



## Getting to know the Autódromo José Carlos Pace

Interlagos, as the Autódromo José Carlos Pace is more commonly known, is one of Formula 1's magic circuits.

The city of Sao Paulo sits in the distance, skyscrapers pushing up through the clouds, as the racetrack winds its way up and down hills, through the Senna esseses, the two lakes that give the neighbourhood its name in the background. Like Spa and Monza, Interlagos is a circuit that makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up.

And, like Spa and Monza, it is a unique track that is both challenging for drivers and thrilling for fans.

One of the special characteristics of the Brazilian Grand Prix circuit is its elevation, a full 800 metres above sea level. The altitude affects atmospheric pressure, leading to a ten percent reduction in engine power for cars running there. In Formula 1, this equates to 80bhp.

“The Interlagos circuit is all about altitude: at around 930mbar it is almost 10 percent lower than conditions experienced in Korea,” Cosworth explained in a pre-race statement. “The resultant drop in the density of air going into the engine equates to a similar drop in power output.

“The biggest test for the engine comes at the exit of turn 12 and the very steep climb which continues through turns 13 and 14, which are all flat in dry conditions. The power reduction makes this climb seem all the longer for the drivers. Drag is also reduced at altitude, which can help the engine and help combat the power loss. One relatively positive side-effect of the altitude is that the internal components of the engine that are loaded due to combustion will have an easier time in Brazil due the reduced cylinder pressures that accompany the low ambient pressures.”

While the engines have to deal with the changes in atmosphere, the circuit itself provides its own set-up challenges for teams. According to Mercedes' Norbert Haug, “the circuit requires good aerodynamic and mechanical performance in the second sector, and efficient aerodynamics and good engine performance in the first and third sectors.”

Haug was not the only senior team figure to comment on the set-up challenges this weekend, with Pirelli pointing out that sacrifices are often made elsewhere on track to give drivers an advantage in the final sector.

“The wide variety of high and low speed corners, along with the big elevation changes and high altitude above sea level, mean that it is quite difficult to find the correct aerodynamic set-up and, once more, a good compromise is needed,” Pirelli said in their preview. “The last sector of the lap is one of the most important when it comes to the eventual lap time, so this tends to get prioritised in terms of set-up.”

Williams' chief technical officer Mark Gillan was another man to point to Interlagos' split personality: “The Interlagos track is a classical 'two circuits in one' layout, with set-up always being a compromise between the long uphill run from T12 to the start-finish line and the medium-low speed corners within Sector 2. Both fuel effect and consumption are low for this 71 lap race so the fuel mass is low at the start of the race relative to the majority of tracks during the season.”

According to Sauber, getting the wing level right is a particular struggle.

“Sao Paulo is one of these circuits that doesn't have an obvious optimum wing level,” Sauber technical director James Key explained. “There are two strategies: one which is a higher downforce setting where the middle of the lap is better optimised; and the other one is a lower downforce setting which is better for the long straight up the hill through to turn one and then the second straight down to turn four. That will cause a little bit of work

on the wing level, both from a strategic and also the lap time point of view.”

Despite the challenges, Interlagos does offer overtaking opportunities, and the combination of the layout, Pirelli rubber, and DRS should lead to some exciting racing this weekend.

“The run up the hill to Turn 1 is quite long, and there is an opportunity for overtaking here, so it is important not to set the straight-line speed of the car too low,” Renault technical director James Allison explains.

“However, the corners in the middle section of the track are all quite long and slow, demanding higher downforce. It is important to set the correct compromise between the two. The track is also pretty bumpy which makes the correct compromise of mechanical setup very important.”

McLaren driver Jenson Button thinks that KERS will also have a role to play in shaking up the action on track this weekend.

“KERS Hybrid will play an important role at this circuit because there is quite a short drag from the start line to the first corner,” he said. “Towards the end of the lap you’ve got a long uphill section out of the final corner and the power will certainly help there, too. And, if you can’t get past into the first corner, then I definitely think you’ll be able to close up along the start/finish straight and then have a look at passing on the short straight ahead of Turn Four, using DRS.”

The run-up to the fast Turn 6, an uphill blind double right-hander, will be a good test of any driver’s nerve this weekend: how he approaches the corner will be a visible measure of his confidence in the car.

Tyres will be of interest this weekend, as Pirelli will be bringing along two extra sets per driver of a new experimental hard tyre, one of the compounds being considered for use in 2012. The softer hards will be available for use in FP1 and FP2 on Friday.

As far as the rest of the weekend goes, Pirelli are bringing along the soft (yellow) and medium (white) compounds. The soft tyre in question is the new compound young driver were testing in Abu Dhabi last week, and which the F1 lot last ran in practice at the German Grand Prix, which should make things interesting.

In his pre-race comments, Renault driver Bruno Senna spoke of Interlagos’ unique challenges for tyres.

“Interlagos is a very challenging track, as it’s one of the few circuits in the season that runs anti-clockwise, as well as being narrower and bumpier than most tracks we race on nowadays,” he said.

“The rear tyres will get a lot of use, mainly due to the many heavy traction zones, big elevation changes, high asphalt temperatures and fairly high surface roughness. We know it will be a difficult weekend for us, as most of the corners are slow in nature and on most circuits with such profile we haven’t been particularly successful, but I believe we can finish the season on a high note and, hopefully score points. There is also, of course, the risk of weather instability, due to the close proximity to a dam, which will make the race that much more exciting.”

The current configuration of the Autódromo José Carlos Pace has been in use since 2000, when minor changes were made to the track but the corners left unaltered. The circuit measures 4.309km: presuming it runs for the full distance, the Brazilian Grand Prix will last for 71 laps, bringing the total distance run to 305.909 kilometres.

The group of past Brazil winners still racing in F1 is fairly small: Sebastian Vettel (2010), Mark Webber (2009), Felipe Massa (2006, 2008), and Michael Schumacher (2000, 2002).

The group of previous pole sitters is slightly larger: Nico Hulkenberg (2010), Rubens Barrichello (2003, 2004, 2009), Felipe Massa (2006, 2007, 2008), Fernando Alonso (2005), and Michael Schumacher (2001).

Fastest laps at Interlagos have been claimed by Lewis Hamilton (2010), Mark Webber (2009), Felipe Massa (2008), Michael Schumacher (2000, 2006), and Rubens Barrichello (2003).

The current lap record at the Brazilian circuit is Juan Pablo Montoya’s 2004 time of 1:11.473s, set at an average speed of 217.039kph.

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## F1 Brazil Blog – Thursday press conference in Interlagos

For the last time this year, six of the paddock’s drivers lined up to face the media for the Thursday press conference. The room was packed, and not just with members of the Brazilian press corps – farewells are always special.

Present were Rubens Barrichello (Williams), Jenson Button (McLaren), Felipe Massa (Ferrari), Daniel Ricciardo (HRT), Michael Schumacher (Mercedes), and Bruno Senna (Renault).

Q: Bruno, I think, first of all, you’ve had a pretty busy time since Abu Dhabi because you came straight here?

Bruno SENNA: Yeah, well, to be honest last week I took [off] to rest and to get acclimatised as well. It was a bit cold in Brazil, so I didn’t get to enjoy the sun but this week has been very busy and I think it’s going to be a very busy weekend overall. But it’s a home race so you have to get used to it and get on with it.

Q: Are you excited about the fact it’s a home race?

BS: Very excited yeah, it’s my second time racing in Brazil and it’s the first time I’ve going to be here in a competitive car so I think it should be an interesting race weekend, lots of pressure but very exciting as well.

Q: You've had less than a half season, how tough has that been and how pleased have you been with the way you've tackled it?  
BS: It's been very tough of course, competing with the guys that have tested and have done the whole season. It's not easy: these guys are not joking around here, they are the best drivers in the world and mixing with them is very satisfying. Overall, it's been a good experience, it would have been much better if I'd done the whole thing, for sure, but I think I'm pleased with the results. There have been ups and downs but the performance normally speaks for itself and hopefully we will still finish this race on a high note.

Q: And the future?

BS: Well, that's still up for...ah... [it remains] to be seen, but I'm working very hard for the seat and hopefully we'll know the future as soon as possible.

Q: Rubens, just going back to the last race, that was a great drive from the back of the grid, were you pleased with that?  
Rubens BARRICHELLO: I was! I was very pleased and, you know, even more that we had so many conversations with the team because there was some idea that Cosworth wanted to take the engine back to the factory and try to work around the engine, not to break the seal. I said: 'look, if it happens then you're going to have to open it anyway, the engine. I'm not going to use that engine in Brazil because I'm going to pay a penalty.' And the only other engine I had was a Friday engine that already had some mileage, so they said: 'OK, let's take the gamble' and when they broke the seal with the FIA there, they saw that it was such a minor thing. The engine became a ninth engine instead of the eighth, so I paid a penalty - but I was on the back anyway so, I have kind of a fresh engine for here. It was good to race hard in that respect. I didn't finish in the points but I still have a lot of pleasure from the drive.

Q: And what does this race mean to you. This one here?

RB: Well, you ask me that every year!

Q: It probably gets more important every year...

RB: It is! It's getting better. They know already that I've lived 20 years of my life just on the other side of the road and I know pretty much everyone around here. It's a lot of emotion coming to Interlagos and to drive here, so even though I don't have a competitive car you have to put hopes... you have to dream. My dream here this weekend is to put the car in the points and have the best finishing position that I can manage.

Q: And are you worried about the future? What are your feelings about the future?

RB: I think it would be sad to be worried about the future. I had 19 lovely seasons, you can see that as much as I wish Bruno all the success in the future, he's having his second year, one-and-a-half years pretty much, working hard to stay there. I've been there for 19 seasons, I've been doing this for such a long time, I've been wanted for such a long time here, so I feel good. I feel that I still have a lot of youth on me, and it's not something that I'm asking 'please, give me the drive'. If somebody wants me to drive on a competitive basis it's because they believe I can do a very good job - that's why I'm here.

Q: And after Abu Dhabi, presumably you've proved that you still can?

RB: Absolutely. It was really good - but I don't think the results right now would make any change in what people think I can do and what I cannot do. It's based on different parameters. I hope that it's enough to secure me a good drive for next year.

Q: Daniel, a new circuit for you. Have you had a look around? How far have you managed to get so far?

Daniel RICCIARDO: I was here last year playing a reserve role, so had a walk last year and I've done a few laps on the simulator so, yeah, I guess I'm coming to the new circuits already a little bit prepared. Y'know, this is another one the drivers seem to enjoy. It's a short lap here, we go round and round in circles for quite a few laps in Sunday and it's going to be good. I'm looking forward to it. I think like everyone else here, you know, I'm trying to end the season on a high and go home over Christmas and have something to be pleased about.

Q: What are your thoughts on your half-season?

DR: I think it's been not bad. Obviously, it took a while to get the big wheel going but I think I then gained some momentum and have had some pretty good races since then and some good qualifying. Coming in half way through the season, as Bruno said, it's not the easiest thing to do. There's always going to be things that you're not 100 per cent happy about or things you know you could have done better. But there's been a good race along the line and a good qualifying at least so I know definitely the potential is there. Just got to try to put it together more often. I think that comes with experience as well and more time in the car. I'm pretty happy, especially if I'm to finish this weekend on a good note, then I'll be satisfied with the last 10 or 11 races. I don't know, it's gone bloody quick!

Q: What do you know about your future?

DR: Not much! Like a few of us we're not really sure what's happening next year but I think I'll live for the moment and try to do the best I can this weekend and see what comes from there. Hopefully I'll keep Dr Marko and the guys at Red Bull happy and see what opens up for next year - but, yeah, it's not really something I'm prioritising at the moment. My mind's set on the weekend.

Q: Jenson, I'm sure a lot of memories of this circuit. It's where you scored your first point, for example, and where you sealed the World Championship.

Jenson BUTTON: Yes. Lots of very positive memories, so it's great to be back. For me, the memory that really stands out is obviously 2009. Winning your first point means something but winning the Championship means a lot more, so clinching the title here with a race to go was the perfect way to win the World Championship. It wasn't an easy weekend for me obviously, with terrible [time in] qualifying but a great race and a fighting race, which I really enjoyed. So, some very special memories and hopefully this race will be special as well. I've only been on the podium here once. I'd like to stand on the podium again.

Q: And that came all the way from 14th on the grid as well...

JB: Yeah, I think my best qualifying [here] for the last six years has been 14th on the grid so I'm hoping to go a little bit better than that this time.

Q: Also, there's second in the Championship up for grabs, how important is that?

JB: Not so important I suppose. I think it's nice to know over a season you can finish in front of obviously some very good drivers but also some teams. To finish in front of a Red Bull would be great, considering that Sebastian's won the championship in a Red Bull. And Fernando has obviously been very strong in the Ferrari so, if I get the chance to beat them at the end of the season in terms of points, yeah, of course I'll be happy but as we all

say, we'd rather come away from here with a victory, that means more to us than finishing second in the Championship – but it's still nice, I suppose, if you can come away with second.

Q: You've almost had a better Championship season than when you won the World Championship. Particularly the second half.  
JB: I don't think that's ever the case really if you haven't won the World Championship. The second half of the season in '09 was pretty tough but it's a very different situation now. The Championship's won: we can have a lot of fun this weekend and, looking back on 2011, yeah, I'm pretty happy with what I've achieved. We haven't been quite good enough to win the Championship but I think we've had a pretty strong year and hopefully we can build on what we've achieved this year, next year and really take the fight to Red Bull.

Q: Felipe, obviously you're looking already at next year but this is a very important race for you as well.  
Felipe MASSA: Yes, for sure. I think when we have the last race in Brazil you cannot just forget and look at next year. This is a very important race for us. I think for all of us Brazilians this is also like a championship, this race. I think when you race at home it's like a different championship. So we try to do the best we can here. I'm happy to already have achieved two victories here in Sao Paulo, in Brazil and looking forward to having another strong weekend and just thinking about this race 100 per cent. And then on Sunday after the race just move everything to next year, which I definitely hope will be much better than this year.

Q: What do you think you can give to your tifosi this weekend?  
FM: Well, for sure we have the same car from the Championship. No new parts on the car but I think when you race at home it's better. I think you feel extra power and everything from the people and I think it's a help. I hope definitely I can have a good weekend here fighting for the podium. If it is the first place, that would be fantastic but I'm definitely looking to have my best result from the Championship in this race.

Q: And as well as those two wins, three consecutive pole positions as well, so it's been a good circuit for you.  
FM: It's the place where I started my career, over the other side of the wall, which we always say here, which is in the go-kart track in the other side. And then when I was 16 I moved to this side and started my career here at this track. It's a very special track for all of us and it also a great feeling to race here in Formula 1 in a place that I always came to as a kid to watch Ayrton and Nelson – not Emerson! – but it's a place that's so special for me.

Q: Michael, again a driver with a lot of memories here: 2006 is one of our great memories, which is yours?  
Michael SCHUMACHER: Obviously, having been around for so long there are many special memories but yes, 2006 was a particular one. Last race before the retirement and a pretty special race that initially, after the puncture I got, I thought 'might as well go into the pits and start the party early', but then I thought 'give it try and see where you go'. It turned out to be a memorable race and a very exciting one.

Q: You've also had a lot of podiums. Not just the four wins but six podiums as well.  
MS: Yes, it worked out over the years. It's a very interesting and very challenging circuit and we seemed to have the right car and combination to do well here in the past.

Q: I'm intrigued that you're still making progress or seem to be making progress with the Mercedes. Even though you're not necessarily putting new bits onto it you are seeming to understand it and getting more pace from it. It seems extraordinary.  
MS: I'm not sure it's actually true. Each car has a certain character and certain tracks may fit better or not so good to it. Maybe lately we've had some tracks that fit the car well. Certainly since mid-season from our side we are able to maximise the potential of the car, a lot more consistent which I'm obviously glad about.

Q: And is that going to be the case here? Do you feel this is going to be a circuit that suits it?  
MS: Ah well, I'll tell you later.

Q: Jenson, when you joined McLaren, you talked about the challenge of taking on Lewis in the same team, and since then you've talked about him being one of the fastest drivers there's ever been, so what does it mean to you to finish ahead of him over a season?  
JB: You would think I would have a good answer for this by now: I've been asked it enough times. When you're working closely with a teammate, when you're off the track you're sharing everything, trying to make the car go quicker and trying to improve your performance compared to other teams, which is the way it should be. But when you're on the circuit, you obviously both want to get the best out of the car, which means beating your teammate is necessary. I think if we're fighting for the World Championship and one of us came out on top it would be a very special feeling but we're not in that position right now but for me, I'm happy with what I've achieved this year in terms of getting the best out of the car and getting some reasonably good performance. For me, Japan really stands out as being a great race, but also some other races that we haven't been able to win, so I take more comfort from just the results I've got out of...on a race weekend, and also how I've felt that I've done over a race weekend. It's not so much about whether you beat your teammate over a whole season, because so many things can happen: reliability issues, incidents that maybe aren't your fault. I think if you clinch the title, as you said, it makes a big big difference, but when you're fighting for second it's not quite the same.

Q: In the last race we saw that some drivers could overtake the competitor in front, and the following straight you could get the position back. Here there is more or less a similar situation: we have a great pit straight and then you brake hard and then you have another straight where you can use the DRS. Do you believe you will be in the same situation as you were in the last race?  
FM: I think you can. If you have overtaken the car on the main straight, which is the better place for overtaking, without using DRS, it is possible you can be overtaking again at the next one, because in the next one you're going to have the DRS. I think it can be the same situation. For sure, maybe it could be the same as what happened in the last race.

MS: I think that if you are able to pass on the main straight, you would actually definitely be the quicker car, because you do it without DRS and then the chicane itself should be enough to clear yourself so that the guy behind shouldn't have sufficient power, even with DRS, to then re-pass you, so you probably only pass at equal speed on the back straight, because of the DRS, but it shouldn't be similar to what we saw in Abu Dhabi.

JB: I agree. I'm in the middle.

MS: I don't think it was contradictory of what Felipe was saying. It's just an add-on.

BS: I agree with Jenson!

JB: Good to hear!

Q: For Michael and Rubens; you both obviously raced here in the days when Ayrton raced here and it was a very, very special

atmosphere, with the drums going – incredible days. I wonder, when you arrive here on a Thursday and you get out of your hire car and you look around at the atmosphere here, do you ever think of him?

RB: I think for me, obviously, it's a different thing to what Michael's going to answer because by being a Brazilian, I lived by Ayrton for most of the time. People still talk about him a lot, it's a time now of his commemoration of the three times World Champion, so it's very special, very, very special. I'm so proud that I was here a couple of times when I raced with him on the same track, and I was here with the same buzz from the people. Even though we haven't been so successful as he was, we still have a lot of good feeling with the crowd to hear our names and to hear this feeling, to feel that makes me always feel that Senna is involved, because people always remembered that, whenever they were cheering, it's because of him, because of Nelson, because of Emerson, but I think even more from Ayrton.

MS: He's certainly someone you will always have in your memory. For me, it goes way back to when I saw him in his go-kart days, becoming a fan of what he was doing, particularly in these go-kart days because I think he has been so exceptional and so special. And then being able to race him over here and having had those years together, it's a privilege and I'm very honoured to have done so. It's great to see that none of us – and even outside – forget what Ayrton has done, as if it was yesterday. It's so fresh, he's just around and that's great.

Q: This is for Michael but the other drivers can comment too: what are your impressions of the rule changes to improve racing this year? Do you think it's had a positive impact, as the season comes to an end?

MS: It's about DRS, I guess. To me, I think it is very obvious that we have improved big time. We have had incredible races this year. I take one particular example and I think it's pretty fresh still, and that's Korea. If you think about the fight that Mark Webber and Lewis had together over there: without DRS, it would have been nowhere close, we wouldn't have seen anything. It would have just been a normal kind of old traditional kind of race and in that respect, it may not always work out perfectly, there's a little room to improve the situation but in general it has contributed a lot to some great racing.

JB: Personally, I think it's brought a lot to the racing. You obviously have races where you think it's too easy to overtake, there are always going to be negatives to something like that, but I think the positives outweigh the negatives and I think we've had some great racing this season on circuits where we've never had overtaking before, especially with two competitive cars, you can have a bit more of a fight now. Even if it doesn't make the pass for you, it can bring you a lot closer so that you can have a go elsewhere on the circuit. I think DRS on its own is good but personally I feel that having KERS has really helped us this year. I think we can really use it to our advantage, to overtake and obviously to try and block a position, so that, for me, has been as big as DRS.

RB: I enjoy it very much. I think it's been an incredible year and the fact that in life, sometimes you can see people are never happy with that, because I heard for 20 years that there wasn't enough overtaking in Formula 1 and all of a sudden I'm hearing people saying there's too much! It's just 18 races and they come up with numbers saying that there's been a hundred overtaking manoeuvres so it looks a bit too easy, but I think it has been quite good. It's still difficult to follow the car in front because the cars are going fast because of its aerodynamic balance, and whenever you have something that destroys that, you basically don't follow the car, so the DRS has helped. It is true that sometimes it may make it too easy, sometimes it wasn't enough, so I think the FIA had all the good numbers to make the show even better for next year. So I'm very much in favour of that. Obviously the new people that come into Formula 1 will still have to get their hands on the buttons and everything, which we were complaining about at the beginning of the year. Now it has become a much easier thing because we've got used to it, but the new guys will have to adapt to that and I hope there's not too many new guys, so that the old one are kept on. We are used to it, so it's fine.

Q: Rubens, looking back to your first ever F1 race, what one thing stands out to you about that weekend in South Africa?

RB: To be very honest with you, I was over the moon. I'm not an anxious guy but I remember that I was sleeping a little bit less, because I woke up very early to go to the track, I was ready to go at any time, but for me, whenever Ayrton came walking to my garage to offer me help, if I needed anything – for me, that's been my weekend at Kyalami.

FM: And he had a lot of hair at that time!

RB: Someone who talks about hair, you should have a look whenever it's raining and he's running in the rain, because now it's combed and it's OK, but you should have a look when he's running. It looks worse!

FM: I think it's better if we stop, huh?

RB: We're going to be fighting even over that now!

Q: Felipe, do you have any news about your new front wings, the problems?

FM: Well, we're going to have all these front wings from the last three races here again and I hope it's not going to shake. I'm looking forward to run these front wings without any problems.

Q: Bruno, the success of the Senna film all around the world seems to have re-awakened – for a lot of people – memories of the great man. Has that also increased pressure on you and what's it like being here? Can you walk around the streets, do people expect you to deliver what he delivered?

BS: No. The movie has only awakened the spirit of Ayrton to people. People come to comment about the movie all the time. Everybody's completely touched by the movie, but that hasn't changed anything from my perspective at all. The most that people will go to when they talk about me in the movie is when they see me driving the boat with Ayrton and stuff like that but not really about my racing. People in general, especially in Brazil, are very supportive of my very short Formula 1 campaign so the pressure is on, it's been on since I started and it's not going to change for sure. Yes, I can walk about the streets. People recognise me but they don't attack me. I'm not any type of superstar or Hollywood film star so it's alright. I bet Rubens and Felipe have much more of an issue with that. They also look much better, of course.

RB: They tell me Bruno looks very good in the film, but he's grown and he's got a different face. It looked very pretty in the film, that's what people tell me.

BS: We'll see when I get to your age...

RB: As long as you will have some hair that's fine.

Q: Question especially for Felipe and Bruno: you've both had problems with stewards' decision in the last races: Felipe in India and Bruno also. How do you feel about it, how do you expect them to behave here, are you satisfied with the stewards' decision, because racing is much closer this year and it tends to create some situations that sometimes you may not agree with.

FM: I'm sure they will behave much better than in India, I'm sure.

BS: I blame it on Jenson anyway! No, when there is a situation where people are judging then there is variability unfortunately so sometimes you can get away with it, depending on the way it looks, sometimes you can't. I think we all want the same thing happening to everybody and in the same situation. This will probably never be the case but whenever we have our meetings with Charlie and the FIA, we try to put our perspectives in front of them and I think it just gets better and better every time we come up with something, so let's hope that everybody gets the same treatment every

time.

Q: Now that we have a whole season under our belts of racing on the Pirelli rubber, I was wondering if you could tell us what effect you think that's had on overtaking as opposed to KERS and DRS?

JB: Yes, I think it has helped. I think that at the start of the season, especially, when we were trying to work out what the tyres were like and how many laps they would run and what the degradation was like, I think there was a lot of overtaking. Some of it came from looking after the tyres but also a lot of it came from people pitting, coming back out onto the circuit and being two or three seconds quicker than other cars. It seems a little bit different now, the degradation of the tyre doesn't seem to be as high, it doesn't seem to drop off a cliff like it did earlier this year. Maybe that's just our car, I don't know, but that's the way it seems. It seems that they are more conservative with the choice of tyres towards the end of the season, meaning that the degradation is lower and I think that that will be the case here also. I personally liked it at the start of the year when we had a lot of degradation, I thought that was more fun but personally I feel that Pirelli's done a great job this year. To come into Formula 1... you know you can't hide coming into Formula 1. I think that they've done a great job, they've definitely been a part of the action this year. There's been a lot of great overtaking and some of it does come down to tyres. So yeah, I think KERS, DRS and the Pirelli tyres have all worked very well together. We've just got to hope that it doesn't change too much next year.

RB: If you want to have the degradation I still have it! You can have mine.

I think it's fun, the way it is. Obviously when you give a tyre to a driver you're talking about more or less grip, you're always trying to go for more grip and the faster you go, the more pleasure you have, so at the beginning of the year, I think everyone had to adapt a little bit, not that the Pirelli was worse than the Bridgestone, it was just different and you had to treat the tyres differently. That was the special feeling about it and when we talked about grip, in testing it seemed that it was not enough with the temperature that we had there, but then when we went racing, there was a lot of overtaking and I think Pirelli had done a really good job to actually help that. So together with the DRS and the KERS, I think the show has improved and let's hope that's the way Formula 1's going to be for the long term.

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## F1 Brazil Blog – FPI in Interlagos

It was a quiet morning in Brazil as the drivers piled out on track for the last FPI of the 2011 season.

And for the ninety minutes of the practice session, all remained fairly calm on track, a boon to the five new(ish) boys taking their turns behind the wheel this morning.

Jean-Eric Vergne, Jan Charouz, and Luis Razia followed up their Abu Dhabi Young Driver Test appearances with a turn in FPI, while familiar faces Romain Grosjean and Nico Hulkenberg also took to the track.

The only incidents of note to take place in the morning session – other than the customary trips across the run-off area – were a spin for Kamui Kobayashi and an engine failure for Fernando Alonso. But even the Ferrari stopping on track wasn't a dramatic moment – Alonso pulled over and parked up without the merest hint of a puff of smoke.

Mark Webber topped the timesheets for Red Bull in the midst of all the calm, followed closely by Jenson Button and Lewis Hamilton. Sebastian Vettel was marginally slower in P4, while Felipe Massa was half a second slower in P5.

Best of the new boys was Nico Hulkenberg, but given the German driver's stellar pole lap here last year, that's hardly surprising. What was surprising was the fact that Hulkenberg outpaced star rookie Paul di Resta, admittedly by about half a tenth. Romain Grosjean was the next newbie (this is relative, of course), out-pacing teammate Bruno Senna by two-tenths.

FPI timings (unofficial)

1. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1:13.811s [26 laps]
  2. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1:13.825s [23 laps]
  3. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1:13.961s [20 laps]
  4. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1:14.025s [28 laps]
  5. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1:14.507s [34 laps]
  6. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1:14.541s [26 laps]
  7. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1:15.162s [28 laps]
  8. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1:15.178s [28 laps]
  9. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1:15.241s [31 laps]
  10. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1:15.321s [29 laps]
  11. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1:15.468s [29 laps]
  12. Romain Grosjean (Renault) 1:15.547s [18 laps]
  13. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1:15.663s [27 laps]
  14. Bruno Senna (Renault) 1:15.732s [32 laps]
  15. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1:15.747s [31 laps]
  16. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1:15.836s [27 laps]
  17. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1:15.979s [35 laps]
  18. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1:16.052s [33 laps]
  19. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus) 1:16.514s [33 laps]
  20. Luis Razia (Team Lotus) 1:17.595s [31 laps]
  21. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1:18.140s [29 laps]
  22. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1:18.643s [29 laps]
  23. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT) 1:18.952s [33 laps]
  24. Jan Charouz (HRT) 1:19.577s [37 laps]
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## F1 Brazil Blog – FP2 in Interlagos

It looked as though FP2 was going to be as incident-free as F1. And, by and large, it was.

At least, it was until Sergio Perez brought out the yellow flags with around 12 minutes remaining of the session, when he stopped his Sauber on track in a manner not dissimilar to Fernando Alonso's F1 retirement. The cause of Perez' retirement has yet to be confirmed, but there's no doubt it was mechanical – the Mexican rookie wasn't going at the right speed for driver error.

The yellow flags that remained out on track for much of the closing minutes of the session meant that times at the top of the chart remained stable for about the last half hour of FP2.

And what times they were – the top eight drivers were covered by less than half a second, which is no mean feat, even at a track as short as Interlagos.

Lewis Hamilton topped the timesheets for McLaren, chased by Sebastian Vettel. Mark Webber was just behind, with Fernando Alonso, Michael Schumacher, and Felipe Massa making up the rest of the top six.

Pirelli brought along two sets of an experimental hard compound tyre for the drivers to test today, and while Webber and the two Ferraris took to the track early to put the provisional rubber through its paces, there has been little feedback available as yet.

All in all, it was a pretty formulaic practice session in which very little happened. The times fell as soon as teams made the switch to softs, and it was situation normal all afternoon.

A fitting penultimate practice session for the Formula 1 season, really – Red Bull were fast but slow enough that people will cry 'sandbagging', drivers from the top four teams made up the top eight, and Force India, Renault, and Sauber are jostling for position in the middle of the pack.

Same old, same old.

FP2 timings (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1:13.392s [35 laps]
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1:13.559s [41 laps]
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1:13.587s [41 laps]
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1:13.598s [35 laps]
5. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1:13.723s [38 laps]
6. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1:13.750s [39 laps]
7. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1:13.787s [36 laps]
8. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1:13.872s [42 laps]
9. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1:14.144s [41 laps]
10. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1:14.807s [48 laps]
11. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1:14.856s [38 laps]
12. Bruno Senna (Renault) 1:14.931s [37 laps]
13. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1:14.970s [33 laps]
14. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1:15.019s [45 laps]
15. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1:15.264s [44 laps]
16. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1:15.388s [41 laps]
17. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1:15.679s [43 laps]
18. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1:15.903s [40 laps]
19. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus) 1:16.298s [36 laps]
20. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus) 1:16.338s [48 laps]
21. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1:18.031s [39 laps]
22. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1:18.051s [45 laps]
23. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT) 1:18.367s [42 laps]
24. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT) 1:18.476s [42 laps]

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## F1 Brazil Blog – Friday press conference in Interlagos

For the last time this season it was the turn of the senior paddock personnel to face the media firing line. There are too many lasts in Interlagos.

Present were Riad Asmat (Lotus), Eric Boullier (Renault), Jean-Francois Caubet (Renault Sport F1), Robert Fernley (Force India), Paul Hembery (Pirelli), and Christian Horner (Red Bull).

Q: Bob, the battle for sixth place in the championship. How important is it for you?

Robert FERNLEY: It is absolutely vital. I mean we lost it last year by one point, as you know, it was a disappointment at the last race and we simply don't want that to happen again, so we have really got two objectives this weekend. One is to secure sixth and the other one is to put Adrian (Sutil) in the top 10 for drivers.

Q: Fifteen points is quite a lot to gain or even lose, isn't it, so it's unlikely to change?

RF: Unlikely, but it could be weather driven and as we all know there is many a slip so we have to be absolutely sure that we deliver.

Q: Your team owner, Vijay Mallya, said that he would announce the drivers before the Brazilian Grand Prix. I think he said that, anyway, and we are still waiting, though, of course, the grand prix hasn't happened yet?

RF: Yeah, he might be waiting a little longer before he finalises it.

Q: Is it the drivers he is talking to or what's holding it up?

RF: A number of things really. I think it is only fair we deal, obviously, with the drivers. We have got three very talented drivers and we need to make sure that the one that is going to be disappointed has the best opportunity to position himself and that's our priority. Once we are clear with all those programmes, Vijay will announce it.

Q: Paul, it's interesting that Jenson Button said yesterday that he felt that at the beginning of the season your [Pirelli's] policy has been somewhat more extreme perhaps with the tyres dropping off quite dramatically whereas perhaps more conservative later on in the season. I think you have already said that you will be less conservative next year, but can you talk about your policy for next year.

Paul HEMBERTY: Well, first of all we didn't change anything, so I think there are a lot of other factors involved why maybe there is not that big drop that we have got now. The only thing that we did change was the hard compound after the Turkish race. Next year we are going towards softer compounds. We have too big a gap between some of our choices this year in terms of peak performance so we are trying to get that down below a second to try and encourage the strategy. Experience and hindsight are wonderful things and we can make maybe some more aggressive choices in some circuits.

Q: Apparently the choice of going softer has come in for a certain amount of criticism, or allegations of favouritism to certain teams that cannot warm up their tyres very well. What do you say about that?

PH: Well, when we go harder everyone says we are being conservative and the races are boring, so it is one of those no-win situations. I think the team you are talking about, when we were in Korea with super softs and softs, still had some issues so that's rubbish. We are doing it because we are trying to encourage more exciting racing and I think what we are doing is in the right direction to try to have the peak of performance much closer together between the tyres. The harder tyres to be more durable and the faster tyres to have a degradation so we will see a little bit more of that strategy we saw earlier in the season.

Q: A question partially for you and partially for Christian about Sebastian Vettel's tyre from Abu Dhabi. Is there anything more to report on that?

PH: Well, to be honest we finished looking at that over a week ago. I said at the time we had a bag of bits and we had a look at the bag of bits and ruled out a whole host of things. We didn't feel there was an integrity issue with the tyre and as we've seen in some races you get debris, a foreign body that you pick up, and that causes a hole in the tyre. It was unfortunate: first corner, first lap, world champion, so not the greatest thing with all the world watching but it's what happens so nothing really else to add.

Q: Christian, anything more from you?

Christian HORNER: No, I think Paul summed it up. There was no smoking gun if you like. We did a lot of research with the Pirelli engineers and worked closely to try to understand that bag of bits that came back. Some of it came back in Mark Webber's car but I don't think we will ever fully know exactly what the root cause was. There are lots of theories, but nothing that you could hand-on-heart say it was that.

Q: Riad, very interesting load of drivers that you used in the Young Driver test in Abu Dhabi. I'm thinking particularly, obviously, of Luiz Razia, who is of interest here in Brazil but also Alexander Rossi. That's a fairly important driver as well in terms of, perhaps, your future strategy for the USA.

Riad ASMAT: I think, bottom line, is that we have always had the capability. We started a team but at the same time we also had a driver development programme. We are filtering them through that system right now and hopefully we get to nurture their talent and hopefully put them in a car in the near future. As you can see we still have the capacity and capability, so we select by merit who can do what and when, so it's a commitment and we are sticking to it.

Q: Is it something particularly with Alexander that you are thinking if we have got an American race we need to have an American driver?

RA: Well, actually, in all honesty that didn't come to mind as we had him even before the American GP was announced and he just had talent. We saw that in him. We worked with him in the World Series and we've now tested him in GP2 and we will have to determine where he goes next year.

Q: And you have also had a name change. That's been approved as well. How important is that?

RA: Well, in a way it is quite sad that we have to move on but at the same time it gives us the pragmatism of determining our future, having control of it, and I think we have reached a very amicable parting of the ways. I think it is good for both parties. For me, it is quite clear what I have to do for the future with the team and we are just focusing on that.

Q: Similar question for both Jean Francois and Eric. You have both had the name change as well and does this mean the parting of the ways with Renault no longer the name of a team. Final severance as it were?

Jean Francois CAUBET: I think the deal was clear. When we sold the team two years ago we agreed on the transition year, so the name was Lotus Renault and the chassis name Renault, but the team was controlled by Genii and no reason to push the name Renault under the ground. The strategy was to move from the team to engine provider and I think that is quite natural that we keep the name Renault for the TV rights to help the team to develop and to have a good balance sheet and I think it was a good strategy.

Eric BOULLIER: Nothing else to add. At least now the situation is clear and there is Lotus name for next year and Caterham and it is all clear now.

Q: Jean Francois, are you still looking for another team to supply engines to or has that died down a bit now?

JFC: Last year we had two teams. This year we have three teams, next year four teams. I think it will be the last step as the problem is not to have five or six teams, it is to provide a good engine and to have a good technical partnership with all the teams. To have good reliability I think four will be the best.

Q: Four is the best?



JFC: Yes.

Q: Just looking back at this season – fantastic success as well?

JFC: I think it was a good season. We have a fantastic relationship with Red Bull. It is good to start a new strategy and win. The reliability is not 100 per cent. I think we had an engine blow-up with Jarno (Trulli) in Silverstone so the goal next year will be to finish all the races.

Q: Christian, just looking back at the season as a whole what was the key to success. A lot of people would say it's the engineering side, it's the way the car has been designed et cetera, it just seems to use its tyres well. It has the downforce, but what from your point of view is the key to success.

CH: It's a combination of everything working in harmony. Everything, every department, all the bits that you don't see. You see the shop-window effectively at a grand prix weekend, but it's the behind-the-scenes as well. The production, the thousands of hours that go into forgotten departments like electronics, like the R&D department, the paint-shop for example. It is all those factors that have to come together. The drivers have to do their bit. Obviously Sebastian has driven at an unbelievable level this year but it's the harmonisation of all those aspects that have to come together to achieve the kind of results that we had. 2010 was a very, very tough year for the team. It was a championship that went all the way down to the wire, development went all the way up to that final race so to come out and win the first race of the year in 2011 after the challenge that went into 2010 was something that was tremendously rewarding. Then to build on that, the momentum on that through the year was really very, very special.

Q: It does, of course, mean that you are in everyone's sights for next year. It does put a lot of pressure on you for next year?

CH: Yes, it's funny when you start winning you are very popular. When you win repeatedly you become very unpopular. That's the nature of sport, the nature of this business. Of course, if you look at the last 40 races we have won 23 of them. We have had 25 podiums this year alone, 17 poles. It has been a remarkable year, or a remarkable period for the team, and with continuity, with stability, our target is to try and maintain the level of performance and success that we have worked so hard to achieve over the last few years. But we are up against phenomenal opponents. Ferrari, the pedigree of that team, the heritage of that team. The engineering resource of McLaren. You have only got to see the size and scale of their facility. We don't underestimate our rivals but we are determined, very focused, to build on and maintain the kind of levels of performance we have achieved not only this year but in 2010 and in the latter half of 2009.

Q: It has been an amazing feat, but you are probably in the sights of everybody though?

CH: Inevitably, I think we have been the benchmark and with that comes a different pressure. It has been a different pressure to defend a championship and I think we have actually defended the championship obviously more convincingly than we won it the first time and it doesn't get easier. Of course there are teams that have not won for several years now that are very determined. Red Bull has only been around for seven years and we have won four championships in the past two years. There are other great teams with tremendous depth of resource that are very keen to get back on top. We can only focus on ourselves, we can't control what other teams are doing and hopefully we can turn up with a good car next year and carry the kind of form we have enjoyed this year. It is a shame it has to end really. I know we are in the end of November, but it would be nice if it went on a bit longer from our perspective.

Q: Eric, can you clarify the Robert Kubica situation at the moment, as that seems to be going to and fro?

EB: The situation is quite clear. We have a contract with Robert until the end of this year, terminating this year. This is why we are using our channel for the communication with him and we agree with his manager, Daniele Morelli, to issue a press release before this week, which was entirely approved by both parties before being released. The choice of the wording is my responsibility and I think the message was clear. We have waited for Robert. We would like Robert to be back. I think we are the first one who wish him well and he informed us that, unfortunately, he would not be able to be at the first test, which means he will not be able to start the season for me, so that's it. I think the issue came up that some translation maybe was wrongly done in the far east of Europe and the message was really that he would not be able to be back in 2012 which is not the message at all. The message was clear. He will not be at the start of the season, or the test if you want, but he may come back next year.

Q: So are you looking to sign two or three drivers?

EB: Nothing like this.

Q: Because you may change drivers during the season?

EB: I still have to sit down with Daniele Morelli to discuss or assess the situation for the future.

Q: When do you think you can announce drivers?

EB: It is a company decision now, it's a board decision, so the board will take the decision. As soon as they sit down they go for it.

Q: Eric, what do you think is the reason that we hear so many negative things about your team. Technically-wise you are in a free-fall. We had the (Nick) Heidfeld situation, then we had the choosing of (Bruno) Senna without any success. Then we had (Vitaly) Petrov complaining and we have the chaotic situation with Robert. What do you think is the reason as no team is producing so many negative headlines like your team.

EB: I don't think we produce any negative. I think the message can be released or can be used negatively. It was a difficult choice for the team to have an accident after the first week of testing which leads into you missing your leading driver. That doesn't help. Then we had a succession of different situations like also the car not lacking but suffering some development because we had a too innovative forward exhaust system. At the end of the season the results are not good and every time the season is not good enough there is some negative.

Q: Are you really convinced that you are right person to be doing this job as Team Principal?

EB: I don't know. You need to ask the people who employ me.

Q: Two questions for Eric: what about Romain Grosjean's performances in Abu Dhabi and here; and how important was this morning's session in order to chose your drivers for next year?

EB: First question: Romain did very well this morning until he had this clutch problem, so I think the speed was there, the feedback was very good, the team enjoyed working with him. I cannot say more than this. Second question: it's part of the assessment we decided to go through so we will see. He did it positively and now it will be reported to the board and then we will see.

Q: Paul, in the last few races, we've seen a couple of Fridays where you've been trying out new compounds for next year. Are you

able to give us any feedback on what the drivers have been saying and which ones we are likely to see next year?

PH: It's a little bit confusing with the naming because, for example, the soft tyre you will have seen here is actually going to be the medium tyre next year so you will probably get a bit confused and a bit bored if you get into too much detail. But we've had some good feedback from the Abu Dhabi Friday session, which is the new soft for next season. The hard tyre we had a go with this morning, which showed a performance which was much closer to the medium compound which is what we were looking for. The hard tyre that we had this year was far, far too conservative. It was creating a lot of problems. So far, we have to say positive. Clearly the young drivers' test was an interesting test, because we saw a lot of drivers, didn't we? They were changing - we had to check who was in the car because we had a lot of drivers going through, but it did allow us to get some feedback which we've used to confirm the data that we had ourselves, and also the simulation data. Of course the teams, by and large, use simulators today to do their work so they'd already run the tyres virtually. We know they need to change the balance of the car. The rear tyre has increasing grip levels so it changes the balance; they will have to work with the aero because there's a different profile. But yeah, so far so good. It is a bit of a limitation for us, testing. We don't have a test car. The Toyota is now in a museum so we can't use that any more. Ideally, we would like to have a more current car or a more recent car to do our testing sessions with.

Q: Christian, for some time now, people have been suggesting that Red Bull has been marching out of step when it comes to the RRA document. In Abu Dhabi, you presented a document to all the team principals. This morning there was a meeting that's been dubbed a make-or-break meeting; how do you feel now after this meeting?

CH: Confused. No, we met this morning and it has been decided that the RRA has effectively been taken out of FOTA for the time being, to try and achieve a solution. I think it's important to try - I think an RRA is important for Formula 1 and I think all the teams are unanimous on that. I think the thing that isn't quite clear is how to achieve it in a way that fits everybody's business models, that some of the teams are different, and I think the key thing for us is that the treatment and transparency of it is consistent and obvious and probably needs to go beyond the chassis and incorporate the engine as well. You can't cherry-pick, you need to look at the package as a whole. Hopefully, in discussions prior to the end of the year a solution can be found but I think that inevitably we come more under the spotlight because, as I said earlier, perhaps if we hadn't had as much success this year then it would be less pertinent but that's the way of the world, but from a Red Bull point of view we're keen to find a solution and we're hopeful that one can be found between now and the end of 2011.

Q: For all of you: we know that you have an economic crisis nowadays in Europe. I would like to know how much impact that will have in Formula 1 over the next two years, because most of the teams have European sponsors? May investment be more conservative over the next two years because of that?

CH: If I may start, I think Formula 1 is a World Championship and yes, Europe is having a tough time at the moment, but South America, your country here, is doing tremendously well. If you look at Asia as well, those markets are doing very strongly, and I think that Formula 1, through its global appeal has attracted brands and partners into the sport from those areas and that's why it's so important for us to be racing as a World Championship. It's important for companies like Renault, for example, to make the commitment to Formula 1, to have made the commitment as an engine supplier into the future, with the new regulations. That's why it's also very exciting to be racing in new markets as well. India, this year, was a tremendous success and obviously new races in future years only endorse the fact that it is a genuine World Championship.

J-FC: Just one example: for Renault, Brazil is the second market in the World. The first is France, the second is Brazil and probably the third will be Russia. So we want to invest in Formula 1 because for us it is the best return on investment. It's true that there is a crisis in Europe but there's no crisis in Brazil, there's no crisis in China, there's no crisis in Australia. In terms of budget, we cut a lot of budget but we didn't cut one euro from the Formula 1 budget.

RF: I actually endorse what Christian and Jean-Francois were saying. It is a global sport. Obviously from a Force India point of view, whilst we recognise that Europe is struggling a little bit at the moment, it will come back in time. Our main backing is from India, so being selfish about it, we're probably OK.

EB: It's true that as a global sport we are also looking after some sponsors in new countries, mainly BRIC countries, where you clearly have some expansion economically and not some crisis as in Europe.

PH: I'm only really going to reiterate what everyone else has said: we're a global business, but yes, we do have problems in certain geographical regions but they're offset by maybe great business performance elsewhere. Formula 1 is a great platform for a business like ourselves that has global expansion plans, very ambitious plans so from our point of view, it's business as normal.

Q: Christian, you mentioned earlier about the unpopular feeling that you were experiencing nowadays. Does it feel uncomfortable to be unpopular or does constant winning make it more bearable?

CH: Winning Grands Prix tends to make up for it, to be honest. It's one of those things, you can't be everybody's darling. For us, we tend to focus on what we're doing and not let other things distract us. There's a phenomenal team spirit within the team. Yeah, we've set the benchmark over the last couple of years, but with that comes an added pressure that you go from being the hunter to being the hunted and that's a different type of pressure to have to deal with. I think that's one of the things that has really pleased me this year: how the team has dealt with that different type of pressure. When you're chasing a championship like last year, and almost went into the last round expecting it to be a long shot to win the championship but coming out on top, it was a completely different pressure this year and so the manner in which we conducted our campaign this year was tremendously rewarding, but we fully respect the calibre of our opponents. Ferrari, McLaren and Mercedes are all great teams, they've all got great heritage and great pedigrees and if anything that makes the winning even more satisfying when you're up against opponents of that calibre.

Q: Jean-Francois, in Silverstone this year, the engine manufacturers met to discuss an RRA on engines. How does Renault see that working, particularly if you're supplying four or five teams versus the three or four of others and the two in the case of Cosworth for next year and does Renault support it? How can you have an equitable RRA? With the teams it's different, they've all got two chassis but with the engine suppliers it will be a totally different matter.

J-FC: Yes, it will be totally different but we are working hard with Mercedes because we share the same philosophy and we want to avoid the same situation we had three or four years ago. I think in the cost of engines, you have fixed and variable costs. All the people are selling the engines on the variable costs, so if you control the fixed costs it will be easier. We agree with Mercedes to share the same philosophy with Ferrari. It is a little bit late because all the investment for the 2014 engine has started, but the problem will be after 2013, probably, to accept the RRA.

Q: Robert, it was mentioned on the BBC coverage today that Vijay is actually planning on making the driver announcement at your team Christmas party. Could you confirm that?

BF: You probably know more than I do if it was put out on the BBC, but I'm sure that's the date he's always set. If you remember, he said December 15, that would be consistent with what he's always projected.

Q: Christian, us Brazilians are in a different situation this year because we used to see the trophy, the championship completed at our track. This year that's not the case. Is your team doing something for next year at this race?

CH: At the last few races we have been working hard - our motivation has been to try and win every Grand Prix that we attend. The track time that is available to Grand Prix teams - this is the last weekend that the cars will run prior to new cars arriving in February next year, so it's important to make the most of the track time that you have available, so inevitably there are little things that are tried. There were some things at the young driver tests that Jean-Eric Vergne tried last week which will be the same for all the teams, but the priority is to try and win the Grand Prix and I think you're set for a really exciting race this weekend. I think McLarens look very quick, the Ferraris are going to be quick and the weather looks like it could be quite British on Sunday, so I think you have all the ingredients for a great race and I think that Brazil has always produced exciting races. We've been lucky enough to win the last two races here and we would dearly love to make it a hat-trick of wins but it's going to be a big task. It's almost like an FA Cup Final, the drivers and teams will really be going for it to try and win this event.

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## F1 Brazil Blog – FP3 in Interlagos

It was another trouble-free practice in Sao Paulo as the 24 drivers took to the track for the final practice session of the 2011 season.

While there was nothing to worry about in terms of spins or offs, there were a few mechanical troubles to keep an eye on.

Sebastien Buemi capped off a year of mechanical woes with a session that saw the Swiss driver complete three laps, none of them timed. His Toro Rosso was sidelined due to reported gearbox troubles, although the team have yet to confirm that.

Bruno Senna was another driver to struggle mechanically this morning; Renault spent much of the middle of the session trying to get to the bottom of an unspecified problem with the engine before blaming the troublesome data on gremlins and sending the Brazilian driver back out.

The final man to struggle mechanically this morning was Fernando Alonso; the Ferrari driver missed out on a chunk of track time while the team tried to rectify a problem with his rear wing flap. But it was no skin off the Spanish driver's nose, as Alonso went temporarily fastest on his first timed lap.

Fastest man of the morning was Sebastian Vettel, as was widely expected. There was a close fight in the top five once the drivers made the switch to the softer compound (again, as expected), but Red Bull carried on their tradition of finding extra pace on a Saturday.

It was a strong performance from Adrian Sutil, who popped his Force India up in P6. The VJM04 is looking quite strong this weekend, with both drivers in the top ten at the end of FP3.

As for the rest of it, there's not much to say - it was Renault's turn to fall out of the top five teams, thanks to Force India's pace, but the rest of the timesheets are pretty standard based on the season's overall results.

FP3 times (unofficial)

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.12.460s [21 laps]
  2. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.12.547s [19 laps]
  3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.12.597s [21 laps]
  4. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.12.622s [15 laps]
  5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.12.765s [17 laps]
  6. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.13.113s [22 laps]
  7. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.13.286s [21 laps]
  8. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.13.393s [19 laps]
  9. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1.13.419s [19 laps]
  10. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.13.583s [18 laps]
  11. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.13.838s [20 laps]
  12. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.14.283s [19 laps]
  13. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.14.286s [20 laps]
  14. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.14.311s [24 laps]
  15. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.14.454s [22 laps]
  16. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1.14.547s [24 laps]
  17. Bruno Senna (Renault) 1.14.551s [15 laps]
  18. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus) 1.15.843s [24 laps]
  19. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus) 1.16.026s [22 laps]
  20. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1.16.616s [26 laps]
  21. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT) 1.17.143s [23 laps]
  22. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT) 1.17.296s [23 laps]
  23. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.17.984s [23 laps]
  24. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) NO TIME SET [3 laps]
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## F1 Brazil Blog – Q1 in Interlagos

As the drivers lined up at the pit exit for the start of the final qualifying session of 2011, track temperature was 40 degrees, while air temperature was 27.

But that doesn't tell the full story – it's a very humid day here at Interlagos, and feels far hotter than it really is. There are storm clouds gathering around Sao Paulo, but it doesn't look like we'll have rain in qualifying. There is, however, an eighty percent chance of rain in the race tomorrow.

Set-up choices will be fun...

Traffic is likely to be a problem in all three sessions, thanks to the short lap here in Brazil. But Q1 is obviously the worst where traffic is concerned, with 24 cars jostling for position on the second-shortest track on the calendar.

Lewis Hamilton was the early pace setter in Q1, crossing the line in 1.13.876s on his first timed lap. Sebastian Vettel bested that time on his second run, with a 1.13.687s.

All 24 drivers are either out on track or have a time in the bag; the low chance of rain is still enough that the teams are keen to set bankers as early as possible in each session.

As the session approaches its midpoint, Jenson Button goes fastest with a 1.13.281s.

Down in the dropout zone are the six usual suspects plus Pastor Maldonado. Sergio Perez, Sebastien Buemi, and Rubens Barrichello are all vulnerable, but secure for the moment.

Eight and a half minutes to go, and the track goes quiet. Ish. There are only six runners out there, with only Vettel and Felipe Massa still running in the top ten. From this point onwards, the action will be down at the back of the pack.

Tyres changed, and there's action from Renault, Sauber, and Toro Rosso. Jarno Trulli has promoted himself to P17, putting Rubens Barrichello and Maldonado down in the dropout zone with Heikki Kovalainen, Daniel Ricciardo, Jerome D'Ambrosio, Timo Glock, and Tonio Liuzzi.

Maldonado saves himself, and Trulli is back down in the dropout zone. Barrichello then crosses the line with a fantastic effort that sees the Williams driver up in P9. Buemi is now the unlucky dog down in P18.

But it's Buemi's turn to save himself, and Maldonado is back down in P18 with seconds remaining of the session. As the Venezuelan driver is in the pits, he's out.

Dropout zone

18. Pastor Maldonado (Williams)
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus)
20. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus)
21. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT)
22. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT)
23. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin)
24. Timo Glock (Virgin)

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## F1 Brazil Blog – Q2 in Interlagos

The air temperature is dropping, the humidity is rising, and rain is on the way.

There's no guarantee that the rain will fall in the 30 minutes remaining of qualifying, but it would take a foolish team not to send their driver out for a banker as quickly as possible once the pitlane reopens for business.

And the drivers were all queued up and ready to go, like the good little boys they are.

Adrian Sutil was the first man to cross the line, but his time became irrelevant the moment Sebastian Vettel posted a 1.12.446s on his first effort. Nico Rosberg surprised the press room by popping up in P2 with a 1.12.569s.

There are currently six drivers lapping in the 1.12s, and times are falling faster than it's physically possible to record them.

With ten minutes remaining, the dropout zone is comprised of Michael Schumacher, Jaime Alguersuari, Sebastien Buemi, Kamui Kobayashi, Vitaly Petrov, Rubens Barrichello, and Sergio Perez.

Schumacher flat-spotted his front left tyre on that last run: a fresh set of tyres should be all it takes for the German driver to get into the top ten, although it's unlikely that he will match Rosberg for time.

Six-and-a-half minutes to go, and everyone's in the pits. The track is like a ghost town, and it's an odd sensation.

There we go – two Toro Rossos and two Force Indias out on track.

No movement from the top six, who hardly need to save themselves. Paul di Resta, who is currently in P10, is putting in consistent lap times but not seemingly able to find any extra pace.

One minute to go before the chequered flag falls and the dropout zone is made up of Schumacher, Barrichello, Alguersuari, Buemi, Kobayashi, Perez, and Petrov. All bar Alguersuari are out on track and have the opportunity to save themselves.

Which Schumacher has just done, knocking di Resta down into the dropout zone. Buemi's returned to the pits; that's it for Toro Rosso this afternoon.

In fact, that's it for everyone. The dropout zone is made up of di Resta, Barrichello, Alguersuari, Buemi, Petrov, Kobayashi, and Perez.

#### Dropout zone

11. Paul di Resta (Force India)
  12. Rubens Barrichello (Williams)
  13. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso)
  14. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso)
  15. Vitaly Petrov (Renault)
  16. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber)
  17. Sergio Perez (Sauber)
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## F1 Brazil Blog – Q3 in Interlagos

No rain yet, but the temperatures continue to fall here on the outskirts of Sao Paulo.

There's good news for Brazilian race fans, who will see two of their local drivers lining up in the top ten, but bad news for Rubens Barrichello, who dropped out in Q2 in what most believe is the last qualifying session of his career.

It should be a close fight for positions 2-6 on the grid this afternoon, but it would take a brave person to bet against Sebastian Vettel securing a record-breaking 15th pole of the season.

The Red Bull driver's first effort saw him cross the line in 1.12.268s, three-tenths faster than his teammate has been able to manage thus far.

Lewis Hamilton appears to have gambled on a wet set-up; he is substantially slower than expected, although still lapping in the 1.12s. The McLaren driver isn't seven-tenths slower than Vettel; it's a simple point of fact.

With less than two minutes remaining of Q3, the three stragglers – Bruno Senna, Felipe Massa, and Michael Schumacher – finally leave the pits and put on the sort of show their fans have paid to see. Because the show happens on every day of a race weekend, no matter how much drivers and teams say that Sunday is all that counts.

All ten men are out on track and fighting for position. Vettel is setting purple sector after purple sector, and is unlikely to be beaten. The Red Bull driver crosses the line in a mind-boggling 1.11.918s.

Hamilton was matching Vettel on sector times, but seems to have lost half a second in the second sector. It has to be a wet set-up, as the British driver's pace doesn't make sense when viewed in light of his weekend as a whole.

Nine of the ten drivers running set times in the final qualifying session of the season, but even the lone spoilsport – Michael Schumacher – took to the track and gave the attendant fans a brief glimpse of the Merc in action.

#### Provisional grid

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull)
  2. Mark Webber (Red Bull)
  3. Jenson Button (McLaren)
  4. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren)
  5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari)
  6. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes)
  7. Felipe Massa (Ferrari)
  8. Adrian Sutil (Force India)
  9. Bruno Senna (Renault)
  10. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes)
  11. Paul di Resta (Force India)
  12. Rubens Barrichello (Williams)
  13. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso)
  14. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso)
  15. Vitaly Petrov (Renault)
  16. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber)
  17. Sergio Perez (Sauber)
  18. Pastor Maldonado (Williams)
  19. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus)
  20. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus)
  21. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT)
  22. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT)
  23. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin)
  24. Timo Glock (Virgin)
-

## F1 Brazil Blog – Saturday press conference in Interlagos

With the final qualifying session of the 2011 Formula 1 season done and dusted, it was time for the last post-qualifying press conference of the year. These are sad times, people.

Present were record-breaking pole sitter Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), Mark Webber (Red Bull), and Jenson Button (McLaren).

Q: Sebastian, a record 15th pole of the season. Describe your feelings at this historic moment?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yes, it is difficult. I mean there has been quite some talk before the qualifying, before this weekend, about this particular record and the best thing was just not to think about it at all. Yesterday we did have sort of a rough start to the weekend where I wasn't happy 100 per cent with the balance yet but then I think we made the right choices overnight and again going into qualifying I was happier. Yeah, enjoying the moment, enjoying the laps I had. I was already happy with the first one in Q3 but I knew that there was a bit more to come and, yeah, put everything into the last lap. Very emotional when I crossed the line as I knew that whatever happens this is all I had and I gave it all so I was very pleased with that but then had to wait for quite a long time to see if my time was good enough or not. The names kept popping. My engineer told me Button P2, Mark P2 and then pole position so really special. Different than the other poles I would say. Obviously it took the master in that discipline, Nigel Mansell, a couple of races less but very special to me and now just happy to be here, happy to start at the front tomorrow, and hopefully enjoy the race so looking forward. The weather is going to be a big question mark. We knew that going into the weekend. To be honest it has improved so today was already supposed to be wet, but it was dry, so I think this place is a bit tricky anyway. Special races, special weather. We have seen that the last couple of years so looking forward to tomorrow.

Q: Mark, you were only a tenth away from Sebastian. The margin is very, very tight so can you finish the season with that elusive win?

Mark WEBBER: Yeah, it would be good mate. Today's qualify went very well. The whole weekend has been pretty strong and it would be nice to keep the heat on Sebastian. Both of us have got the maximum out of the car today. Unfortunately I could not look after Nigel today and get pole, but Seb did a good lap as usual and my lap was pretty good as well to be honest. We both got the best out of the car so looking forward to the race tomorrow.

Q: Jenson, it is very close and tomorrow might throw up the changeable conditions that you have often thrived in. What are your thoughts on that?

Jenson BUTTON: You know, I think we are all excited about tomorrow. The last race of the year and we want to end on a high. But at the moment I am just enjoying the moment. This is my best qualifying for the last six years and 10 places better, I think, than last year so it's a good start to the weekend. I always love racing here. It is such a good circuit for racing and really fighting and out of the last corner down into Turn 1 is very good for overtaking and obviously we have the DRS out of Turn three, so hopefully we can get these two tomorrow. I think whatever happens it has been a great season for us, just not quite good enough. There are a few areas we need to work on and, as I said, hopefully tomorrow we can end this reasonably good season with a high.

Q: Sebastian, now we have had the final qualifying session of the season you can tell us what is the secret. How did you find those few final tenths-of-a-second on that run last run in Q3? All of these guys would love to know and we all want to know too.

SV: Yeah, I don't know. There is no secret. We had a nice dinner on Wednesday before the weekend here and a couple of the mechanics kept joking 'where is the bag, where do you keep these couple of tenths for Q3. Do you just take it out?'. It is not that easy to put everything into one lap. All the circuits are different and sometimes you are not so happy but other times you are very happy with what you can do or what you could do in qualifying. Generally this year I think I was able, most of the time, to put everything into that one lap, or final run in Q3. Sometimes you want a little bit more but all in all I was pretty happy with my days on Saturday and we had good Sundays as well so there is no secret. Once we go into qualifying we all seem to enjoy it. I personally love the moment when you go out for your final run. You feel it is different to any practice run, or Q1 and Q2. You are so excited, nervous, as you know that's the lap. The build-up to it is great and then the lap itself is like a rush so I really enjoy that.

Q: Sebastian, a lot of drivers don't worry about statistics, don't worry about records, but this one seems to be very special for you?

SV: Yeah, I don't really worry going into the race or into the qualifying or into the season. I think you can't set yourself a target like that. It is a bit hard to believe it now, but I think those sort of numbers in a way they are made for ever and it would be ridiculous going into a season thinking you might be anywhere close at the end of it. As I said, I think it just happens. Many times if you set yourself a target to say I want to achieve this or that or reach a certain number, go for statistics, I think it goes wrong. There was quite some talk already on Thursday. Not from my side, but from the outside and today as well. I think the only way to really get there was not to worry about it and just do our normal job which is trying to do the best we can. I said to myself going into qualifying that I want to make sure I get everything out of the car there is and if someone else beats me then he totally deserves it. I think that is the name of the game every time. Fortunately this year we had quite good Saturdays, also brilliant Sundays, but surely sitting here now and answering these kind of questions is very special.

Q: Have you ever thought how you are in the car? Are you tense? Are you gritting your teeth or are you relatively relaxed?

SV: Good thing you don't see our faces! I think sometimes you would be surprised. Not really, you don't really think about yourself. Qualifying is all about putting everything you have and the car has in one lap. Sometime sacrifice a bit here to get more at the next corner or the next sector. I think you have to be awake for sure. Even if sometimes things go a little bit wrong in one corner, I think you straight away have to move onto the next corner. I just love the build-up to qualifying. Q1 and Q2, you know that the most important thing is to get through. Of course, you would like to be fastest in the session but then Q3 is really when you feel the excitement and you are getting tense and nervous at the same time. When the lap happens you don't really think, you just got for it and try to get more and more. Fortunately it has worked out pretty often, but you are also very close to doing mistakes, which happens if you push yourself on the limit over the limit. It is natural, it happens to all of us.

Q: You said you needed to take another step from yesterday and the team seemed to have delivered. Was that fairly easy to work out where that speed was coming from?

SV: Not really. The start to the weekend, yesterday morning, was a bit rough. It wasn't bad, but just I wasn't happy with the car, myself, balance, and just everything did not come together and we made a reasonable step overnight. The guys on the car worked pretty long last night so really thanks for that and the engineers, especially my engineer Timmy [Maylon] he pushed very hard and I think he didn't get a lot of sleep and he is responsible for a big part of the car improving so much. I think it was more what I was used to having in previous races straight from this morning and then we fine-

tuned a little bit and then in qualifying there is not much you can do. We just tried to get a little bit better every run, tried to go with the track and see what we could do.

Q: Mark, you have won from second on the grid here and here you are, second on the grid again.

MW: Yeah, it was a good qualifying session, all in all, very tight at the end of Q3 there between most of us. Seb just had that extra tenth to grab the pole, so disappointing [for me]. I tried to help old Nigel [Mansell] out today but it didn't work out, so a good lap for Seb. In the end, I'm happy to be at the front for the start of the race tomorrow.

Q: What were the conditions like; you said they were pretty difficult yesterday?

MW: Yes, I think because of the track temperature, also pretty windy. When the track is around 50 degrees, it's challenging for the car balance, how the tyres behave, all that sort of stuff. It's the same for everybody and today wasn't too dissimilar. Obviously by qualifying the temperature had dropped, with a bit of cloud cover and in the end - we've always been towards the front this weekend - it was obviously just a question of who was going to get pole. Obviously with the run that Seb's had, obviously it takes a big arm-wrestle to get it off him. I was close, but not quite close enough.

Q: Well, you got your own trophy yesterday for fastest laps.

MW: Yes, it was nice of DHL, I must say. It was a lot better than a lot of the trophies we get on the podium: a lot of them on the podium are quite boring but there was a bit of imagination to that one, so it was quite a nice trophy and also a beautiful Rolex, so that was nice. So thanks to DHL for that and yeah, it was good.

Q: What are you looking for from tomorrow - obviously a win but second in the championship as well?

MW: I'm not overly bothered by that. It would be nice, of course, and if you had a choice, you would always take second over fourth, fifth, sixth or whatever. JB's had a great season, so has Fernando, given the car that he's got, so all in all, yes, leave me tomorrow with a win, obviously. If it's in the fence, it's in the fence, but a win would be nice.

Q: Jenson, you said yesterday that you were having problems with the option, the softer tyre. Did you get over that today?

JB: Yeah, quite a bit. I still feel that I was quicker on the prime, didn't quite have the balance in Q2 on the softer of the two tyres but made a few little adjustments for Q3 and I feel that we did the best with the car. I think the set-up was as good as we were going to get it for Q3. The lap was pretty ragged for me, but I got everything out of it, I think, so an enjoyable lap, I thought I was going to be further up the grid than I was, but it just shows you how good a job these two did and obviously their cars are working alright as well. So yeah, good day and much better than Saturday last year, and I think tomorrow's going to be a very interesting race. There's a good chance of rain, I've seen that these guys have a very slow end-of-straight speed so I'm guessing it's a bit of downforce and a bit of something else which is going to help them tomorrow, but we are where we are and we've just got to hope that our car works well in the wet. It's worked pretty well so far this year.

Q: I think the last time you wore that driving suit was pretty lucky, wasn't it?

JB: Yeah, this is my flower power suit, gives me a little extra push around the circuit, especially when it's wet, the flowers grow. I have good memories of Hungary [where he wore it and won] and she's back. Big thanks to the team today, actually, because as I've said, I've always struggled here on Saturdays, so it's nice to qualify well, and I want to say a big thank you to them for the whole season. It hasn't been perfect but we've still done a good job, I think, and it's a good base for next year. I'm just saying this just in case I'm not here tomorrow or something happens!

Q: Sebastian, I wanted to ask you - you are now not only the team to beat but the man to beat for 2012: how does it feel, knowing that you are now the hunted and not the hunter?

SV: Well, I think, to be fair, it has been a little bit the same situation going into this year. The guy who wins the championship the previous year has the number one on the car and that's what we are all after. We had an incredible three years now, but in particular the last two were very special for us as a team and for myself, obviously. To be honest, right now, I'm not bothered about next year, I'm looking forward to tomorrow. I think it should be quite an exciting race. Conditions might be a question mark, there's rain on the way. The question is when, how much and if the flowers grow or not. It should be an exciting day tomorrow and after that we worry about next year. I think, first of all, it has been a long season this year. We are all tired in a way and ready for the break and then, quite soon, we are ready again for next year so I'm looking forward to that, obviously. The guys in the team are pushing hard to work on next year's car, but years like this, or seasons like we had this year, you can't take that for granted at all. We work very hard to have a competitive car next year again - we hope - and then we will see.

Q: As you said, the rain is coming; the question is to all three of you: would you like it to rain and would it help you to win or not to win?

JB: I really don't know. When it's wet it's obviously a lot more tricky. There's a chance you could have great performance and you have a good chance of winning, but still, even if you have great performance there's a good chance you could end up off the road, getting out of the car before the end of the race. It's tough, especially around here. There's a few very tricky corners if it rains. I think what they've done with the drainage system, putting the little grooves in the track has helped a lot but it's still a very tricky circuit, especially when it rains hard. It's the same for all of us. If it's dry tomorrow, I think we will still have a good race, but the wet will obviously mix it up a lot more.

SV: Yeah, I agree with what he says. There's always more chances if it's wet. On the other hand, the risk is higher so yeah, it's probably very exciting for people in the grandstands - maybe not so much for them if it really rains because they get wet - but the people behind the TV screens and generally watching the race, it can make it more exciting. For us, it can be exciting too but as I said, it's obviously quite a bit trickier, especially around this place so we will see. If it happens, it happens. It's not in our hands anyway. It's a good thing we cannot control the weather. We control too many things, I think. The weather's not in our hands.

MW: Yeah, the guys have touched on it. Obviously the car is more consistent, more controllable in a way when it's a dry track. As JB touched on, it's one of the trickier venues when it's wet but it's a challenge to a grand prix driver obviously to perform in all conditions within reason. Obviously Charlie looked after us a few years ago in qualifying after we had a few crashes of course, but generally... we will see how heavily it rains tomorrow, if it does at all. Let's see how the conditions are, but it should be OK. Visibility is the main thing. If we can see where we're going, then we can have a race.

Q: Sebastian, of course, you won't tell us about the tyre strategy but what can you say about the option tyre degradation and in which kind of aspect do you think the race will be decided if the rain doesn't come? Jenson said yesterday that he didn't think the back stretch will be enough to benefit the DRS: do you agree?

SV: Well, there's a lot of questions there. We had time yesterday - quite consistent conditions, it was pretty hot - but then we were able to check the

performance and check the cars on either tyre, in particular on the soft one, and you have to say that if there's a certain figure in your head about laps that you can do, this circuit is shorter, a lap is shorter, so you do more laps, the race is longer, you have 71 laps tomorrow. Degradation is there, we saw that yesterday but it wasn't shocking, it didn't surprise us so I think that if it's a normal dry race, it's within the two or three stop region. I think it's not real secret. If the degradation is really high then it would tend to make it three or four stops. If it's really low, then two would be for sure. I think it's somewhere there. Surely it will be important to look after the tyres around here. That always has been in a way and it has been this season, so we will try to do that again tomorrow. For the DRS overtaking, I think generally around here it has been a miracle track. We have seen a lot of overtaking in the last couple of years, sometimes less, but other times we have seen a lot, and a lot more than anywhere else. This track has potential to give a little extra and, in a positive way, to be a bit crazy so we will see, and I don't think we necessarily rely on DRS to see overtaking. Sure, it enhances our chances into turn four but it's quite short and it's not a prime overtaking place on the track anyway, if you look at the last couple of years. If anything, it helps, but we will see what we can do.

Q: You each have a few years on the grid already but can you imagine yourselves doing 19, maybe 20 years in F1 like Rubens?

JB: I'll start because I think I'm the closest. Scarily, this is my 12th season already, yeah, 31. At the moment no, I definitely can't imagine being here for another eight years but four or five years into Formula 1 I didn't expect to be here now so time flies. As we all know, when we're travelling around, you don't sit still for a second so the years go by very quickly and as long as the hunger is still there, which it obviously is with Rubens, it's great that he still wants to race. I really hope he gets a drive next year, I hope he's racing next year because otherwise we've missed a really big party on Sunday night. And I think that's the same for a lot of drivers. You've got to make sure that you're ready to leave because if you leave too early and you try and come back, for a lot of us I don't think it will work. It's a difficult call, when you decide to retire, if it is your choice. It's not something you take lightly or chose lightly.

SV: First of all, I think it would be a real shame to lose Rubens for the future, because he belongs here, he has been here for a long time as you said, pretty crazy to imagine yourself to be around that long. In the end, I don't think it really matters how long you are in F1 but the really inspiring bit about Rubens, I really like him and the inspiring bit is that he loves what he does. I get the impression that he's happy when he wakes up in the morning and goes to the track, he doesn't think about his age. Sometimes you have people – I don't know, but from what I have seen, sometimes we've seen people of that age who are sad that times passes on but Rubens has no problem with his age. For him it's a number but it doesn't mean anything, he still feels young and fresh and he's still really funny and definitely a character. It would be a shame to lose him and I think for all of us, in a way, it's hard to imagine that we will be around for such a long time. Mentioning statistics, I heard a figure the other day – I don't know if it's true, I don't know how many races or grands prix that Rubens did now, I think 300 and something – but he has participated in more than half of the grands prix ever held [not true, 321 out of 857]. I don't know if that's right, I think so, so it's pretty impressive.

MW: Rubens has been an amazing man for our sport, for sure. He's been through incredibly difficult times, particularly 1994 and had some great moments as well. I think seeing him crying on the podium at Hockenheim after that amazing drive from the back of the grid is how we always love seeing Rubens and that's how he genuinely is anyway. Obviously this year he hasn't had a very competitive car but it would be great to have him around again next year. A few months ago I was in the gym and I bumped into Frank Bruno who was a boxer; he managed to fight Mike Tyson a few times and he's been through quite a few things, and he has been very honest with me the last few times I've gone up there and he said that the biggest fight you will have in your career is when you just try to stop, and that's how it is for all of us. The positive thing is – that's how competitors are – there's obviously some arrogance involved that we want to keep competing. But the hunger, desire, all that is still with Rubens so to answer your question, unlikely for me that I'm still here. I don't know what I would need to be. Like JB... I think I started two years after JB so ten or eleven years now, so for me to do another nine, I think I would look not very sexy at 45, so I think I will probably leave it at that.

Q: Jenson, you mentioned that you went for top speed; obviously you knew the weather forecast for tomorrow. What was the idea behind it; are you taking a gamble that it's dry tomorrow?

JB: Well, we couldn't go any slower, basically. We tried as much as we could but we couldn't go any slower. It's not a gamble that we've taken.

Q: While the weather forecast tomorrow is for rain, have you chosen the set-up of your car only for qualifying or also thinking about 71 laps for tomorrow?

SV: To be honest with you, I think a typical rain set-up doesn't exist any more. The big difference is that you put on different tyres. Car-wise, there isn't much you can do. Generally if it's wet, you put on more downforce if anything but car-wise, from the set-up point of view, it's more or less the same as in the dry.

JB: I think that the set-up we've taken this weekend is a set-up that helps us in the wet, and it's not been done on purpose, it's just the way it is for us around here. Yeah, as Seb said, there's not a big difference. You don't really have a massive change to the car for wet conditions but there are small things.

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## F1 Brazil Blog – The Brazilian Grand Prix as it happened

The weekend of lasts has reached its conclusion – we're staring down the barrel of the last race of the 2011 Formula 1 season, and the circus is gearing up for a few weeks free from airports, hotels, and suitcases.

The talk of the day is rain – will it or won't it? Outside it's baking hot and the air feels dry, but humidity is around 58 percent so there is a chance of rain. It looks remote right now, but I'm no meteorologist.

Track temperature is 47 degrees, with the air temperature at 25. But with the hot Brazilian sun beating down on your back it feels much, much hotter.

And they're off!

The two Red Bulls make a good start, but Alonso is really going for it. He tried to pass Button going into the first corner, and didn't make it, but the Ferrari driver did manage to squeeze Hamilton down into P5.

Hamilton and Massa are now running side by side – will we see a final 2011 collision from the magnetic pair?

Kovalainen got an excellent start; the Lotus driver was up to P15 by the end of the first lap. D'Ambrosio was another good starter at the back of the back – the Belgian racer started on the back row, and had jumped both HRTs by the end of the first lap.



Hamilton is struggling for pace; the McLaren driver was 1.2s down on Alonso by the end of lap 2.

DRS has been enabled.

Vettel has a 2.2s lead on Webber in P2; the double champion obviously intends to end the season in the dominating style to which he has become accustomed.

Alonso is 0.2s behind Button in P3; the Ferrari driver is lining up for a move over the course of the next few laps. Interlagos isn't bereft of overtaking zones, and opportunities abound.

By lap 5, the positions in the points are as follows: Vettel, Webber, Button, Alonso, Hamilton, Massa, Rosberg, Sutil, Senna, Schumacher. Qualifying order, with the exception of Alonso's pass on Hamilton on the first lap.

But further down the grid, overtaking manoeuvres abound. Sauber and Toro Rosso have all their drivers running together, and it's a four-way battle for a place in the points.

Lap 8, and Hamilton starts setting personal best sector times. He is now 0.7s behind Alonso, who is himself 0.7s behind Button, and there's the prospect of a three-way battle for P3.

DRS doesn't seem to be having much of an effect on this afternoon's racing, as was predicted by Button earlier in the weekend. The DRS zone is too short to have much of an impact on what is already a very short circuit.

Lap 10 and Schumacher dices with Senna, taking chunks off the Renault's front wing and destroying his left rear tyre in the process. It would have been a great pass, if only it had been clean. If, if...

The stewards have announced that the Senna-Schumacher incident is under investigation. On replays, it looks as though Senna was to blame - Schumacher got past cleanly, and Senna clipped the German driver's tyre on his attempted re-pass.

And the excitement kicks off in earnest, with Alonso making it past Button for P3 on lap 11.

Lap 12, and the order in the points is: Vettel, Webber, Alonso, Button, Hamilton, Massa, Rosberg, Sutil, Senna, di Resta.

Both Senna and Schumacher have now pitted following their altercation; Schumacher returned to the track in P24, while Senna emerged in P18.

Lap 15, and Vettel has a problem with second gear. Ayrton Senna won his first Brazilian Grand Prix with the car stuck in sixth gear, so it doesn't look as though Vettel's race is going to be over thanks to a sticky gearbox.

Button pits from P4 and returns to the track in P7, behind Rosberg. And the pitting begins in earnest, with Rosberg, Hamilton, and Barrichello all boxing on lap 17.

One lap later, and Vettel pits from the lead, handing control of the race over to teammate Webber. Di Resta pits at the end of lap 18, and is joined by Maldonado and Kovalainen. Pirelli are expecting a two-stop race if the weather conditions remain normal.

Senna has been issued with a drive-through for his part in the Schumacher incident.

Webber pits from the lead on lap 19, and Massa is leading the Brazilian Grand Prix in front of his home crowd.

Lap 20, and the first round of stops is out of the way for much of the pack. The order at the front is: Massa, Vettel, Webber, Alonso, Button, Hamilton, Kobayashi, Sutil, Perez, Alguersuari.

Button and Hamilton have both set fastest laps in quick succession on their fresh tyres; the McLarens might just be back in the fight for the podium this afternoon.

Mercedes are having a hellish afternoon - Schumacher's race is as good as over, and Rosberg keeps getting stuck in traffic and narrowly avoiding collisions.

Lap 21 and Vettel passes Massa to reclaim the lead.

Lap 22 and Massa pits, joined by Kobayashi and Alguersuari. Only Perez, Liuzzi, and Glock have yet to pit. And with that, Liuzzi and Glock pit together.

At the head of the pack, Vettel is pulling out his customary lead. The Red Bull driver is 2.6s ahead of his teammate and 7.3s ahead of Alonso in P3.

Glock has just retired from the race with a missing wheel, which went bouncing down the pit exit. It was already a bad weekend for Virgin, and the botched pit stop won't have helped matters at all.

Senna and Maldonado spend lap 26 battling for P16; the pair are slowed by their fight to the extent that Kovalainen is catching them at around 0.5s per lap. Senna's efforts are hampered by a front-wing endplate that went flying when the Renault driver bounced over a kerb.

Vettel is now dealing with serious gearbox issues - he's been short-shifting in second all race, but it looks as though he might be having bigger problems. Webber is catching his teammate at around 0.5s a lap.

Maldonado is out on lap 28, and the yellows are out in full force. The cause of his retirement hasn't been shown on replays yet – all I've seen is a gently smoking Williams at the side of the track, but it didn't look like enough smoke to be an engine failure.

Lap 31 and the yellows are still out for Maldonado's retirement.

Vettel concedes the lead to Webber as the German driver struggles to cope with a failing gearbox.

Lap 32, and Button pits for the second time, emerging behind Massa in P6. The British driver is on the harder compound, and will now run to the end of the race unless anything happens that necessitates a stop. Sutil also pits, and returns to the track in P9.

With the race approaching the half-way mark, the order in the points is now: Webber, Vettel, Alonso, Hamilton, Massa, Button, Rosberg, di Resta, Sutil, Kobayashi. All of the men in the top ten have pitted at least once.

Hamilton pits from P4, and emerges on track in P6 on the soft tyre.

Rain on the way, Vettel is told over the radio. We're on lap 36 of 71, which is as close to half-way as you're going to get.

Perez spins and continues at Turn 8, harming nothing but his tyres.

Alonso pitted for a third set of tyres: I don't think he's run on the harder compound yet this race, meaning a final pit stop will be required at some point.

Lap 38 and Webber pits from the lead, returning control of the race to the struggling Vettel. The Australian returns to the track in P2, just as P3 Alonso sets a personal best lap of the race.

Gearbox problems are the order of the day here at Interlagos – in addition to his short-shift problem, Vettel's gearbox is overheating. Senna has lost fourth gear, and Hamilton has as-yet unidentified gearbox issues.

Lap 41 and Massa and Hamilton are now running together, prompting fears that they'll have yet another collision. Massa has yet to pit for a second time, and is doing a good job keeping the fresher-shod Hamilton behind.

By lap 42, the order in the top ten is: Webber, Vettel, Alonso, Button, Massa, Hamilton, Rosberg, Sutil, Kobayashi, di Resta.

Lap 44, and Massa and Hamilton are still running together cleanly. Massa is driving aggressively, but not dangerously, and Hamilton is approaching with caution.

One lap later, and Hamilton pits. This time, the McLaren driver takes on the medium tyres that will see him through to the end of the race.

Webber and Vettel are trading fastest laps at the top of the timesheets, giving credibility to the cynical opinion that the world champion's gearbox issues were merely a face-saving way of gifting Webber with a race win this season and helping the Australian to secure second place in the drivers' standings.

Lap 47 and there's another mini exodus to the pits as teams prepare their drivers for the final run to the finish. With the stops complete, the order in the points is: Webber, Vettel, Alonso, Button, Massa, Hamilton, Rosberg, Sutil, Alguersuari, di Resta.

Lap 48, and Hamilton is out of the race. The McLaren driver's gearbox went into neutral, and there was nothing for the 2008 champion to do but watch as Massa sped off into the distance before pulling over and retiring.

Sutil and Rosberg start dicing on lap 49: it looks as though they are gearing up for a long battle.

Not that long – lap 51, and Sutil makes it past Rosberg on the back straight, pulling off what might be the only DRS-powered pass of the race.

Twenty laps remaining and the top ten is made up of: Webber, Vettel, Alonso, Button, Massa, Sutil, Rosberg, di Resta, Kobayashi, Petrov.

Lap 53 and Button pits, taking on the prime compound. McLaren manage to time the stop so that Button doesn't lose a position on track.

Lap 55 and Alonso pits from P3. Like Button, the Spanish racer manages to hold his place despite the stop.

Button goes purple on lap 56, but it's unlikely the McLaren driver will make an appearance on the podium this afternoon. Did he jinx himself by doing his farewells in yesterday's post-qualifying press conference?

Lap 58 and Webber pits from the lead, taking on the mediums for his final stint. The Australian driver returns to the track in P2, 10.6s behind his teammate and with 13 laps in which to pass Vettel and claim his first win of the season.

But Red Bull box Vettel on lap 59, and the lead is returned to Webber. Alonso is 22.704s behind P2 Vettel, with Button 0.6s behind in P4.

Lap 61 and the action on track is heating up, with Button and Alonso battling for the last spot on the podium. The two men are split by 0.2s, and with ten laps remaining of the 2011 season (and the Brazilian Grand Prix, but, you know...) there's all to play for.

Lap 62 and Button takes a look but Alonso defends cleanly. A second attempt is less successful for the Ferrari driver, who has been knocked back to P4 by the McLaren on a charge on the back straight.

The Scuderia have struggled for performance on the harder tyre compounds all season, so it's hardly surprising that they'd see more of the same as the year draws to a close.

By lap 63, Alonso is 1.4s down on Button, a clear indication of the Ferrari's relative loss of pace on the primes.

With eight laps remaining, the order in the top ten is: Webber, Vettel, Button, Alonso, Massa, Sutil, Rosberg, di Resta, Kobayashi, Petrov.

Button is now gaining on the ailing Vettel, who lost some time with an earlier run off track, but with seven laps to go and 10.2s to make up, it would take a blinder of a drive from the McLaren man to get onto the second step of the podium.

Lapping the slower cars on such a traffic-heavy circuit only makes the job more challenging – Interlagos is short enough that all cars up to P6 have now been lapped.

Liuzzi stopped on track at Turn 1, bringing out the yellows for a brief spell.

Five laps remaining, of both the race and the season. You could cut the tension in the press room with an uncooked sausage. Erm, maybe not – this race has been looking like a foregone conclusion for quite some time.

Four laps to go and Button is now 9s behind Vettel.

Three laps remaining and nothing new to report. Button has taken another second off the Red Bull, but he's hardly likely to make up 8s at this stage in the game.

Two laps left, and the only real news is DHL Fastest Lap Trophy winner Mark Webber goes purple.

It's the last lap of the 2011 season, and Webber can go home happy, although he might have to pay excess baggage fees for the ginormous trophy he'll be taking back to Europe.

Button has just stopped on track; presumably he's running out of fuel.

Brazilian Grand Prix results (unofficial)

1. Mark Webber (Red Bull)
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull)
3. Jenson Button (McLaren)
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari)
5. Felipe Massa (Ferrari)
6. Adrian Sutil (Force India)
7. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes)
8. Paul di Resta (Force India)
9. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber)
10. Vitaly Petrov (Renault)
11. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso)
12. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso)
13. Sergio Perez (Sauber)
14. Rubens Barrichello (Williams)
15. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes)
16. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus)
17. Bruno Senna (Renault)
18. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus)
19. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin)
20. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT)

Tonio Liuzzi (HRT) RET but classified

Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) RET

Pastor Maldonado (Williams) RET

Timo Glock (Virgin) RET

2011 Formula One World Drivers' Championship

1. Sebastian Vettel – 392 points
2. Jenson Button – 270 points
3. Mark Webber – 258 points
4. Fernando Alonso – 257 points
5. Lewis Hamilton – 227 points
6. Felipe Massa – 118 points
7. Nico Rosberg – 89 points
8. Michael Schumacher – 76 points
9. Adrian Sutil – 42 points
10. Vitaly Petrov – 37 points
11. Nick Heidfeld – 34 points
12. Kamui Kobayashi – 30 points

13. Paul di Resta – 27 points
14. Jaime Alguersuari – 26 points
15. Sebastien Buemi – 15 points
16. Sergio Perez – 14 points
17. Rubens Barrichello – 4 points
18. Bruno Senna – 2 points
19. Pastor Maldonado – 1 point
20. Pedro de la Rosa – 0 points
21. Jarno Trulli – 0 points
22. Heikki Kovalainen – 0 points
23. Tonio Liuzzi – 0 points
24. Jerome D'Ambrosio – 0 points
25. Timo Glock – 0 points
26. Narain Karthikeyan – 0 points
27. Daniel Ricciardo – 0 points
28. Karun Chandhok – 0 points

#### 2011 Formula One World Constructors' Championship

1. Red Bull Racing – 650 points
2. Vodafone McLaren Mercedes – 497 points
3. Scuderia Ferrari – 375 points
4. Mercedes – 165 points
5. Renault – 73 points
6. Force India – 69 points
7. Sauber – 44 points
8. Toro Rosso – 41 points
9. Williams – 5 points
10. Team Lotus – 0 points
11. HRT – 0 points
12. Marussia Virgin Racing – 0 points

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## F1 Brazil Blog – Sunday press conference in Interlagos

And that's it, folks – no more Formula 1 for 111 days, when the season reopens in Melbourne. All you've got to get you through the long, dark nights ahead is this final press conference from Interlagos.

Present were race winner Mark Webber (Red Bull), Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), and Jenson Button (McLaren).

Q. Mark, a win to take you into the winter, how are you feeling right now?

Mark WEBBER: Yeah, very good. Felt good all weekend to be honest. Seb did a great lap for pole yesterday but y'know today I had a little bit of the rub of the green. It would have been nice to have a race with Sebastian all the way through but I think he's had a little bit of a problem. It's a win that you'll take, for sure, because I've had enough bad luck and whatever you want to call it. That's the way that motorsport goes sometimes. So, very important win for me and the team again to finish on a high. I enjoyed the last few laps, to be honest. It's always nice when you finally... I could pit a bit later and cover people off and do all that sort of stuff, so that was good. I enjoyed doing the last few laps. That was a nice way to finish. I want to dedicate this win to a close friend of myself and my family, Bob Woods, who's a very ill man at the moment, so this win is for him.

Q. Sebastian, you compared yourself to Ayrton Senna here in 1991, nursing a gearbox problem for a lot of the race. Describe the struggle you had today to get to the chequered flag.

Sebastian VETTEL: The difference is he won! Yeah, it was a real shame because I had a very good start and then a good feeling. I was able to pull a gap straight away at the beginning of the race but very early got the call that we have to manage a gearbox problem. And yeah, I had to turn down the engine, short-shift and it was just getting worse throughout the race so I ended up using higher gears pretty much everywhere and that's why the comparison came into my head. Nevertheless, Mark drove a fantastic race, he deserved to win. I don't really like calling this bad luck. Surely, if something like this happens it's not in your hands. Still, I tried to do my best: tried to stay as close as I can; tried to keep the gap to Fernando for most of the race and then Jenson at the end. I think we had a pretty amazing season and I think it would be over the top being upset now. We take this second place and a one-two finish for the team, which is great and... yeah, it has been a phenomenal year and a very strong finish as well so now I think we are all ready for the winter and looking forward to the break to recharge our batteries and come back as strong as this year, hopefully, at the beginning of the season next year.

Q. Jenson, a fighting drive to the podium today after losing a place to Fernando Alonso earlier on.

Jenson BUTTON: Yeah, it was a difficult race for me on the softer of the two tyres. Fernando was very close out of turn five, so I covered the line into six. Normally it's an easy place to block but I looked at where he was and then when I looked forward again there was lots of debris on the inside. I think it was Michael's [Schumacher] tyre and a bit of front wing. As soon as I saw that I didn't want to drive through it. I couldn't pull to the left because Fernando was already there, so I had to back out of it and just pull in behind Alonso. That was a bit disappointing and a little bit unlucky – but I just didn't have the pace on the softer of the two tyres. We decided to put the harder tyre on for the last two stints and it worked pretty well for me, especially the last stint where I could hunt down Fernando. Ferrari, I think, struggle on the harder of the two tyres. I was able to make the pass but third was as high as we could get. I was qualifying every lap but I still couldn't catch Seb.

Q. Mark, it got a little tight between you and Fernando after the first round of stops. He took three-and-a-half seconds out of you there. Were you ever concerned at that point?

MW: Well I knew he gained something out of that first round of stops. Obviously I went a bit longer than I would have liked to because Seb had the priority obviously on the first stop, so I was out of juice on the tyres at that point so I knew I was going to lose if someone else was going a bit shorter. In the case it wasn't just to lose out a bit to Seb obviously I lost out a bit more to Fernando. I was a bit surprised at the margin, nearly three seconds or a bit over. He must have had a good stop and risked a little bit more here and there on in and out laps. I think I had a bit of traffic on my out lap as well, so, y'know, sometimes that's just the way it goes.

Q. Sebastian, sum up your feeling on what's been a pretty historic and dominant season for you.

SV: You have time? It's difficult to sum up. I think it was a great end of the season to finish with both cars on the podium, a one-two. Surely I would have loved to have finished the race in a normal way today but nevertheless I think we had a great, great season. Pretty incredible. Going into the season we thought we have a competitive car, maybe we can win some races but it has been phenomenal. The team has been faultless most of the time, so they've raised their level massively compared to the last two years. We seem to enjoy what we do. It's nice every weekend to come into the garage, see the boys with a smile on their faces, being happy with what they do. At the end of the day I don't think it really matters if you, I don't know, race Formula One cars, touring cars, sports or business, as long as you enjoy. I think one thing about us: you walk into the garage, I think even as a guest, and you get that feeling that we really love what we do. We are passionate and it doesn't matter if we have to work until late or work harder than others. We are ready to take that because we know how sweet it can taste at the end of the race, at the end of a grand prix or the end of the season. I'm really grateful to all the guys here on the track but more so even to the guys in the factory. All year long pushing to keep the car at the level that it is. McLaren were pushing massively and I think at the end we were pretty even. I don't think that one car really had the edge. Sometimes here, sometimes there, but all in all it was much tighter than probably it looked. Looking at the Championship score obviously it wasn't that tight but that shows how good we work on the operational side. More or less getting 100 per cent out of us as a package all the time. We can be really proud of that. I'm very proud to be part of that. This will be a year that we will look back to and always be very proud of.

Q. Jenson, you're confirmed second place in the Championship, a strong end to a strong season. Where do you and McLaren go from here?

JB: Into a long winter, ready for next year. I think at this moment in time we shouldn't think too much about next year this evening. We should celebrate what we've done this year. It hasn't been perfect, no, these guys have been quicker than us, more consistent than us, but all round it's been a reasonable season. We've grown as a team together and I think that we have a very good base going into 2012, so I'd just like to say a big thank you to everyone for 2011, thank you to all the guys involved in the team but also the other guys who've surrounded me for the last 12 years of my career. Big thanks to them and bring on 2012.

Q. Mark, finishing with you, obviously a dominant year for Red Bull but next year are you going to give the little fellow to your right [Vettel] a bit of a harder time, do you think?

MW: I think I can have a stronger season than this year. Clearly I started off poorly for lots of different reasons. You've got to look at all different areas to get at the highest level, and when the bar's high it's obviously not just Seb. I don't come here thinking about just him, we've got some class operators in other teams: JB, Lewis, Fernando... these boys are on the case. So, that's what makes it rewarding. It's a nice little tonic for me to finish the year, that's why those last few laps for me to feel the car and give the RB7 a bit of a send off for me because it hasn't had an amazing amount of memories for me but today was a very special day for me and I'll have that over the winter. Although some other nice drives as well but Seb clearly had a great year and so did the team, Renault, reliability. We were bomb-proof in many areas and that made it hard for the opposition. So that is important. And I'm looking forward to learning how to surf in the winter and backing off a bit, recharging and then coming back in February and concentrating on the job again.

Q. Well done, Mark. Is there a little bit of relief there, to have won?

MW: There is, yeah. Just the feeling is nice. Obviously in motor sport you take them as they come. It was actually brewing into a reasonable little battle with Seb and I. The pace wasn't too bad at the end of my stints. I'm not exactly sure when he started to have a few little issues, but obviously I can only control what I'm doing, so I kept pushing and then really it was down to then covering off whatever Fernando might be able to do, and that obviously turned out to be possible and then we spread the race out, then obviously made sure we loaded the tyres correctly to get to the flag. Yes, with ten laps to go, I started to think 'OK, it's nice to finish the year with a win, nice to finish with the car feeling good underneath you, nice to have my second victory here in Brazil - it's always been a nice little track for me, a little classic.' It's been a pretty good year but not like 2010 obviously, so all the guys on my car, Gav and Ciaron in particular, have worked their nuts off all year so it's been good, and I'm happy to get the win today.

Q. And you were talking about those last ten laps: certainly the last three were all fastest laps of the race.

MW: Yeah, it was getting a bit frustrating because I kept pinching the front a little bit into turn eight. On the last lap I got it a little bit better otherwise I was probably going to bail a bit earlier, but I kept pushing pretty hard. Yeah, that's what it's about, isn't it, pushing yourself and backing yourself and having a crack. I was only racing myself at that point so it was a nice little feeling, as I say, to have the car working well underneath me. As I said, this winter a close family friend of ours has been in very very ill health so I dedicate this win to him.

Q. What was the team saying to you about Sebastian's problems?

MW: It came pretty quickly. I thought he was either in tyre trouble way earlier than he should be or no KERS or something was going on, because one thing Seb doesn't do is forget how to drive from one lap to the other. When I started to take a pretty big chunk out of him per lap, I thought something might have been going down and then Ciaron informed me that he had a gearbox problem and I think I could smell it a little bit when I got close, and there was also a little bit of fluid. Normally, that's a nice feeling... OK, it was mixed obviously for me, because there was the chance to get the win but I know how hard the guys worked on Seb's gearbox last night because it wasn't completely smooth. They got it together but it turned out, obviously, in the end that something's let them down. I thought that with that far to go in the race he obviously would not finish but the car still got home and that's it.

Q. When exactly did the problem occur, Sebastian. Was it lap 13 when you started to lose time to Mark? Was it before the stop or after?

SV: Yeah, it was already at the end of the first stint. It was during the first stint, at some stage, that I got the message 'we have a gearbox issue'. It sounded pretty strong, pretty severe, so I turned down the engine and then immediately started to short shift and it just kept getting worse. I got through the first pit stop and obviously gained a little bit on Mark, because I came in a lap earlier but then at some stage I realised that it was still pretty early in the race, our main priority is to finish the race and Mark would be catching up and the most important thing would be to help the team to win the race. I tried to be very clear on the radio that I cannot keep first position with the pace that we were going or whatever they asked me to do, what was required to manage the gearbox and then I told them 'OK, but obviously advise Mark' or 'tell Mark that I would let him through', to give him the

chance to keep pushing, don't lose any time getting past me because at that stage I didn't know whether I would see the chequered flag or not. So I'm really happy to be here, but obviously it was a little bit of a shame. I then just kept losing more and more time towards the end, so I had to be more and more conservative. At some stage I said that 'I feel like Senna in 1991 when he had to manage the gearbox problem around here'. Obviously it was totally different for him, he was Brazilian and he still managed to win the race. I was forced to push in areas where I was allowed to, in the corners, but as soon as I went on the straight, I obviously had to shift earlier. I don't know if you have walked the track or have run the track, but getting out of the last corner is pretty steep so there was no chance to really ... I tried to stay with Mark as well as I could, in case the problem solved itself and we could go again, but in the end I was just trying to keep the gap. When I heard that Jenson was going on P2 I wasn't very happy because I've heard that a couple of times, when he was coming through at the end of the race, but this time we had enough pace in hand to keep him behind and enough of a gap, so that was fine, but all in all, as I said earlier, I'm very happy. It would be wrong to complain today, it's an amazing result for the team to finish first and second. Mark drove a very good race and had very strong pace, so I'm not sitting here and saying if ... if ... if this and that, then I would have won. The fact is that he won the race, he deserved to. As I said, we've had an incredible year, the team, myself, so I'm not really wanting to complain.

Q. We did see the fairly rare sight of you off the circuit as well.

SV: Yeah, I was a bit surprised when I got onto the primes and warm-up was a bit poor and then I think I just got caught out with the traffic ahead and lost too much at the front with a little bit of warmup. It's quite tricky, the exit kerb of turn four, because it's off-camber and then it pulls you to the exit or off-track and then I said 'OK, there's no point' so I tried to open, give the car enough space and come back easy on the circuit before I tried to do something stupid, so that was that.

Q. Jenson, was it planned that both of you would come in fairly early? You were about the first and second to pit.

JB: No, I pitted earlier than expected. I really struggled on the tyre that I've been struggling with all weekend and strangely, I couldn't look after the tyre, I really struggled with degradation, especially at the rear end, which was a little bit of a shock. But for me, the problem in the first stint was Fernando, he pushed me very hard, and when someone's doing that, you have to drive a little bit harder, so I was pushing the tyres pretty hard. And then Fernando got the run on me out of turn five, got alongside me and I picked the wrong line, because that lap is when Michael had his puncture and there was rubber all down the inside (of the track) and I didn't know what it was, whether it was part of a car, so I couldn't risk just driving straight through it, and I couldn't pull to the left because Fernando was there, so I had to back off early and pull in behind. I would say he was gifted the position quite easily. And then I pitted early because I couldn't look after the tyres, so that was the issue, put a second set on, exactly the same thing happened and then we went to the prime tyre where the pace was much better, the car felt more consistent and the good thing was that we could get a good feeling on that tyre for the last stint, when I stuck on some new primes and I was able to hunt down Fernando. It was definitely the right call. I think we need to look at the reasons why I couldn't look after that tyre because it's quite unusual, but all in all, it ended well and I had a lot of fun fighting with Fernando today.

Q. At one point you were on the prime and Lewis was on the option and you were still lapping quicker than he was.

JB: Yes. I don't know, I don't know if it was just our car with that tyre, I don't know. For me, we made the right call in the end, but we just didn't have the pace to fight these two today, but I'm happy to be on the podium. It's nice to get my 12th podium this year. As I said before, it's been a good year, it's not been a perfect year but it's been a good year and we can really take a lot from this season, a lot of positives, sort out a few little issues that we had with reliability and I think we will be looking pretty good. I think for us the main thing is to have a strong winter - we're not able to drive the car - but have a strong winter at the factory and come out fighting at the first test not at the first race. But no, a big thank you to the guys. I think we've really grown as a team this year, I feel a big part of the family of Vodafone McLaren Mercedes. They might not look like it from the outside but they do have a lot of passion and they will do anything to win.

Q. Mark and Sebastian: we also heard that Sebastian had gear problems and suddenly, very hard gear problems. Then we started following your lap times. We should expect you to lose time in sector two maybe, when you used the low gears which your mechanics suggested you use. But you didn't lose time there and you could maintain the pace with Mark and you also finished very close to him. We had the impression at some times, I'm sorry to say, that it might not be true.

SV: I can tell you that I had a gearbox problem and I was forced to ... I didn't like the message but I had no choice. Either you finish the race or you don't. As I said, I turned down the engine, I felt happy in the car and I felt more and more able to understand the tyres after the first stint and keep the pace reasonably well, so I tried to stay as close as I could with Mark and then push where I was allowed to which was in the corners, not so much as soon as I started feeling the throttle, because I was forced to use high gears and upshift earlier. At the beginning, I think I was able to keep reasonably close, especially in the second sector. Of course, I lost - not traction - but then acceleration but then the straights are relatively short in the second sector. But then if you compare the last sector, for instance, which has only one corner, and then it's killing uphill when you have to upshift early. At some stage I got the message 'we need to save the gearbox and slow down' but I told them that I'm aware and I wasn't pushing hard. Yeah, I think we had good pace in the car and we were quite quick on the soft tyres at the end. Obviously it was more about getting the car to the chequered flag, but you can believe me, if I had the choice, I would have gone for the racing option.

MW: Well, I didn't drive Seb's car. All I can do is what I can do. When I first got past Seb, obviously, I realised that the race was not over for him, but I thought, OK, I'm maybe managing the race with the other guys, because problems normally only get worse. So my rhythm wasn't only judging myself against Seb at that point. If I pushed, obviously, most of the time it was half a second per lap or four tenths, and then some laps it would be the same, mainly because I was not completely disciplined myself because I knew I could give the tyre a bit of a chance to breathe a bit more and make the stints a bit longer, and keep the gap at whatever it was. Some laps I could push, obviously, and give the tyres a bit more of a chance when I had less fuel and stuff like that. I've agreed with you many times this year, but not this time.

JB: Viewing this from the outside, I can say whatever I wanted, but as a driver you learn to adapt to a situation. If you're told to save fuel, if you're told to save brakes, you learn to adapt and you drive in a different manner. Many times this year we've saved fuel and you can pretty much match a lap time after five or six laps, because you adapt to it and you drive in a different way. That's what we're paid to do.

Q. Seb, at what time did you think you might take all risks to catch Mark or did you prefer to save second place?

SV: It's never nice to finish second when you know you have a car or a package good enough to fight for victory. But yeah, very early in the race I got the message and then, as I said, the main priority was to make sure that at least if I went out, Mark could carry on and win the race. I didn't want to hold him up, so I gave way and after that, more and more, I was forced to slow down and in the end, I was going round and not using second gear, which around here, in the slow speed corners, is not a help. Sure, I lost time, but in the end I don't want to sit here complaining. As the team told me and as I understood, the most important thing was to finish the race and it's great to be on the podium here. I think the people here at Interlagos are very passionate about racing, the drivers' parade is very nice. When we stand on the truck and go around the lap, there are so many people cheering for what we do. They get excited for what we do a little bit later on on the same day. It's great to be part of that and then going into the track, you never know what's going to happen, so if you see the chequered flag and then stand on the podium, get a trophy, it's not a bad day.

Q. Mark, your season started off with momentum, quite bumpy; thing smoothed out, pace got better. How much will this win kickstart the momentum for next year and give you a flying start?

MW: Well, Dan, even if the win didn't come today, I think there were some positive signs in the last three or four events. To be honest, the team knows there's been some races where it's been a reasonable pace for me, considering some of the things that have been going on, whether that's damage to the car or bits and bobs here and there. That's not an excuse, it's just what happened. Sometimes my pace on Sundays has definitely been better than it was at the start of the year so there were some indications to get more positive. Today was a good Grand Prix for me, the pace was good, all that sort of stuff. Obviously if Seb... we're not sure how it would have turned out but maybe I wouldn't have finished too far behind, maybe a little bit ahead. Who knows how it would have worked out if he made a mistake or whatever, or if I made a mistake? We can't judge what would have happened in the rest of today's Brazilian Grand Prix but it's not a bad thing to finish the year like this. One of the most important things is that I've started to feel the car a little bit better, in terms of direction and working better with the guys and what we need to do, which happened a while ago, not just at this race but starting to get a bit more of an understanding, which, together, has actually helped both of us again, because we've got the most out of the car and that's been a success for the team as well. Yeah, happy for the win mate, that's for sure.

Q. This is for all three of you. We saw quite a high number of gearbox problems in the course of the race. I was wondering, do you guys think that's mechanical fatigue at the end of the year or the particular challenges of Interlagos?

MW: I think it's mechanic fatigue maybe? Caipirinhas? You never know. It's been a long year, maybe a bit of a coincidence. Turn two is pretty hard, inside, outside with the rear end of the car there. The gearboxes these days are pretty reliable. They've got to do a lot of events. I don't know in terms of the cycles of where people were with their boxes but I think because we've had a couple of high-profile ones today - obviously one with Lewis and Seb who got home - that's the way it's been but it's unusual to have retirements these days. Normally the cars are like a computer game: they just keep going round. The drivers drive them. We had a few stoppages today.

SV: I'm not sure. My gearbox was brand new, so it was the first race. Maybe we should have kept the old one, I don't know. I think yes, the circuit is pretty rough but on the other hand there are places where it's way worse. Street circuits where you use low gears all the time, you do very short ratios in the car so you have a lot of changing gear... Fatigue would be a bit odd after only one race, not even that.

Q. Question for Mark and another for Jenson. Mark, you had it seems this time you had a quite normal start, you hadn't any problem and sometime you had a gap of up to three seconds to Sebastian. Do you think under normal conditions you'd have been able to fight him on the race? And to Jenson, do you think that without that stuff with the exhausts at the start of the year, the pre-season where the team needed to revamp the rear part of the car, you should be able to be here still fighting for the Championship - and do you think having the right things in the right place next year, you'll be able to make a better year and fight Red Bull?

MW: As you say, the gap was in the three-second window. Be nice to be a bit less but that's what it was at that point. When you're within that margin it can be the drop of a wheel nut, it can be a small lapse of concentration from Seb and you're there. So, it's impossible to say how the rest of the race would have gone. Sebastian was very strong in qualifying and very strong at the start of the stints and I felt I was a bit more comfortable at the end of the stints, which was probably one of the first times this year, to be honest. Difficult to say mate, but it would have been a very tough race to challenge Seb hard but we never know.

JB: I don't think we can take anything away from Seb and Red Bull this year. I think they've done a phenomenal job and it's wrong to say we could have fought them if we had a better winter. We don't know that. What we do know is that we didn't have a very good winter. The guys did a great job of turning it around for the first race. Our performance was pretty good but obviously you lose a lot of preparation work in terms of reliability but also in terms of set-up and moving forward in terms of aerodynamics and also the blown diffuser. It wasn't an easy start of the season but it's just the way it is. These guys had a better start to the season. For next year? We hope we have a winter, basically, of testing, whereas this winter we didn't. We didn't really do any set-up work because of the issues that we had. Hopefully we can start the year off well in testing and not do all of our set-up work at the first race. Actually do something over the winter tests. That's the aim for 2012. And I hope we can achieve that.

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