job or trying to look at what Sebastian's doing and try to beat him?

DR: I think for now just focus on what I've done the last few years and keep doing what I've been doing to get to this point – and then assess it from there and see how it's going. Obviously I get a good view behind the scenes from the engineers of how Seb works with his guys and understand a little more through that as well – but for now it's just do my thing and see where I stand off that and we'll work from there.

Q: Kevin, welcome to Formula One, if you look around you at the drivers sitting here with you this afternoon, who have seven Drivers' World Championships won between them, 104 grand prix victories between them. Do you feel you have to pinch yourself to believe you're sitting here today.

Kevin MAGNUSSEN: Yeah. Definitely. It is a dream come true and every day is fantastic at the moment – I'm sure it will keep staying like that. I'm just really excited to be here. It's been a long winter, since signing. I've been looking forward to this weekend but yeah, feeling good. It's been a good winter in terms of preparation with the team. They've done a really good job in terms of preparing me for this. It's not easy. It's a big job, a big challenge but I think I'm pretty much as ready as you can be these days. I've done a lot of work over the winter but I'm not underestimating the challenge that I'm facing. It's a big challenge but I'm looking forward to it.

Q: Shed a little light on it for us. McLaren looked very strong at the start of the testing but perhaps the end looked a bit more difficult. What was going on?

KM: I think the whole testing we pretty much ran the launch car and were behind a little bit on development – but the car feels good. If you didn't know the lap times of the other guys you would think that it's pretty fast – and that's a good sign. If we can just put some downforce on the car and keep developing as we did over the winter with the car, I think we can be in a good position. The team obviously come off a difficult season and they are massively motivated to come back to where they belong and that's a good feeling.

Q: (Kate Walker – Crash.net) To all six of you: I was wondering in development terms if you could tell us the difference between the cars that were packed up in Bahrain and the cars that we're going to see leaving the pit lane tomorrow?

SV: I think it will be a very different car. Obviously, for us, we had a lot of problems during the test so we didn't get to test a lot of stuff and we hope we do some more running here and obviously put the parts to the car that we think are better for overall performance. Yeah, it will be a bit different but I think it's the same for all of us.

Q: Fernando, I was on the same plane as Pat Fry and he was certainly pushing a lot of boxes out through customs when we arrived, so you've got quite a lot of new parts I guess.

FA: No, maybe they found some...

SV: Spare parts.

FA: ...food or something. The car is exactly the same as it was in Bahrain, not new sponsor, not anything.

LH: It's very similar to the two next door... probably more so to Fernando. There'll be a couple of things on the car but generally it's going to look the same.

FM: The same car.

KM: We've got a few bits on the car so hopefully we will be good.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Sebastian, obviously this past pre-season has been very different compared to previous pre-seasons with Red Bull. I was just wondering if you come into this season with a different mind-set, knowing you've got a car that could struggle to even cross the finishing line on Sunday, compared to the car you've had in previous seasons where you know it's going to be pushing for the front row of the grid, pushing for race wins. Does your mind-set alter?

SV: I think generally, at this stage for all us it's difficult to know what to expect, how the racing will look, how it will feel inside the car, how many cars will cross the line. We saw that we had a lot of problems, others had a lot of problems during the tests that we had. It's difficult to have any sort of expectations for most of us I think, but as I said in the beginning, it's a long season and so obviously I'm going out here, not trying to just make it round. I'm going out here to push to the maximum and do the best I can and then we will see where we are and we will see how far we get. The target, for sure, is to finish and the target for sure is to finish in the best possible position, so that's the mind-set, fairly straightforward and for the rest of the year, I think we're a strong team, we have a lot of good people on board, we have strong resources so I'm confident we should progress as the season goes on.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action) Lewis, you and Nico get along very well, you got along very well last year when you were going

for wins. This year, you might be both going for the championship, you've been in that kind of a fight before. Do you see that putting a bit of a strain on the relationship with Nico?

LH: I mean when everyone's talking about the relationship between us, it will be the same at the start as it will be at the end. We've been racing together since we were 13, we've been in championships competing right to the end, one where he's won, one where I've won and it's been the same since... It's a more fierce championship and a lot more is riding on it but at the end, I don't see any issues.

Q: (Trent Price - Richland Fl) Kevin, you say that the McLaren feels quick, does that mean it's responding well to set-up changes? Does it feel like it has a good baseline?

KM: Yeah, both, I would say. It just feels like a Formula One car, it feels like it's balanced and I don't have a lot of experience with Formula One cars but definitely the car that we had last year just didn't have the right feeling about it. This year's car is responding well in terms of driving the car and also set-up changes and has a good feel about it.

Q: (Shane McInnes - 3AW) Seb, have you offered much advice to Daniel, your new teammate now racing at Red Bull and if you have offered some advice, can you share that wish us?

SV: Not much, we didn't drive that much this year so there was not much I could talk about. Obviously you do your own thing once you are in the car, but as a team we share everything that we experience and together with the engineers, it's always... people expect that if you come to a new team or if you have a new teammate or you know a certain driver very well, people expect kind of questions like 'how hard do you approach turn three in Australia' or in Monaco. It's not like that. Obviously everybody's got his own style and even if I told him to brake here or there, then he would still try and find his own way. There are some things where I'm open so if he has some questions he can ask. It's the same for me the other way round. I think I can learn a lot from him so obviously he's a new guy, he has a different driving style to Mark. I didn't see that much yet in testing because we didn't run so much, but I'm sure, as the season goes on we'll both learn from each other.

Q: (Ben McKay - Australian Associated Press) Felipe and others if you wish, there are so many uncertainties leading into this season, is it fair to say that Formula One is under something of a cloud with the continued poor health of Michael Schumacher?

FM: Sure, I always think about him every day, pray for him every day so I really hope that things can go back and be OK for him. For sure it was a shame to see what's happened but I keep thinking about him, he's on my helmet and we'll keep praying and believing that things can be OK for him and he's coming back.

Q: (Mat Coch - Pitpass.com) Kevin, this year you're up against Jenson Button who I guess is getting towards the end of his career while you're at the very start. Do you feel that it's a little bit of a make or break year for both of you and that if you beat him, your career is made whereas if he beats you, you're perhaps in a bit of trouble?

KM: Well, we all know that you are measured against your teammate but I don't see it like that, I try and do my best, try and learn as much as I can in the early part of the season and see where it takes me. There is a lot pressure in being in Formula One, especially when you are with a big team as I am. It's where I want to be, I've always dreamed of being with McLaren and I'm here and I'm going to do my best and try not to worry too much about the negative things.

Q: (Sylvia Arias - Parabrisas) Felipe, I want to know that after so much time with Ferrari, working with a Latin team, how do you feel now with a British team, what differences have you found, your feelings?

FM: For sure, working with the car is the same and everything, similar things. It depends which team you are with but the idea, the working is the same but it's very different the way... outside, the way they talk, they are much more quiet. The Italians, they cannot talk without shaking their hands. I am like that because I am from Brazil as well, so for sure it's a big change for me. I'm trying to learn everything quickly, changing some names as well, understanding the way they talk as well, because I never lived in England, so that's also new for me. But it's nice, it's a nice experience as well, but definitely the mentality is pretty different.

Q: (Carlos Miguel - La Gaceta) For all six, it's a simple question: which team is the favourite for the championship?

DR: I think the championship is... as Seb said before, a long way away so... I could probably say for this race, judging from testing but I think we're going to develop so much throughout the year, all teams with the new cars this year so to answer the question simply, for this race, I would put my money on Mercedes but try not to count anyone else out but to answer your question in one word then it's them.

KM: I don't know, it's very hard to predict. We've seen for many years whoever is strong for the first part of the season might not always be the one at the end of the season so it's hard to predict. I don't know.

FM: Yeah, I think I would say Mercedes.

LH: I will say Williams.

SV: Yeah, not much to add. I think for this race Mercedes based on winter testing for the season. I think after three or four races we will know a little bit more.

FA: I've no idea.

Q: One final question: how many finishers in the race on Sunday?

FA: How many are we? 16.

SV: 12

LH: 15

FM: 14

DR: No one. We're all going to be running across the line!

KM: 22.
