

Fl Abu Dhabi Grand Prix – Thursday press conference

It's the final countdown to the end of the season, and all eyes at the Thursday press conference at Yas Marina Circuit were looking to the future.

Present were Jenson Button (McLaren), Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber), Felipe Massa (Ferrari), Vitaly Petrov (Caterham), Charles Pic (Marussia), and Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso).

Vitaly, like a number of drivers here today whom we'll all be talking to about the same subject, the future is not decided for you. What are your feelings about that, what's happening and when are we likely to hear about it?

Vitaly PETROV: Bob, I think you'll know what I mean when I answer this question. Last time you asked Nico [Hulkenberg] the same question so, I think I will answer the same: I'll focus on this year trying to do the best race to race. My management is doing the work and that's it.

What about the recent performances? The car seems to be going better. Are you happy with that? You've been matching Heikki pretty much if not finishing ahead of him.

VP: I'm working quite hard to beat him every race and I have a goal. Look like we now understand much more the car and the set-up. We're very excited for this weekend because we bring quite a big package of updates, so we'll need to test a lot of things in P1, P2 and P3 – probably even in quali. We're looking forward to understanding them, as those updates will probably be on next year's car as well. So I'm really excited to see how they are because in the last few months we bring some updates but we didn't bring in... towards being quicker, you know. So this is why this test is quite important for us.

Daniel, the news came out a couple of days ago that you're staying with the team. I guess everybody thought that was automatic but it doesn't seem that way.

Daniel RICCIARDO: I guess until something's signed and sealed, you always keep a bit reserved, so it's nice to get confirmation that I'll be back with Toro Rosso next year. Yeah, it's good to now focus on the last few races and it's good to know we've got that behind us for next season. There are some big expectations there have been some big changes throughout this year and they'll be in full effect next year essentially. It's been a little bit too late to make a huge difference this year but we're definitely expecting good things for next year and I'll have a bit more experience behind me, which will help as well.

Talking about improvements in the car, will there be improvements here?

DR: We hope so. We're not bringing any big updates this weekend, nothing to brag about. We've been pretty good since the summer break, we've definitely been more consistent in compiling the points more regularly. Unfortunately, in India it wasn't the case, but prior to that we've been pretty good. This weekend we'll see what happens. Quite a few sponsors and guests here this weekend, so we'll do our best to impress them all.

Charles, also a question about the future. What is there in the pipeline for you?

Charles PIC: I don't know, there are still three races to go and I want to be focused on this. Of course we are asking about next year but nothing is done, so I will have to wait.

Are there updates coming for the car here?

CP: No. I think from Singapore we made a step and we are much closer to Caterham, our direct competitor and our objective is to try to keep this 10th position.

Kamui, again, another future question for you, what's happening with you?

Kamui KOBAYASHI: Hi everyone. I have the same thing as the guys – we have to work hard to get next year's seat. I think I'm pretty confident to deserve a Formula One seat but for sure we definitely need to focus for these last three races. So, let's see. We don't have so many seats [available] either, so this is also a big question, so I think I try to focus on the results and also negotiate with other teams or the same team, I don't know.

And this is a circuit where you scored your first World Championship points, so it must be one that you remember.

KK: Yes, definitely. I have a good memory here. Abu Dhabi is one of my good memories of track, and especially I think like Toyota's race is something special for me and at the same time scoring first points here. Of course I think we had different cars and I think had to take a different approach. But the last two years experiencing it with the same team I have quite a positive feeling for here.

Felipe, we haven't spoken to you since you were decided for 2013 for Ferrari. It must be a relief to be signed.

Felipe MASSA: Yes, I think it's very nice to stay with Ferrari after a long time now. Going to the eighth championship for Ferrari, not counting even when I signed the contract when I was a young driver. Not so young anymore but still a young driver, before Formula One, when I signed a contract for Ferrari. It's a long time now. It's very nice, and really looking forward to finish well this end of the Championship but also to concentrate 100 per cent for different and very competitive 2013 as well.

The race results have been getting better for you over the last few races. Has that been because the car has come towards you with the development?

FM: A little bit, yes, but also I think, y'know, I would say maybe I had a better direction for the second part of the season. I had good races before, for example the pace was very good in the race, the possibility to score good points and finish in the points was high but always something was happening with some race and I couldn't put it together. I would say after August everything was much more in the right direction. Nothing was

happening during the race: the position on the start was better: so I think you know, this helps a lot. Also my mind, I mean I put it on my mind that if it's OK, it's OK, if it's not OK, is not OK and that's fine. I try to enjoy, like I always did in my career, going in the car, trying to have fun, enjoy and I think when you do that, you can put the best possible and make the car as quick as possible and the result is there.

Jenson, you've had three third places here. Is it a track that's going to suit the McLaren this year?

Jenson BUTTON: I really don't know! I think as you've seen in the last few races, Red Bull, the Ferrari and our car have been relatively strong. Maybe Ferrari and us not quite as strong as the Red Bulls but this is a very different type of circuit to India. It's not front-limited like India was, I think the rear is going to be the limitation. So, we will see. It is going to be very competitive, I think. And that's just those three teams: I think you'll also have a couple of other teams that we've seen be strong on occasions. Especially the latter part of the season, that we'll see at the front fighting as well.

I don't know if you've been out on the circuit but they've added some kerbs, quite a few kerbs around the circuit.

JB: I haven't, no, I'm going to head out this evening. This is a fun circuit to drive. It's a difficult circuit to overtake on but it's fun to drive and it's good that they've put bigger kerbs in, I think. Last year, if you saw the footage, we were using probably more of the circuit than we should be because there isn't a limit in terms of a big kerb to stop you from going over the white lines. Now there are bigger kerbs, I think it's a good thing: it keeps us all on the circuit, keeps us in the right place between the white lines. Now we have to see what the kerb ride is like because obviously it's different to what it was last year.

Vitaly and Kamui, since nobody in big business in Russia and Japan are interested in following you or supporting you next year, if it's like this, would you consider looking for a foreign sponsor, a big international company, not specially Russian or Japanese?

VP: I don't think it's my job to do it, because I don't understand too much about it. My management must do that, and I hope for that, so I don't know what to say.

KK: I think it's interesting, but after the race at Suzuka this year, since then I think Japan is more interested in motor sport, especially Formula One. I think if I had a little bit more time I could find more sponsoring from Japan. This is what I'm looking for. After Suzuka, we definitely had a lot of contact from a couple of companies. It's very difficult to judge what I have to say, because I'm not deciding the team and I don't know the budget. I have no idea. This is a very difficult moment, but at the moment I could find quite a lot of sponsors and we definitely see a lot of good signs after the Suzuka result. It's very important to get international but also my preference is if I could bring some sponsoring from Japan, to get more popular in Japan. I think this is what I'm really focusing on at the moment.

Jenson, what is Abu Dhabi to you? Is it just another day at the office, or is there something special about the place?

JB: I haven't actually spent much time in Abu Dhabi. The only time I've actually been in Abu Dhabi was for a party, post-Grand Prix. Apart from that, I've never actually been to Abu Dhabi. I've only stayed at the hotels on the outskirts. I've obviously been to the circuit. The facilities out here are phenomenal, probably the best in the world. I think for the people watching and the people watching on TV, it looks like a spectacular race. I think everything's done very well here. It's a good Grand Prix, not a bad Grand Prix for me over the last three years. I like coming here, it's an enjoyable Grand Prix for me but as I said, I haven't been here, I've been down the road in Dubai for the last three days.

How was the party?

JB: I can't remember. It must mean it was good.

Jenson, just been speaking to Sergio earlier and he's mentioned that he's already had a couple of conversations with you about McLaren, what it's going to be like joining next season. I was just wondering about the ten year age gap between you two, whether you feel like an older brother to him in some respects?

FM: Getting older.

JB: I don't actually think I'm that old. I was surprised when I was told he was 22-years old. It seems like he's been around for a lot longer than that. But no, I don't feel like an older brother, no. It's important to work closely with your teammate. I think that when he's in the team he will probably learn a lot from someone who is older, with more experience, which is me but I still think that when you're an older driver you can still learn from a younger teammate, to bring fresh ideas to the table. But as an old brother? No, I definitely don't feel like that.

What do you expect to learn from him?

JB: I don't know yet. We'll see.

Jenson, just following up on Parksey's question: how much has Lewis learned from you, given that the age gap there is a few years as well?

JB: That's a great question. I don't know. I think you will have to ask him that. You'll get a good answer, I'm sure, on that one.

Charles, we have heard today that Marussia have confirmed that they have got financial difficulties. We know that there are possibilities of new investors in the team. Does this mean that you are broadening your discussions with other teams for a drive next year?

CP: Actually, I try to be focused on my job and for the moment, my job is to give my best for the three last races. After we will see what's open for next year. We are speaking with some team but I think it's too early to say anything. Thank you.

Jenson, following up on Perez: what does he bring to the team? You're losing Lewis, does he make the team better? From what you've seen in his driving, how is he different from Lewis?

JB: Obviously it's very difficult to know what he brings to the team, because he's not there yet. With Lewis leaving, obviously the team loses a very fast driver, a guy that's achieved a lot with the team, wins and obviously a World Championship - the last guy to win a World Championship for the team. It is a big loss but things change and you learn to move on and adapt. It's definitely not the end of two strong drivers at McLaren. I think Sergio will be fast but I really don't know. He's obviously unknown in a McLaren, because he's not there yet. But it's a great opportunity for Checo and I'm sure he will take it with both hands.

Jenson, do you think that Lewis is able to make a Mercedes car quicker and better next year?

JB: I really don't know. I think the first year with a new team is always a little bit tricky. It's a new experience for Lewis. I'm sure he's excited about it. I really don't know. He's as quick as they come but sometimes it's not that easy to win Grand Prix and to build a team around you and also to help a team achieve great results.

For all you: between Fernando and Sebastian, which is the driver who deserves the title the most, do you think?

VP: I think it's clear, for me, at the moment, today, that the Red Bull car has a big advantage compared to Ferrari. This year, Alonso did a fantastic job from the beginning; he's had a few crashes but all of us know that Ferrari is not on the same pace as Red Bull. It will be difficult for Ferrari but I think Ferrari also has the passion to win and they bring a lot of updates maybe for this weekend or another weekend. I really don't know, but what I can see at the moment is that Red Bull is the quicker car. That's it.

DR: I think he said that quite well. I think this season has been very hard to judge. It's been a very exciting season. I think anything can happen, so even if it is the case that the package of Vettel himself and the car is better at this stage, it doesn't confirm a World Championship. You have to get it done on Sunday and there are still three Sundays to go. Things can happen. I think they both have had their little bit of bad luck this season. I think, for now, they're going to go head-to-toe but yeah, we'll see. Obviously Red Bull's been the car to beat for the last four races or so, but I think the pace is always changing, and Ferrari's obviously got some good experience and some good people behind them, so I'm sure a surprise is not impossible either. See what happens, it's exciting. I would like to be part of it.

CP: Yes, I think maybe Sebastian is in a little bit better position than Fernando right now. From the last few races, they had a little advantage but I think it's still quite open and there are three races left. The championship is still quite close so anything can happen.

KK: For sure, I think Red Bull has the greater advantage but I think the last three races will be quite difficult to judge. At the moment, I think Sebastian has the greater chance but if there's something... if Sebastian misses one race, then I think there is a lot of chance for Fernando. We will see. But at the moment I think Sebastian has more chance.

FM: Well, I think both drivers have had a fantastic championship. I think Fernando did an incredible job up to now, Sebastian as well, especially in the second part of the championship, so I think we are not talking about one guy who has many victories and the other one not. I think we are talking about two drivers one of which will win and who we will say deserved it. But anyway, I hope Fernando will win.

JB: It's a very difficult one to answer. As Felipe said, they have both done a fantastic job this year. You would say that throughout the season, Fernando has been the more consistent. In the last few races, yeah, it's been a great job by Red Bull, but also a great job by Sebastian. He's been given the equipment and he's delivered. You don't win Grands Prix on your own, and you don't win championships on your own, so whoever comes out on top is the driver and the team that deserves to win it.

Kamui, you just said that you were pretty confident that you're going to get a seat next year. Sauber has just confirmed Nico Hulkenberg and postponed the decision or at least the announcement about the second driver, so I wonder what it is that makes you confident that you're going to get the seat?

KK: It's a feeling. I have nothing, you know, but just feeling. If I can explain something I think it's better but unfortunately not. I think we have to see. I think we still have the last three races and if we have some good results in the last three races maybe something can happen. I believe in that and try to focus. But the feeling for next year is just... feeling.

Felipe, I know last year you took part in a charity football match when you were in Abu Dhabi. Is that something you will be trying to do again this year, or do you see Abu Dhabi as more than just another day at the office?

FM: I think Abu Dhabi is growing a lot. Every year when you come here you see so many new things so I think that's very nice. I had a nice football match last year. This year we didn't have it but anyway I think it's really a nice place to come: you have nice restaurants, great hotels and everything. It's beautiful. As Jenson says, it's one of the most incredible races, even to watch. I really enjoying coming here. Hopefully we can have a good race as well, another great race for the people.

Kamui, when you first came into Formula One you had about two or three races to make an impression and you did it and you secured your future. Do you feel that these next three races are a similar situation, that you could possibly change things in the last three races and secure your future?

KK: Of course, I think this is a good opportunity like three years ago, but this year I have a little bit different feeling. I didn't know three years ago that Toyota would leave Formula One, so just to give myself a good result, just driving for the same team. At the same time, I have to negotiate and do everything, a good result is very important, but this year it seems there are not many seats left so I think we have to move quite quickly as well.

F1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix – F1 report

It's a Friday, which means the usual caveat applies: anyone who chooses to read too much into the times set in either session does so at their own risk.

Sure, the top ten was littered with the expected faces from the usual teams, in an order not too dissimilar to that seen last week in India, but McLaren's apparent dominance might yet be upset by those pesky Red Bulls, who always seem to find an extra half a second between the sofa cushions just when they need it most.

That being said, Lewis Hamilton has had a consistently strong record at the Yas Marina Circuit, taking pole in 2009 before retiring with brake failure: taking P2 in both qualifying and the race in 2010; and winning last year, so the McLaren driver's aptitude for this particular track should not be discounted.

But anyone who thinks that Sebastian Vettel will not pose a threat to Hamilton's hopes this weekend had another think coming: Vettel is a threat to every driver at every circuit.

F1 saw a host of Friday drivers take their turn behind the wheel: Jules Bianchi took over Paul di Resta's car, Max Chilton replaced Charles Pic, Ma Qing Hua gave Narain Karthikeyan the morning off, and Giedo van der Garde would have had a go in place of Vitaly Petrov had his Caterham not come down with a slight case of engine failure.

The Dutch reserve driver completed only three laps of the track before the team changed the exhaust system on the car and discovered that the machine was no longer capable of leaving the garage – depending on who you talked to the issue came down to either power or wiring, both of which seem fairly linked to me...

For Ferrari, it was a typical Friday morning spent evaluating new components. But with only three races remaining and Fernando Alonso's

championship chances diminishing with every Vettel victory, the Scuderia are becoming increasingly desperate. The most recent raft of upgrades – which includes a new front wing and revised bargeboards – is designed to give the team more aerodynamic consistency, but didn't seem to offer much in terms of pure pace.

And pace is what Alonso needs if he is to best Vettel – talented though the Spanish driver might be, there is only so much he can do when faced with an opponent in such superior equipment.

FP1 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.43.285s [21 laps]
2. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.43.618s [19 laps]
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.44.050s [23 laps]
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.44.366s [21 laps]
5. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.44.542s [22 laps]
6. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.44.694s [23 laps]
7. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.45.115s [26 laps]
8. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.45.194s [19 laps]
9. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1.45.347s [25 laps]
10. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1.45.422s [15 laps]
11. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.45.567s [24 laps]
12. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1.45.587s [20 laps]
13. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.45.722s [20 laps]
14. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1.45.743s [20 laps]
15. Jules Bianchi (Force India) 1.45.769s [22 laps]
16. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1.45.811s [22 laps]
17. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1.46.649s [24 laps]
18. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1.46.708s [26 laps]
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Caterham) 1.47.418s [23 laps]
20. Timo Glock (Marussia) 1.47.891s [21 laps]
21. Pedro de la Rosa (HRT) 1.48.354s [22 laps]
22. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1.48.887s [22 laps]
23. Ma Qing Hua (HRT) 1.50.487s [20 laps]
24. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) NO TIME SET [3 laps]

F1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix – FP2 report

Quelle surprise – Red Bull found a few extra tenths and ended Friday top of the charts. Who woulda thunk it?

Sebastian Vettel was the fastest man around Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina Circuit during FP2, showing all and sundry just why the young German is in line to become Formula One's youngest triple world champion. But the nine decade advantage the RB8 has demonstrated at some circuits was not in evidence today, which is why Red Bull insist they're not entirely happy with their car as it stands.

Vettel headed up a veritable Noah's Ark of drivers: the top ten featured both Red Bulls, both McLarens, both Lotuses (Loti?), both Ferraris, a Williams, and a Sauber, with the second Williams in P11. The drivers were marching two by two, hurrah, hurrah...

When all was said and done, the second free practice session was dry in more than just climate – there were no incidents worth noting, and a few minor spins that saw no damage to the cars and no reason for any mechanics to fear a long night of work ahead.

With the track improving lap by lap, the times set in FP2 were significantly faster than those on offer in the morning session – that extra rubber laid down by the V8 Supercars provided enough extra grip that the improvements were little short of inevitable.

Fernando Alonso doesn't seem to have the single lap speed he needs to get an advantage over the Red Bulls in qualifying, so Ferrari's hopes for the weekend will depend heavily on the Spanish racer's ability to work his way past the Red Bulls at the start on Sunday – a difficult task in any circumstances, but an additional challenge in Abu Dhabi, where overtaking is something of a challenge.

It was at this circuit in 2010 that Alonso saw his championship chances slip away behind the Renault of Vitaly Petrov, and a similar Sunday spent stuck in traffic will hand the drivers' title to Vettel should the latter driver not suffer the sort of reliability issues that rarely seem to strike the Red Bulls.

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.41.751s [34 laps]
2. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.41.919s [34 laps]
3. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.42.412s [36 laps]
4. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.42.466s [21 laps]
5. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1.42.500s [34 laps]
6. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1.42.532s [28 laps]
7. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.42.587s [31 laps]
8. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.42.823s [33 laps]
9. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.42.998s [37 laps]

10. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1.43.106s [36 laps]
 11. Bruno Senna (Williams) 1.43.191s [34 laps]
 12. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.43.200s [36 laps]
 13. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1.43.255s [34 laps]
 14. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.43.267s [32 laps]
 15. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1.43.578s [34 laps]
 16. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.43.689s [32 laps]
 17. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1.44.260s [27 laps]
 18. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1.45.073s [19 laps]
 19. Vitaly Petrov (Caterham) 1.45.245s [36 laps]
 20. Heikki Kovalainen (Caterham) 1.45.782s [33 laps]
 21. Timo Glock (Marussia) 1.46.589s [36 laps]
 22. Charles Pic (Marussia) 1.46.671s [32 laps]
 23. Pedro de la Rosa (HRT) 1.46.707s [26 laps]
 24. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1.47.406s [35 laps]
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F1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix – Friday press conference

It was a short and sweet senior team personnel press conference in Abu Dhabi this evening, with little on the agenda.

Present were Ross Brawn (Mercedes), Toni Cuquerella (HRT), Pat Fry (Ferrari), Andy Green (Force India), and Remi Taffin (Renault Sport F1).

A question to you all about engines at this stage. It gets towards the sharp engine of the season and people are running out of mileage on their engines. Perhaps you could give us an update on how you are with engines at this stage?

Andrew GREEN: We're completely to plan. As we worked it out from race one, so no issues for us at the moment.

Antonio?

Toni CUQUERELLA: Yes, same for us. We're going to start this race, both cars with the last engine and it's all according to plan as we planned in the winter.

Pat?

Pat FRY: Yes, exactly the same really. It's going to plan. I think we have one engine left to play but touch wood it should be fine.

Ross?

Ross BRAUN: As with everyone else, you manage it through the whole season. So you're making adjustments and corrections as you go through the year and we're OK.

Rémi, your teams?

Remi TAFFIN: Let's say since last race we're on plan. We've obviously had up and downs during the year but we're all fine. We also have some engines left obviously for six of our eight drivers, one left, which we should use for this weekend. So it will be up to eight this weekend for all our customers and we should be OK for the rest of the year. Obviously we have to manage the mileage on Fridays but yeah, we're on target.

Andrew, first of all, Force India seems to be fairly comfortable in the midfield but what does it take to get the team towards the sharper end of the championship?

AG: Quite simple: you've got to out-develop the guys in front of you.

Is that money? Is that personnel?

AG: It's everything. But ultimately you need the money to invest in the team, in the hardware and in the people and ultimately that will increase your rate of development. That's what you need to do, that's what we would need to do if we were to start to target these guys in front of me [Fry, Brawn]. It's something we've discussed with the shareholders at great length, telling us where they want to be, what they want to do. There's more discussions happening very shortly and hopefully we'll be able to announce something in near future.

Have you still got developments coming this year or are you working one hundred per cent on the new car now?

AG: Oh, we've been on the new car for several months now. There's been no development on this car since the shutdown effectively.

Antonio, can you give us an update on how the team is developing in Madrid, in terms of staffing etc.?

TC: Yeah. As you know we've done a big change this year, moving everything, everybody's under the same roof now and we got our DO [design office] as it started from the summer and now our department is moving from Germany to Spain. We are recruiting, we are doing a lot of interviews and we are recruiting at a high rate of people. But still we are the smallest team, there's no need to hide that. It's a long way for us to get into the midfield, or let's say the average size of team. But we are growing fast.

In terms of development of the car for next year, is it going to be essentially the same car?

TC: Oh no. It's not going to be the same car. It's going to have... all the cars they have a lot of common parts that carry over from one to the other but of course it's going to be completely new in many areas: suspension, aerodynamics and many areas. Of course some parts of the transmission are parts we are going to keep them but I would say all the parts that are lap time-relevant are going to be improved or replaced.

Pat, I think you made quite a big push for this grand prix in terms of developments. Can you give us some sort of update on it?

PF: We've been pushing for the last few grands prix really. There's a few new developments on the car: we worked through our programme this morning and this afternoon, looking promising but we need to analyse all the data as normal before we decide what to run for tomorrow.

How much did you change your schedule to bring those parts to here? Is it something that's recently come in? And how much has that been affected by the shutdown of the wind tunnel?

PF: Well, we're still using our wind tunnel. We're obviously using a customer one as well. I mean it's just been part of our normal tunnel programme if you like, and I suppose we are a little bit later this year than we were last year with the new car but development on that has been going strong for quite a while as well.

Ross, obviously the announcement that Niki Lauda will have a role within the team has been of interest? How is that going to work with you?

RB: Niki is non-executive chairman, chairman of our board. We meet our board several times a year, to discuss the major issues. I think Niki is also going to add a lot of racing experience to the board. The board meetings will probably have a slightly different complexion in the future. And Niki's helping with some of the bigger strategic issues, such as the new commercial agreement with Bernie: obviously Niki had some involvement with persuading Lewis to join us - so those sort of issues but not involved with the day-to-day running of the team.

So your role essentially doesn't change.

RB: No, no. I've just got a new chairman. I had one before, I've got a different one now.

You touched there on Lewis joining the team, to what extent would you encourage him to build the team around him, rather as Michael Schumacher did at Ferrari all those years ago? And how would that therefore work with the other driver?

RB: Well, I think both drivers in the team contribute to developing a team, building a team. We are clearly not achieving the results we want to achieve yet, so we've got some progress we need to make and I think Lewis will be able to contribute a lot to helping us make that progress. We obviously believe and we know he's a very very quick driver. This is perhaps a new challenge he's facing of helping a team grow and develop and become more competitive. So there's some different aspects, perhaps, to what he's going to face with us and what he's faced at McLaren, which was a pretty complete and rounded team.

Remi, first of all, interesting developments from Lotus with the Coandă exhaust: how does that affect the Renault engine? What do you have to do to the engine with different exhaust systems?

RT: Obviously that affects the performance of the engine so get the performance down from the first attempt of the exhaust. Thereafter, we have to work on how we can assess this loss and try to minimise it, so that's our main objective when we work on this exhaust back at the factory. That's why you can see some different versions coming at any race we do, so that's the part of the job we do.

And here, how much is the performance of the engine affected from free practice in the morning, through to qualifying or the race, the difference in temperature, 13 degrees track temperature, but how much does the ambient change affect the engine and performance?

RT: If we look at what we're going to get at the end of the race, it could be five to 10 degrees down. Engine-wise it's more like what we're going to try to assess for the cooling, for example, so we just basically have to get the data from P2 because it's more or less the same timing, and assess the set-up of the car, we need to get with it, and that's basically it. Racing is pretty close to what we've been doing in P2 so that's when we will get the data and find out what we need.

Is there a power change at all?

RT: Obviously there will be a power change, but let's say it's the same for everyone. The only real change that we have from Friday to Saturday or Sunday is the engine change, because we're going to change the engine for tomorrow, so that's going to be the main difference.

Ross, the FIA has published the entry fee requirements for next season with a significant increase in the amount for every point scored, which is probably going to hit the mid-table teams more than others. I was just wondering about your thoughts on that? Mercedes, presumably, can afford to pay it but it's quite a significant increase on this season.

RB: I think, for us, we would be delighted to pay it because we would be scoring a lot of points. In fact, if you're a mid-range team, and considering the fact that all the extra facilities that we pay for separately at the moment are rolled into that entrance fee, I think for a lot of teams it's going to be very similar. It's going to make more substantial difference for those teams who finish in the top three or four of the championship. I was being a bit flippant, but obviously I hope that we can have that problem next year.

Pat, are you confident you can reduce the gap from Red Bull in qualifying or do you think you will suffer again as you have in the last races?

PF: We are trying as hard as we can to improve the qualifying performance. As I say, we've got some updates here. I need to go through... or the guys need to go through and check the exact performance level, but obviously our race pace is quite reasonable, as last weekend showed. We need to work on our qualifying, so we will keep on trying, we will keep on pushing.

A question for Remi: we understand that the new Red Bull or the new Renault alternators are going to be seen in Austin for the first time; could you tell us what work has been done to integrate them on the engines and what the differences are with the new specification?

RT: The new specification we've been running now since Singapore. It was obviously run on Fridays but before we did that, we did the normal job we do with any parts that we fit on the engine on the dyno, for example, so it has obviously passed all the tests, so we are now quite confident that we can race it and that's why we have a target to introduce that at race 19, so in Austin. The question now is whether we're going to fit that on all of the cars or all of the teams we supply and it's just a question of supplying the parts. It's not that easy to get all the parts changed but obviously the major changes we've done is all about what failed and we've discussed bearings so that's the work we've achieved so far, so that's where we are.

F1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix – FP3 report

Sebastian Vettel is a very dangerous man. Give him twenty seconds in a working car, and he can set the sort of lap times that make fellow champions weep.

The Red Bull driver spent the bulk of the final practice session tucked up in the garage, waiting for his team to fix his RB8, which suffered braking problems during the defending champion's installation laps. Both front brake calipers were replaced, and with around four minutes remaining, Vettel was back out on track to set his first timed lap of the session.

His first effort was unimpressive, but that was only to be expected – even in desert climes, the Pirelli rubber takes at least a lap to get up to optimum temperature. The first lap is rather like the first pancake – suitable only for the bin, and not worth taking into account as an indication of future deliciousness.

And on his second effort, Vettel showed all and sundry just why he is such a force to be reckoned with: the German racer crossed the line in 1.42.614s, half a second shy of the best time set by pace-setter Lewis Hamilton after 18 trips across the finish line.

McLaren may have secured the first two places on the timesheets, but Vettel showed that the British team's pace was largely irrelevant. Had he been given a working car for the duration of the sixty minute session there is no doubt that Vettel would have ended FP3 ahead by the sort of margin that has his competition wondering if they should give it all up to go and spend the rest of their days working in a bank.

The most worried face this afternoon belonged to Fernando Alonso, who was a second down on Hamilton and half a second slower than Vettel after 15 laps. Ferrari broke curfew for the second night running in an attempt to give the Spanish driver a fighting chance at saving his championship campaign, but Alonso's chances are looking more remote by the day.

The F2012 is undoubtedly more stable than it was at the beginning of the season, and Alonso's talent is such that race pace is never an issue as long as he has the slightest opportunity, but there is no denying that Red Bull are unbeatable over a single lap. And at a track like Yas Marina, where overtaking is nigh on impossible? If Alonso can't get to the front on Saturday, the odds of him making it there on Sunday are slimmer than a supermodel.

FP3 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.42.130s [18 laps]
2. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.42.420s [17 laps]
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.42.614s [7 laps]
4. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.42.743s [18 laps]
5. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1.42.750s [19 laps]
6. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1.43.015s [18 laps]
7. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.43.064s [19 laps]
8. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.43.133s [15 laps]
9. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1.43.184s [22 laps]
10. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1.43.338s [19 laps]
11. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.43.480s [17 laps]
12. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1.43.571s [20 laps]
13. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.43.593s [20 laps]
14. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.43.635s [19 laps]
15. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.44.010s [22 laps]
16. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1.44.025s [18 laps]
17. Bruno Senna (Williams) 1.44.071s [19 laps]
18. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1.44.149s [19 laps]
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Caterham) 1.45.301s [22 laps]
20. Timo Glock (Marussia) 1.45.879s [19 laps]
21. Charles Pic (Marussia) 1.46.036s [19 laps]
22. Vitaly Petrov (Caterham) 1.46.261s [22 laps]
23. Pedro de la Rosa (HRT) 1.46.554s [20 laps]
24. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1.47.032s [22 laps]

F1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix – Q1 report

It's all to play for over the course of the next hour – the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix has only ever been won from the front row, so Saturday afternoon will prove vital to both Sebastian Vettel and Fernando Alonso's championship campaigns.

As has become traditional of late, the Red Bull pair were the last two out of the garage in Q1; the team has such confidence in their car that they use the minimum amount of rubber to make it through each phase of qualifying.

But while the team are rightly confident in their car, it's not been all smooth sailing today – Sebastian Vettel missed the majority of FP3 with brake issues that saw the team do a high speed replacement before their championship contender managed a P3-worthy lap on his second timed attempt.

Fernando Alonso showed his determination to get the most out of the session with an early timesheet-topping time of 1.42.115s. But there was no denying that the Scuderia still have a long way to go when Lewis Hamilton crossed the line six-tenths faster than his former teammate.

Vettel's first effort was a more conservative 1.43.089s; the Red Bull driver's lap was affected by a wall-scraping manoeuvre that saw sparks flying along the barrier as the right rear wheel of the RB8 made more contact than is ideal.

With the end of Q1 approaching, the dropout zone was comprised of the six usual suspects plus Jean-Eric Vergne, with Paul di Resta and Kamui Kobayashi next in line for the danger zone should the Frenchman find extra time on a later attempt.

Despite being comfortably through to Q2, Vettel elected to complete extra laps at the end of the session, proving a point to himself but achieving very little in real terms.

As the chequered flag approached, Vergne was pushing hard to save himself from the indignity of dropping out at the end of Q1. But the Toro Rosso driver was pushing too hard, and spun at Turn 20. There was enough time remaining to begin one final lap before the chequered flag fell, but the damage to Vergne's tyres made it a fruitless attempt, and he was fated to join the six usual suspects in the dropout zone.

Dropout zone

18. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso)
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Caterham)
20. Charles Pic (Marussia)
21. Vitaly Petrov (Caterham)
22. Timo Glock (Marussia)
23. Pedro de la Rosa (HRT)
24. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT)

F1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix – Q2 report

With Q1 little short of predictable these days, the real excitement comes in Q2, when almost anyone is at real risk of dropping out.

As a result, the session tends to be action-packed, with cars pouring onto the track from the very outset, wasting rubber, causing traffic, and leading to all manner of angrily waved hands and petulant behaviour forgotten in an instant.

Lewis Hamilton continued his campaign to claim a spot on the front row of tomorrow's grid with an early 1.41.366s that should see the Briton safely through to Q3. But with the session less than half run, anything can happen, and it probably will.

Fernando Alonso's increasing desperation was in full evidence early on; the Spanish driver's first lap was around seventeen seconds off the pace thanks to driver error, but his second attempt was a far more competitive 1.41.514s.

Sebastian Vettel crossed the line in a temporary P2 with 1.41.511s that was soon bested by teammate Mark Webber, who briefly claimed the top spot with a 1.41.277s before Hamilton became the first man to break into the 1m40s.

But the battle at the head of the pack is less important right now: fighting for survival in the final five minutes of Q2 are Paul di Resta, Daniel Ricciardo, Kamui Kobayashi, Bruno Senna, Sergio Perez, Michael Schumacher, and Nico Rosberg.

Hovering on the edge and getting slightly nervous are Nico Hulkenberg, Pastor Maldonado, and Jenson Button – all three are at risk of dropping out in the event of strong laps from their rivals further down the pack.

There's no denying that the Toro Rossos lack pace this afternoon; Ricciardo is three seconds off the pace, and seven-tenths slower than his nearest rival.

But there's very little movement at the pack of the pack – the order changes, but the names do not.

Dropout zone

11. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India)
12. Sergio Perez (Sauber)
13. Paul di Resta (Force India)
14. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes)
15. Bruno Senna (Williams)
16. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber)
17. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso)

F1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix – Q3 report

Having been the fastest man on track in both qualifying sessions thus far, all eyes are on Lewis Hamilton to see if he can maintain his momentum and keep Sebastian Vettel from claiming yet another pole position.

While there is no ill will towards the Red Bull driver, the hope is that the drivers' championship fight will be kept alive until Interlagos at the end of the month. Another Vettel front row start followed by a lights to flag victory will make any hope of a thrilling end to the season disappear into the distance, probably with a two-second lead by the end of its opening lap.

Hamilton's first lap was a 1.40.630s; he is still the only man to have lapped in the 1m40s during qualifying at Yas Marina Circuit. Vettel's first run at pole saw the Red Bull driver claim provisional P2 with a 1.41.093s – close, but rather short of that infamous cigar.

Fernando Alonso is not having the best afternoon. While the Spanish racer has been giving it his all – he always gives it his all – the simple fact is that

the F2012 is not capable of competing on equal footing with the RB8 or the MP4-27. His best isn't good enough, and it's not his fault.

Nico Rosberg had an early end to the session: the Mercedes driver parked up in the pits and was seen storming to the FIA garage, apparently filled with rage.

Moments before the chequered flag fell, Pastor Maldonado pulled an excellent lap out of the bag, crossing the line in 1.41.226s for a provisional P3 before Mark Webber claimed provisional P2 and pushed his teammate onto the second row.

Vettel was unable to improve, and the front row belongs to Hamilton and Webber.

Provisional grid

1. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren)
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull)
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull)
4. Pastor Maldonado (Williams)
5. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus)
6. Jenson Button (McLaren)
7. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari)
8. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes)
9. Felipe Massa (Ferrari)
10. Romain Grosjean (Lotus)
11. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India)
12. Sergio Perez (Sauber)
13. Paul di Resta (Force India)
14. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes)
15. Bruno Senna (Williams)
16. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber)
17. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso)
18. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso)
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Caterham)
20. Charles Pic (Marussia)
21. Vitaly Petrov (Caterham)
22. Timo Glock (Marussia)
23. Pedro de la Rosa (HRT)
24. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT)

F1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix – Saturday press conference

The Red Bull PRs looked very stern on their approach to the post-qualifying press conference at Yas Marina Circuit on Saturday evening after championship contender Sebastian Vettel stopped his car on track on his slowing down lap.

Present were Lewis Hamilton (McLaren), Mark Webber (Red Bull), and Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull).

What are your feelings for tomorrow?

Lewis HAMILTON: Very excited, very excited. It's the first time for a long time to be ahead of the Red Bulls, and not to be seeing the tail of them at the start of the race but I know it's going to be, as always, very, very tough in the race because they've got great race pace. But we are strong enough to fight them, the team's done a fantastic job all weekend. The car's felt beautiful all weekend. I don't know why the car works so well here. We've not really made any improvements to the car since the last race, so I guess it just suits. The guys are still massively focused so I hope that tomorrow's a good day for us.

How have the long runs been looking?

LH: We did a couple of long runs and they seemed to be OK. On one of my long runs I had a lot of traffic, but Jenson had a fairly decent long run, which shows... a bit like last race, we should be quite competitive. But for me it's trying to improve the start of the race because these guys are so quick over the first couple of laps.

Mark, well done, second fastest in qualifying. You've out-qualified your team-mate as well. But there have been some worrying moments, for example last week you had the loss of KERS and you had the problem yesterday. Are you slightly on the back foot?
Mark WEBBER: Well, first of all credit to Lewis, he's obviously got a quick car this weekend and he bumped us off the front row, that's the first time in a while, maybe since six or eight weeks ago when we had a good run, so now they've done a good job today. Credit where it's due and we did the best we could. I think it was a pretty smooth qualifying session for both Seb and I and we did what we could. I think it went well but as you say we've got a little bit of a fire going which we need to tidy up and the quality of the team is exceptional, we know what we need to improve on, to help our championships along. Obviously Seb's still involved in the Drivers' [title] and the Constructors' is still important to us, so we'll focus on tomorrow's race. The car generally works pretty well on Sundays but Lewis and JB did some pretty strong long runs as well, so yeah, a little trouble this weekend but overall we're positive and looking for a good strong run.

Sebastian, obviously you had a problem with the brakes this morning and we've just seen you stop on circuit this afternoon, but you're third on the grid, at least you salvaged that. What are your feelings about that?

Sebastian VETTEL: I don't know why I was asked to stop. I think probably some problem. It shouldn't be something major. Obviously this morning wasn't ideal, not being able to run. So we didn't get probably the answers that we were hoping for. Nevertheless, this afternoon we were settling in quite well

and the pace was there, but I think as Mark touched on, McLaren, in particular Lewis, are pretty quick. So they were out of reach today. I'm not entirely happy with my qualifying, the last part of qualifying was quite tricky for me. I think I should have been a little bit quicker, whether it would have been enough to beat Mark... obviously he's on a different sheet of paper, but all in all I think we can be quite happy. Race pace should be good tomorrow. As we know it's a long race here and there's a lot of things that can happen, so looking forward to tomorrow.

But there must be a certain relief in being three places ahead of your main championship rival?

SV: Is he sixth or...?

Seventh.

SV: Ah, so... yeah, I think we've seen so many races this year that have been up and down, so from where we start it's obviously quite good, close to the front, so we go from there. As I said, it's going to be a long race; a lot of things to look out for. I think strategy-wise it's probably not 100 per cent clear yet, a similar position to last race in India, so yea, I think we have to look after ourselves, try to race this guy and then we should be in quite a good place tomorrow.

So Lewis, you can't really explain why you're so quick here this weekend?

LH: No, I don't know. The car's been feeling fantastic all weekend, like I said we haven't come with upgrade packages, we haven't got any... y'know we're always modifying small, little wings but it does very, very little - but the car's felt great from the get-go this weekend and done some fine tuning and every now and then you're fortunate enough to make the right change and it feels even better, which it did. So, I didn't really have to change too much going into qualifying. Actually I didn't change anything going into qualifying from P3. That lap felt fantastic. The next lap I was up a little bit, I think I was up a tenth or so, and then I lost it. I had no idea I'd done a good lap, so it was just about going completely over the line and seeing if you can get something - but it didn't work.

We have seen a lot of drivers doing that this weekend and I guess it's just exploring the limit.

LH: Yeah. Well, I know what the limit is because I was on it when I did my first lap but I was trying to go way past the limit and see if it was possible. It worked for half the lap but then it didn't work the rest of it.

Mark, the reliability thing, has that set you back a little bit in terms of race preparation, yesterday for example.

MW: Yeah, you would like to do that work for sure but obviously we have a huge amount of historical data, this year and also at this venue and Seb did some work. I did one lap, so I've got a little bit to look at. But it should be OK, the Friday's running is never a bible anyway, it's just a good reference. So we're in pretty good shape in terms of data going into the race. So obviously we'll have a bit of a look through in the morning to see how we're going to prepare. But yeah, we realised we've got to work on our reliability. We've had a few issues of late and that's something the group is on. There's nothing Sebastian and I can do about it. It's not our job, it's their job and they know they've got to improve.

And you'll be starting ahead of Sebastian, so what chances in the first corner?

MW: Well, good. You never know. Lewis' starts lately haven't been phenomenal so let's see if he has a good one tomorrow. Generally it's down to how the clutch is and things like that - it's not really down to Lewis. We'll see how they go off the line but I'm looking to go forward, for sure. Then we'll get settled into the race and see where everyone is after that.

Sebastian, the brake problem today, is that something that has been cured and you're confident you won't see again?

SV: Yes, I think so. Obviously it wasn't expected, it wasn't the plan because the plan is to run in free practice - but I think we fixed the problem, I had a fantastic brake in qualifying, so I think we got on top of the problem at the end. I had a little bit of a run, two laps in the practice this afternoon, so should be fine.

Overtaking has been difficult here in the past. Admittedly you haven't had to do very much but it's been difficult, there's a double DRS, how vital is pole position and a good qualifying position?

SV: Well, I think Lewis is pretty happy where he's going to start tomorrow. Obviously we are not on pole but yeah, I think, y'know, third is not far off and it should be a good race. Obviously, as you touched on, it's difficult to pass here, even though you've got long straights, we've got the double DRS so we'll see if that helps. I'm sure it's not impossible. It's definitely possible to pass people, even though it's not easy but, y'know, race pace should be good. Should be in a good position.

Lewis, yesterday you said after second practice that you didn't believe you could get pole, it would be extremely hard. What changed? Was it you and your car that did more or was it perhaps Red Bull which haven't performed as you expected?

LH: They were slower than I expected but we were faster than I expected as well. Mark did a great lap as well - what's the margin, it is three tenths? I knew that they were very very quick but I would never have imagined being this far ahead of them. But I did do a really really good lap, very happy with the lap. I thought that we would be a match or slightly slower than them this weekend and it's a blessing in disguise to be ahead of them.

Sebastian, on a different subject, Michael Schumacher has just three races left in his F1 career. How do you view his last three years in Formula One?

SV: We have commented on this a couple of times. I think Mark summed it up pretty well a couple of races ago, that obviously those three years are very different to the years he had before that, but it doesn't make him a worse driver. I think the last three years he was hoping to have a better car than he probably had. When the car was there, I think he was able to use the potential so I think we've seen that he's still very quick, for example in Monaco, when the car was there. Obviously very different to the years with Ferrari when they were dominating a lot, but it also shows that you need to have the right car beneath you, and the right team in order to fight for wins and championships.

Sebastian, in Q1 you touched the wall a little bit, did that have any effect on your mind during the rest of qualifying?

SV: It was the first lap, I was a little bit greedy on the exit of turn 19 and I just brushed the wall a little bit so not really hard contact. There was no problem for the car.

Sebastian, you were hardly able to run in the morning; had you been able to do that, would you have found out something which would have helped you in qualifying?

SV: I think so. Obviously Saturday morning - or Saturday afternoon in this case - is the last chance before qualifying and also the first chance after practice on Friday to have a read on the car and I think we tried a couple of things. Obviously I would have loved to get a proper answer so I think that

what we had in qualifying was still pretty good and very competitive but obviously some boxes will never be ticked so we won't get an answer on the things that we wanted to but I'm quite confident we found a good compromise, nevertheless.

Sebastian, is it a kind of relief having Fernando seventh, given that it's not so easy to overtake here. Will that change something in your strategy going into the race, or are you going to race, attack and try to win?

SV: I think we have to try to race. I don't think you can go round looking at one guy in particular, so, as I said, you don't have to be Einstein to make out that it's good if you're ahead and bad if you're behind but today there's no points, it's a long race tomorrow. I think some of the guys were very quick in qualifying, arguably they are slower in the race so we are going to find out tomorrow. I think if you are quicker, then it's also possible to overtake. Obviously it might be tricky, we've seen that in previous years but as I touched on earlier, it's not impossible and for us, also in terms of strategy, we go for the fastest race, that's what we have to focus on and at the moment, Lewis is ahead of us so we are trying to hunt him down.

Lewis Hamilton, do you give a chance to the Red Bull drivers at the start tomorrow?

LH: Do I give them a chance? Definitely not, de-finitely not. As Mark was saying, I've had some very very bad starts but that's down to clutch performance but I will be onto my guys tonight to make sure that that doesn't happen tomorrow.

Mark, when we talked to Christian Horner on Thursday, he never used the word team orders. He did say you're a strong team player, an important part of the team, and you would know what to do. Are you comfortable with that for tomorrow?

MW: Drive flat out.

Lewis, yesterday you were struggling more with the option tyres and this is why you were also explaining your difficult session. Do you think you have solved the problem?

LH: Yeah, I just changed my technique a bit, in terms of warming them up and then from the previous race when we struggled in Q3 on the option tyres particularly in P3 in India, I think it was, we used the method that we improved there, which seemed to have helped this weekend, which I am sure other people are doing. It's nothing special, it's just with tyre temperatures and pressures and other things, but it worked, they worked really well.

You have pretty broad sporting interests, Mark. The Melbourne Cup is coming up on Tuesday, the [horse] race that stops the nation [Australia], they say. Are you interested? Will you watch it, do you have a tip?

MW: I love sport but horse racing is not far off the bottom of my list. Gambling, in my house, my father didn't tolerate it. Actually, I'm not a big fan of how much it's rammed down your throat in Australia, in terms of how you can bet on who farts at what stage in a football match. It's incredible how obsessed we've become with gambling and betting but each to their own. If you love gambling it's a good buzz but it does nothing for me. I would rather ride my mountain bike.

That'll be no then.

MW: That's a 'no'. I got busted once. I was in the principal's office at school for playing up and the race was on, so she couldn't see me so she had to wait until the race was over. I did, when I was very very very young, my grandparents let us put a little sneaky fiver on sometimes, which wasn't always allowed and the horse was called Tawrrific and it actually won the race, so I told her that I was very happy and she wasn't very impressed, because her horse didn't win.

Did you watch the Aussie V8s today?

MW: Not enough, the time schedule is not very helpful and they're parked down the other side of the track. I want to go and see some of the guys for sure. It was just great that they managed to drive on the same track as us, a slick operation as usual, it's a good category. No, I haven't got to see any of the action yet but I've seen the results, but I haven't seen a single lap.

You could take Lewis and Sebastian with you. You guys would go and see the V8s, wouldn't you?

LH: Sure. When we have time.

F1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix - Race report

Going into the 2012 Formula One season, if you had told anyone that the two most thrilling races of the season would take place in Valencia and Abu Dhabi, you would have been escorted swiftly to the nearest insane asylum.

But in a topsy-turvy season that began with seven winners from seven races, and has seen all manner of chaos on and off the track, perhaps such surprises were inevitable.

The fifty-five laps of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix provided 106 minutes of nail-biting drama, replete with two Safety Cars, two changes of pack leader, and the thrilling spectacle of Sebastian Vettel fighting his way up from a pitlane start to a podium finish. The icing on the cake? A win for Kimi Raikkonen, just as Lotus had abandoned all hope of a 2012 victory.

The action began on the very first lap, when Raikkonen got an excellent start, passing Mark Webber within nanoseconds of the lights going out. The Australian racer tends to be slow off the line, and Sunday evening was no exception. But this time, the Red Bull driver's Achilles heel turned out to be less of a weakness and more of a fatal flaw.

Before the cars were half-way around the circuit for the first time, Webber had lost two positions, with both Raikkonen and Pastor Maldonado taking advantage of his stuttering start. Further down the grid, Fernando Alonso was on a typical charge, forcing his way up through the pack till he was hot on Webber's heels and minded to fight.

By the end of the first lap, the scene was set for a thrilling spectacle. Nico Hulkenberg was out of the race, the victim of a crash with Bruno Senna, while teammate Paul di Resta was limping to the pits with a puncture. Romain Grosjean was the victim of another first lap incident: the Lotus driver was running three abreast into Turn 11 when he made contact with Webber and damaged his right front tyre in the process.

"It was a tight battle with three of us in a row at Turn 11, then Sergio went off track at Turn 13 and came back on the inside at Turn 14 leaving me with no room to go anywhere else," Grosjean said. "Mark then came from behind and we touched: it was a big shame."

The next few laps provided a respite of relative calm, although there was still action aplenty out on track: race leader Lewis Hamilton made an unforced error on the second lap, nearly allowing Raikkonen through for the lead; Vettel was charging his way up through the backmarkers; and Sergio Perez slipped neatly past Kamui Kobayashi for eighth place while Webber passed the sleeping Jenson Button for P5.

Hamilton regained his stride, and spent the next few laps pulling out a steadily increasing lead over Raikkonen when the first of the serious incidents occurred, bringing out one of what would be two Safety Cars over the course of the race.

On the approach to Turn 16 on lap 9, Nico Rosberg found himself running up behind the slowing HRT of Narain Karthikeyan. The Mercedes driver was going too fast to do much in the way of evasive action, and ended up clipping the right rear wheel of the HRT, going airborne, and narrowly avoided decapitating the Indian driver in the process. It later transpired that Karthikeyan was in the middle of hydraulics failure at the time; his car was leaking oil and there was little he could do but slow and attempt to find a safe place to stop.

"On lap 9 we had a problem with the hydraulic pressure and steering of the car went rock solid, so I had to lift my foot off the accelerator," Karthikeyan explained. "Unfortunately, Rosberg was coming from behind and couldn't avoid me."

According to Rosberg, the Mercedes' driver's race was over before the collision – his first lap incident with Grosjean had brought an end to the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix before it began in earnest.

"My car felt competitive today so it's a real shame not to have finished the race and scored some points," Rosberg said. "Unfortunately that chance was gone after the first lap incident with Romain, after which I had to come into the pits for a new nose. Then there was the accident which put me out of the race. Narain told me that his steering broke and he needed to brake which I didn't expect in that high-speed corner. There was no time for me to react, and I'm very thankful that we are both fine."

In such a competitive environment it was heartening to hear race leader Hamilton radioing his team after the incident, asking whether Rosberg and Karthikeyan had managed to escape unscathed. While all 24 men out on track are there to achieve the best result possible, they are also a tightly-knit group who respect the dangerous nature of their work.

The Safety Car remained out on track until the end of lap 14, and while laps led by Bernd Maylander are usually less than thrilling, Vettel provided entertainment thanks to a mini nervous breakdown behind the Toro Rosso of Daniel Ricciardo.

"I had a moment with the Toro Rosso," Vettel explained after the race. "I don't know what he did. He was braking his car down and I was surprised, caught out. Maybe I should have paid more attention, but yeah, I went to the right and I wasn't very lucky, there was the DRS board, which I took head on and then I thought 'well, now the front is fucked at least, so we've got to change it'. We did it in the worst possible moment, during the Safety Car, when all the cars were already queued up and we lost everything."

After a smooth restart, the next race-changing incident came about on lap 20, when Hamilton retired from the lead with a total loss of power. It was the second time this season the Briton lost a race through no fault of his own from the front, and it brought about an official end to his mathematically slim hopes of claiming the drivers' title.

Raikkonen inherited the lead, and commanded the race from the front for the remaining 35 laps, staying ahead even through the pit stops, and only looking marginally under threat in the closing stages, when Alonso was giving it everything he had to get past the Lotus and claim the win for himself.

Meanwhile, Vettel was continuing his climb up from the back of the pack, aided unwittingly by his teammate, who did a remarkable job of taking out the men in front one by one.

First Webber clipped Maldonado on lap 23 before spinning off track. Neither man was forced to retire from the race, but both lost positions on track. The sleeping Button briefly awoke and took advantage of the chaos to slip past Maldonado on the following lap as the Venezuelan tried to recover lost ground.

By lap 25, Vettel was up in P8, having passed Michael Schumacher with remarkable ease. One lap later, Webber was at it again, this time clipping the Ferrari of Felipe Massa mid duel. The Australian driver then cut the chicane in his second attempt at a pass, scaring the Brazilian driver into a smoke-heavy spin that saw neither driver suffer significant damage, but which destroyed the momentum of both their races.

Webber was the star of all the mid-race incidents, and it was a lap 39 collision with Grosjean that brought out the second Safety Car – and finally brought about an end to the Australian's race, and the demolition derby he was causing with every lap. After a poor start and a worse middle, Webber's race came to an abrupt end when he attempted to slip past a group of cars approaching the Sauber of Sergio Perez, which was returning to the track after a spin into the run-off.

The Red Bull ran into the pack of cars – literally – and the ensuing carnage meant that a second Safety Car was little more than an inevitability.

After the lap 43 restart, the 2012 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix finally settled down into a semblance of calm. Vettel continued to work his way up through what little remained of the pack, and spent the better part of ten laps chasing down Button for the final place on the podium. On lap 52, the defending world champion finally made the move stick, nipping past the McLaren and strengthening his claim on the drivers' title in the process.

Ahead, Alonso was giving it all he'd got in an attempt to close up on Raikkonen. The Spanish driver did a noble job eating away at the Finn's lead, chipping the margin down by at least two-tenths a lap, but by the penultimate turn of the circuit it was clear that he would not be able to pass. With a clear eye on the drivers' standings, the Ferrari driver cooled his fire and sailed home for a comfortable – and safe – second place, secure in the knowledge that he had reduced Vettel's lead in the drivers' championship standings.

F1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix – Sunday press conference

Some post-race press conferences are little short of predictable. But with Kimi Raikkonen taking centre stage, the Abu Dhabi edition was a riot of laughter and more than a little swearing. Don't read on with a drink in your mouth...

Present were Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus), Fernando Alonso (Ferrari), and Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull).

Kimi – your first victory since the 2009 Belgian Grand Prix. Tell us about your emotions at this time.

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Not much really.

People want to know how amazing it is to win a grand prix. Tell us.

KR: Last time you guys was giving me shit because I didn't really smile enough, so maybe this time again but I mean I'm very happy for the team – and myself – but mainly for the team. It's really a hard season for the team and not an easy time. Hopefully this gives them more belief, not just for the guys making all the work but also for the guys who run the team. I hope this can turn around the tables and give us many more good races and wins. If not this year then next year.

Fernando, you never gave up, you were chasing Kimi down in the closing stages of the Grand Prix. You must be surprised to see your world title... well all three of you were technically in the world championship battle until this moment. Tell us about your race and how you felt it was going.

Fernando ALONSO: I'm very happy, I think we were not super competitive this weekend. We started seventh, sixth at the end with Sebastian's penalty so we have to fight all through the race, the first laps to do some good overtakings and then a very good strategy that gave us the ability to fight at the end for the victory. In the last couple of laps Kimi was a little bit slower, so we attack. But second, I think, was the maximum today, starting sixth, so a perfect Sunday again for us and we kept fighting until the end.

Sebastian, did you honestly believe you could be standing here today, starting from the end of the pitlane?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yes, I did, to be honest with you. After the first couple of laps obviously that target was drifting a little bit away. I had a messy start to the race, which is quite difficult at the back, to get through the cars as quickly as I could, damaged my front wing. And then to the safety car, yeah I had a little bit of a big mistake with Daniel [Ricciardo] I think, who was stopping his car on the straights and I was very surprised. Turned to the right and... if it would have been 50m earlier, 50m later I wouldn't have done damage to my front wing further but after that, I said to myself 'yeah, either we go full attack or nothing'. So that's what we did and I had a fantastic race. I enjoyed it a lot. Obviously the safety cars here and there was helping, the second one, and after that, at the end it was a nice fight with Jenson. He was difficult to pass. I expected to have a little bit easier time because obviously I was passing the slower cars before and with him I was a bit struggling. Then I just squeezed my way past into Turn 11 which was nice, it was very fair but for sure, it was a thrilling grand prix, up and down all the time. Yeah. Obviously it's very nice to stand here now, pick up a trophy and drink some champagne. It's not actually champagne, I don't know what it is but it tastes good.

Your name is up there as a double world champion. Do you now feel that you've got your hands on one side of the cup for a third world title?

SV: I think it's still two races to go so obviously we see how quickly things can change. Yesterday was a surprise for us, I think would we have started from third it would have been a different race. But yeah, it was obviously a chance to fuck it up and we didn't do that. So I think we can be very proud today: we got the maximum. We lost only a very little bit, I think we have the momentum still, the car is bloody quick, so looking forward to the next two races. We are definitely believing in it and that's the target.

Kimi, you've won before, you've won the title before and standing here you sent a message to the team about how you hope this will motivate future success, but when it is moment going to sink in? That you've won a grand prix in your comeback year.

KR: I mean like I said, I'm happy, but there's nothing to jump around about. Really we still have a few races to go, I'll try to do the same again, and for sure we're going to have a good party today and hopefully tomorrow, when we are feeling bad after a long night, we will remember how we feel so... I'm just happy for everybody in the team.

Kimi, well done, congratulations. Fantastic win for you, you've really been waiting for this win, I think, all season and now it's happened. What are your feelings?

KR: Like I said before, I'm very happy for the team. We have had hard times lately and hopefully it gives some belief for the people, even more that... I mean they've been working very hard the whole year but with the hard times there's a bit unknown in the whole situation and hopefully for the people who runs the team, who owns the team, the people who works for... for everybody, hopefully it gives a bit more support and hope that things will turn around and be even better than it's been this year. So, great thing for the team itself, for the guys and, I mean of course I'm happy myself, but if I win it's great, if I don't I will try again and it's not the end of the life. We've been close few times but now I said that even the last race I think we had the speed to even win the race but if you don't start in the front we see what can happen. We knew the start would be a really big key and I got a really good start so I think with the McLaren we didn't have the speed, at least in the beginning of the race – but then we have to finish the race to win so... I mean after that we were pretty good. Just the safety cars made us a little bit more tricky today.

The start really was... gave you the second place straight away, it was a really excellent start.

KR: Like I said yesterday, this going to be key, to get behind the faster car and not start behind the cars that cannot go as fast as us. And I mean we have a fast car for lap time in the race but if we stuck behind there's no way we're going to get past so, that's what we could do this weekend: put yesterday in a good position and then made a good start and then just go from there.

And how much is the development that has been taking place on the car with the exhaust etc, how much has that been bringing pace to the car?

KR: It brings some pace, helps our straight line speed. So in average we gain some advantage but it's exactly the same car we have in Korea. So we see how much even this year in all the races some circuits suits better for one team and the next one is not so good for you. We had good speed last race as I've already said. We made some mistakes in qualifying and paid the price in the race. So now we put all together like we should have done quite a few times this year but for one reason or another we haven't. But at least we've got one win so we'll keep try to push still and see what we can do in the next race.

Fernando, tremendous pace at the end there, where did that come from and was it just a little bit too late?

FA: Well, I think we just saw on the board eight laps to go, there was no more concerns about the tyres because obviously doing one stop you never know how the tyres will finish the race, and also after the last safety car we saw Sebastian with the soft and the first three of us, we were with the prime, so we didn't know how much a threat was Sebastian for fight until the last lap. So after they lost a little bit of time, Jenson and Sebastian, and we didn't care any more about the tyres, I push 150 per cent for eight laps and I tried to catch Kimi but it was never enough to be within one second for the DRS to be even closer. So at the end we didn't have the pace to win but fantastic race anyway. We didn't have the pace this weekend in any practice, in qualifying seventh and ninth and then today we were fighting for a victory – surprising again. This is thanks to a perfect car for the race, a perfect start, perfect strategy, perfect pitstops so everything perfect Sunday for us, maximising what we have in hands.

Do you think the modifications brought to the Ferrari helped during the race today?

FA: I think it helped for sure because when we tested it on Friday, they gave us some performance but we are talking very few hundredths of advantage that for sure when you have a gap to close that is a couple of tenths, when you bring hundredths and your opponents bring also some new parts, I think more or less you are in the same position. So, we need to keep working and in Maranello they work day and night very hard to bring new parts. Here in the track, mechanics work 24 hours and we are doing our maximum and we sure that hopefully it will be enough.

Are you a bit disappointed that you didn't have more of an advantage over Sebastian, you only pulled out three points?

FA: To be honest we were concentrating on our race. Our simulations we had gave us the possibility to finish fifth or sixth, so we were not very optimistic with today's race and despite what Sebastian was doing in the race we were taking eight, ten points maximum in our simulations. So we concentrated on our race. He did a very good race and he was able to use the performance in some of the parts of the race when he was in clean air plus the safety cars that I think put the group all together. So at the end I think this is nothing we can do, we just need to concentrate on our race and if we finish in front of Sebastian in the next two races then maybe we have a chance. So that's our concentration now.

Sebastian a pretty lively race for you one way or another. It's quite lively back there isn't it – there's a lot going on?

SV: Yeah, usually it's hard enough to fight your way once through the field but we did it twice today so... Yeah, obviously not the first couple of laps we were hoping for. We damaged the front wing early, which didn't seem to be a big problem but it was probably the worst possible time with the safety car. I think we were already quite high up, close to the top 10, around 13, 14, 15 or something like that. And then I had a moment with the Toro Rosso. I don't know what he did. He was braking his car down and I was surprised, caught out. Maybe I should have paid more attention, but yeah, I went to the right and I wasn't very lucky, there was the DRS board, which I took head on and then I thought 'well, now the front is fucked at least, so we've got to change it...' (sorry). We did it in the worst possible moment, during the safety car, when all the cars were already queued up and yeah we lost everything. We were dead last. At least we had a fresh wing and from then went through the field. It was a lot of fun. Quite difficult with some guys, a little bit easier with other guys, but the most important thing was that the pace was there and we were in a very strong position – already half way through the race, 20 laps to the end and also on the soft tyres in the last stint. Obviously the safety car helped a little bit. Nevertheless, I think it was a fantastic race: a great fight with Jenson in the end, who was the most difficult to pass, obviously he was the quickest I passed in the whole race. We know that... I think it's quite difficult for us to get past a Mercedes-engined car. It was very, very close with him. I enjoyed the fight a lot, tried a couple of times and finally made it. He was very, very fair. You can't do that kind of move with all the drivers on the grid. And after that not enough laps left to catch up with Kimi and Fernando but the pace was there. Obviously we had an interesting race, up and down all the time and a great result in the end. It was a big chance to lose out a lot today, but we didn't lose anything, so I'm very happy. The guys are pushing 100 per cent. I feel very happy they're all behind me and I try to do my best for them. I think we have two more races ahead of us, we're in the best possible position so I think we're looking forward to the next race – a new grand prix, a new challenge. It's difficult to know who is going to be quick but I think it was another race today where we see that it's over as soon as we see the chequered flag and not before.

Kimi, was that your best start in a Lotus and after that, which one was the hardest competitor, the second safety car or Fernando?

KR: I think we've had some very good starts before, but compared to the others, today was a pretty normal start on our scale. I managed to pass Mark and Maldonado before I changed into second gear. I'd had a very good start on the warm-up lap so I knew this was going to be good. That was our aim, to try to make a good start and we managed to do it, so it was key for our win today. For sure, the safety car hurt us much more than the others. We had a good lead and then nothing, and then twice. The first time was when Hamilton was in front of us but it definitely didn't help us today.

Kimi Raikkonen, how and with whom and how many days will you celebrate this win?

KR: I have almost two weeks. As long as I manage to get myself to the next race I think the team is happy. I try to get home at some point.

Kimi, one of the highlights of the race was your radio messages, the ones that you were giving to the team. How distracting is it when you're fighting behind the safety car or whatever, to have them reminding you to warm-up your wheels?

KR: It's a normal thing. It's the same with all the teams. For sure, they are just trying to help but if you keep saying the same things two times a minute, I'm not so stupid that I cannot remember what I'm doing. It's a normal thing, they are just trying to help. I know what I'm doing. I will ask for help if I need it. It's not the first time and it won't be the last time. It's been many times with other teams also but they are all there to help you and try to put you in the best position. Different people like different things.

Sebastian, was it a bit of racing into the unknown at the beginning; you changed the gearbox, the ratios? Were you pretty sure you could do this kind of race or were there some obscure points that you had to sort out during the first laps, to find out what you could do?

SV: No, I don't think it was racing into the unknown. Obviously what we didn't know was how quickly we would get through the field. We knew that we were quite a lot quicker than the first couple of cars that we were approaching; obviously we have a different pace to Marussia, HRT, Caterham, so it was important to get through those. We took the chance to take ratios which helped down the straights, made life a little bit easier but obviously when you're not in the pack, you pay the price as well, so I think it did help us for overtaking but when we were in clean air, it was surely not optimum but it's always a trade. I think from Friday to Saturday we changed the car, not necessarily made a step forwards. We were changing quite a few things and getting closer to what we had on Friday which I think was a faster car so it was as simple as that.

Fernando and Sebastian, Michael has had 56 races without a win after his comeback; are you surprised that Kimi won his 18th after his comeback?

SV: No, I think it doesn't matter how many races it takes you. The most important thing is that you get the results you can achieve. I think Kimi drove a fantastic race today. For the first time the car was probably able to win and he did it. I don't know how their race was at the front, I was busy myself

but I think we've seen this year that generally if you compare this year, the Mercedes was not as competitive as the Lotus, so it's as simple as that, not in every race but in the majority of races. I think Michael showed his talent more than once in the last three years, even though he probably wasn't as successful as he was before, I don't think it makes him any worse.

FA: I agree.

Kimi, how special is it to be the first driver to win for Lotus since Ayrton Senna in 1987?

KR: It's a long time for them, I guess. I don't think there are any (of the same) people in the team any more. It's a name. It's the same team and it has been since Fernando was there, just a different name. It's a great name for us, good past but you know I race for the team whatever the name is, I don't really care so it's just for the guys who do all the work. Maybe it looks good in somebody's eyes but for me it really makes no difference.

To each of you: who is going to win the World Championship?

KR: I wouldn't put money on me! They are quite close; I don't know what the points difference is. Ten? One bad race could decide the championship if they keep doing what they've been doing. It's hard for Fernando but we saw yesterday and in races before that anything can happen. If it's a normal situation I don't think much can happen but one small mistake can decide everything.

FA: Yes, I'm confident. We will fight until the end. We are not fast enough, this is true and we are honest with ourselves, we know this. We need to accept this. It's a weak point, the performance that we have at the moment in our package, and we have some strong points which we will try to use.

SV: I think we were not always fast enough this year but for the last couple of races we were, so looking forward to the next two races.

Sebastian, this has been a pretty troubled weekend for the team. On Friday Mark had the issue with the KERS, you yesterday in the morning, then the problem with the fuel. How much of a relief is it for you to come out of such a weekend and be on the podium losing only three points to Fernando?

SV: Honestly, I would have loved to have got past Jenson quicker and past Fernando as well. I think the speed was there but it turned out to be quite tricky to pass Jenson, and took a lot of time. But yeah, I think we can be very happy with today. I think it's one of those races where it's difficult to predict the outcome. We have simulation tools etc telling you one thing but I was convinced that you have plenty of chances and I said yesterday, obviously it was a big hit for us because if you can choose between starting third and last you don't need to be a genius to make that one out. It was a big hit but I said yesterday that every chance is an opportunity and there were lots of chances today for us. I think we had a very good race, I enjoyed it a lot and I'm very happy with today's result.

Sebastian, you said before that yesterday was a mistake. How angry are you that this mistake happened? You don't have to be Einstein to calculate how much fuel has to go in for three laps, especially after it had already happened to Hamilton in Barcelona. Do you think the team should have been more careful?

SV: There are so many things that could have worked differently. I made a mistake on the last run, I aborted the lap, nobody ever finds out, nobody realises there was a problem. As I said earlier, it was a mistake, there was no intention to go stupidly close to the limit for a gain of nearly nothing. I think it's different to what happened to Lewis in Barcelona at the beginning of the season, obviously they deliberately put less fuel in the car and stopped on the in lap, but for us, we had enough fuel but somehow we had enough fuel on paper but not in the car. Obviously we stopped the car for emergency reasons, not to damage anything and then obviously it was quite a long procedure yesterday and unfortunately we couldn't drain the fuel that we wanted and it was not enough to provide the sample so it was as simple as that. Rules are clear. I think the penalty was very harsh but we had to take it. Rules are clear. If it happens to you in race three and you are in a similar position at the end of the year, nobody is asking and it's not a big fuss but if it happens to you three races from the end, obviously there's more attention etc. We had to live with that.

Fernando, your last win was at Hockenheim in July, more than three months ago. Do you think you absolutely need to win one or both of the last two races to gain the title and do you think it's possible to do it?

FA: That will help, for sure, but I don't think so.

Sebastian, so in the end, after all the difficulties, do you guys consider your result a surprise or not?

SV: I don't think you can talk of a surprise. I think we knew we were quick. I think if you look at the race, there were a lot of things that happened that you couldn't foresee. I don't know what happened to the HRT which caused the first safety car and I don't know what happened to Romain who caused the second safety car, but obviously these things are difficult to predict. I think we knew that we had a chance to get into the top five, even with a normal race. Given the pace was there, as I said earlier, what we did from Friday to Saturday, obviously we tried to improve the car, not necessarily achieved that but we are hungry, we want to try things to make the car faster. I don't blame anyone for that. I was one of the biggest drivers to make the changes, behind that on Friday, and they didn't work, but yeah, obviously we're not talking seconds per lap but small things and today we lost a position on the grid but we got the chance to change the car which we did and we knew that it will be a very competitive car. The speed was there, as I said, and obviously here and there we were a little bit lucky, but I think we created our own luck in that regard.

Sebastian, what kind of focus, commitment and mental strength does it really take to start from where you did, and eventually end up where you have, from a purely individual perspective?

SV: The race is long. I said to the guys before the race that I trust them 100 percent and they can trust me. I will try everything. There's no reason to give up. Of course, if you look where we started, it was the worst possible spot but we gave everything we had and I think when you do that, you cannot fail so it was a perfect example of that today. Everyone was focused on the moment and enjoying it as well. Don't forget that, I think we are here, obviously, to fight for wins and stuff like that but we are also here to have a good time, enjoy and have fun and I think all the guys in the team at the moment, they don't want to be anywhere else. Obviously it's tough on Sundays. The tension is there, obviously you're nervous, excited, any race such as this one, especially with the difficulty of starting last but it's also the challenge that you like, to race every single lap. Obviously it's nice to sit here and look back. Some days it will be difficult again, when we sit - not here - and look back and look at the mistakes that we've made, but hopefully we will learn from those as we did in the past to maximise the times that we sit here.

Kimi, does it take anything from your joy that when you win you kill your last hope of the championship?

KR: No, I think we knew already, a few races ago, that we didn't have the speed to challenge at the front. We always said that we would keep fighting and trying to do the best that we can. We got the win, we might have lost the championship on the same day but I don't really care. We didn't really expect to be fighting with them anyhow. We've always been a bit behind and not really had the speed to challenge them in normal races and now in the last few races we've had very good speed and finally we put all the things together and won. We will try again next year.

Sebastian, sorry to come back to yesterday's incident but we didn't really understand why you stopped the car, because a loss of

fuel doesn't really damage the engine, normally?

SV: Obviously it was a precaution. We saw some numbers going down and in order to save the engine at last, save the pumps in between etc, we decided to stop the car, convinced that we had enough fuel in the car to provide a sample but, as I said, for some reason we didn't have enough fuel so I don't know what happened. There must have been a mistake somewhere which was a big hit, like I said, but I'm sure we will learn from that and it won't happen again. I think we have done the exercise a lot of times, we know the rules. As I said, we are talking two hundred millilitres that were missing. If you go to the loo before qualifying or something like that it can make the same kind of difference. I think it's very difficult to measure. It was a mistake for which we had to pay a very hard price but c'est la vie.

Sebastian, in two weeks we're going to Austin, you have the first chance to win the third title and it's going to be your 100th Grand Prix.

SV: Yeah, it sounds a lot. Obviously time goes by quickly. I'm sure when you ask Fernando and Kimi they remember their first couple of races and probably don't feel that it's so long ago. I think that more than anything, if you do something that you love, that you enjoy the time goes by quickly. Now, when I'm talking about 2006, 2007, when I started to drive a Formula One car for the first time, I still know most of the guys and can recall the places I've been. If you then tell me it's six years ago, it sounds like a big number. I'm sure, when someone tells you the first time that you came into a Formula One paddock, it's however many years ago, it might be shocking as well. Time goes by and obviously with age, you get a little bit smarter - hopefully. You learn certain things and you get a little more relaxed probably but also it's important to stay childish, stay hungry and do mistakes, otherwise how can you go forward. All in all, looking forward to going home, get some rest, charge some energy to be full charged in America to attack and obviously try to win.
