

## Fl Austin Blog - Sunday press conference

It was an entirely Renault powered trio who graced the Austin post-race press conference, the fifth time this season the engine manufacturer has locked out the podium.

Present were Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), Romain Grosjean (Lotus), and Mark Webber (Red Bull).

Q: Sebastian, I'm still out of breath. How in the world do you do it: eight straight, I mean you're rewriting the record books. Tell us about it. Second last year, top podium step this year. Tell us.

Sebastian VETTEL: I don't know, honestly! It's impossible to know what to say. First of all, I would like to say thanks to the crowd. It's unbelievable. It's only our second race here. Second race here and we've got more than 100,000 people coming on Sunday. I think this is one of the best races we have all season. The whole city is going crazy, so it's phenomenal to race here in front of the crowd. The car was fantastic. It was a bit tight at the start. Romain had a good start initially, I didn't know whether it would be enough. It's tough judgement up the hill and then I just tried to focus on myself. We had incredible pace again in the car and could control the gaps. I don't know, eight in a row is... you are a legend, you know....

Q: Your first win on American soil. Your debut was on American soil as well?

SV: Yes, 2007 in Indianapolis. To come back [to the US] last year and finish on the podium and today to win the race is incredible. I don't know what to say.

Q: Fabulous, congratulations. I guess you're going for nine next week?

SV: We'll try.

Q: Romain, congratulations, your best effort of the season - sixth podium. You have represented Lotus in a very proud way. I guess number one in the team next year, right? Let's make it official. So congratulations. Tell us about your race today?

Romain GROSJEAN: Yeah, good race. Good start, I could pass Mark and almost got Sebastian. The car was working very well today. I'm very proud to represent Lotus and my guys that are working in Enstone. It's a fantastic team. Being between those two cars is our best - everyone did a 100 per cent job. It means a lot to do a podium here in the United States. I like this country. It's always good to come here, so glad, and looking forward to come back on that beautiful track and hopefully next year we'll be one step ahead.

Q: Mark, I guess this is going to be your last stop here in Formula One at the Circuit of the Americas, so not a bad effort today, third, a podium.

Mark WEBBER: Yeah. Obviously pole position was very important yesterday, so I knew it was going to be important and that it would cost me a lot better result today. A little bit disappointed not to qualify better. We knew it was not going to be the easiest to get into turn one from there. We had a good launch, a good start, but then obviously we all wanted to be on the outside. I got a little bit boxed in and then I had to pass Lewis. Then it's not easy to pass Romain. He drove very well. He was very clean on the exit of eight, nine. The DRS in the end was a little bit short on the ratios but in the end that's how you get the ratios for the whole race. So, good job for the whole team and I'm happy to finish on the podium in front of the American fans for the last time, in Formula One anyway. I'll see you next year with the Porsche.

Q: Sebastian, your 12 win this season, seventh from pole, 38th of your career but probably the most important number is that it's the eighth in a row. Never been done before in Formula One. You got a bit fed up answering questions about it in anticipation but now that it's actually happened and you've actually done it, how does it feel?

SV: It's incredible. I think it's one of those things that you never expect to... one of those records that you never expect to be beaten so it's very difficult to find the right words. I didn't really answer the questions the last couple of days because at the end of the day what makes me jump into the car is not a certain number. But certainly today, when you realise that you've done it, it makes you very proud in that moment and, yeah, I think it's very difficult for all of us to realise what it actually means. If you look back, and if you look those names who had similar records or outstanding performances in the past, I think it's impossible to understand. People look back and they talk about that time and about certain drivers and one day people might look back and talk about our time and what we've done as a team. I said it on the team radio, the spirit is fantastic. Everybody's just happy to turn up, give it everything he has and I think - if there is one - that's the secret. Yes, we have a phenomenal car: yes, the car has been mostly very, very reliable but I think it's the mindset we have going in, really trying to give it everything we have, not miss a single step... yeah... How to, after the race, not to turn around and think that there was a little bit left here, a little bit left there. Another very, very, very strong weekend. I think people tend to forget that every single weekend is a challenge on its own. It's not eight weekends as a whole. It's every single weekend. And to have such an incredible run, it's very difficult to realise.

Q: Romain, your sixth podium of the season. I think you just said in your own language that it's one year ago that you became a father. It's been an amazing turn around from last year to this year but obviously this was a race all about your start and particularly then about soaking up the pressure from Mark in the closing stages. Tell us about it.

RG: Yes, exactly. We knew that the start would be crucial for us and then the race, if they were going ahead, they had too much speed for us, basically. They're doing a fantastic job with a phenomenal car, as Seb says. But we can... he spoke about the spirit in his team and I think we have the same: every guy is happy to come in the morning and happy to work and check things. Y'know, drivers will always complain about this and this and this. They change it and it brings us to second at the end of the day. So, a very good start, a very good strategy, same as everyone else - I think I was just a little bit better on the option. I said in my own language that one year ago my wife sent me a picture of a pregnancy test saying that 'well done Champion, you're going to be a Dad!' So America brings me a lot of bliss and pleasure and looking forward to come back here.

Q: Mark from your point of view. Obviously starting second. The initial getaway looked fine but it then was going up the hill that you lost the initiative. I guess your race really was dictated by qualifying yesterday to a large extent but particularly by the getaway today.

MW: Yeah, pole position yesterday was where the fight was. Going to be very difficult from there. I think we were... I was very happy with how I drove today. Got a very good start. You want to be on the outside for Turn One but Romain was already there. I think I made a very good start from the left hand side, which is not the easiest here, so we did what we could. Lewis also was on the outside for clean braking so I had to be a little bit careful with Seb on the inside. And then you've got to clear people and you know when you've got to clear people you use tyres, you use everything up. Romain drove a very good race, he was very strong in the last part of the first sector which you need to be to get out of there. It's super-super difficult to stay close. I did what I could for most of the time but also the tyres are screaming at you for lap after lap and you have to drop back, give them a breather, go again. So, yeah, I did a pretty clean race. I think the performance and pace were very strong from my side but yesterday was when victory was made easier for Seb.

Q: (Frederic Ferret - L'Equipe) Romain, what was the strategy to resist to Mark, and Mark, what were the different things you tried with the KERS?

RG: Well, I think the strategy was pretty clear. We were copying what Mark was doing. When he was pitting for hard tyres, we pitted for hard tyres, if he was pitting for prime or option. Then in the race I was just trying to make as much gap as I could before the DRS zone, so turns eight and nine are pretty hard to follow another car. I think we had a pretty good balance around there and then use all the power we could on the back straight, trying to avoid the DRS and then I know that by turns 17,18,19 it was very difficult to follow me, so he was very close every time into turn one, but never had a go. I think the closest he was into turn 12 was probably ten meters. He pushed me wide once because I outbraked myself but as long as he didn't seem to be too big in the mirror that was fine.

MW: As usual, the Lotus is not too bad on the softer end of the range, if you like, with this tyre we qualified on. Had to do the race start, obviously I had to use the tyre to pass Lewis, so when it was time to build up towards the stop, to be patient, to go as long as possible but also knowing that Romain was covering us off, covering the move and waiting for us to pit because the Enstone guys are not rookies when it comes to strategy either. We knew we would look to have an attack on the prime but also, as you say, moving the KERS round a lot is part of my job, to try and create more pressure. The back straight was OK to use all of it, but the key areas are eight, nine and then the hairpin. It's not the easiest track on which to follow people, I think we saw last year, obviously Seb was in traffic with Lewis, Lewis was very quick but following all the time and couldn't pass. It's a challenging venue still to pass because of turn eight and nine, I think, so in the end we did what we could do. There's not many regrets as to what we could have done differently to get the job done on Romain after that.

Q: (Luis Fernando Ramos - Racing magazine) Mark, we have a Brazilian Grand Prix in one week, so what's your feeling as you go into your final F1 Grand Prix?

MW: I'm looking forward to it, driving round in the middle of the race thinking 'yes, I'm really looking forward to it because it's time', the enjoyment factor is there but it's not like it was when I was at Jaguar or when I first started at Red Bull. That's natural, that's why the decision gets made obviously. The category has changed quite a bit in the last few years, I've done what I can, done my best but when you realise there comes a point where it's not what it once was and that's what happens to all sportsmen and women, there's a point when it's a little bit different. I've got one week to go, I will leave the paddock very satisfied. I've been dealt a very good hand, very proud of what I've achieved. I never thought I would do that when I left Queanbeyan in Australia, to have had the results I've had, to have worked with the amazing people I've worked with, to race against amazing drivers on the best tracks in the world. I've learned a huge amount about myself, about everything. One week to go and go from there. It's the next chapter when I step out of the car for the last time I will be fine with it. Back to UK Sunday night, walk the dogs on Tuesday morning.

Q: (Sarah Holt - CNN) Seb, not such a massive victory margin as we've seen in recent races but still, can you tell us what it's been like to effectively race yourself in the last few races and what's been going through your mind in the car?

SV: It's not as if I've been getting bored. Obviously I've quite a lot to do, looking at the gaps. First of all, I have to match their pace. Obviously when they do come closer it's not the best feeling because you want the gap to increase always, but you don't want the gap to become smaller. I think it was clear this weekend that again we had a very strong package. Friday already looked very good, especially on the long run pace. I think in terms of set-up we might have compromised the pace a little bit yesterday. Also it was very tricky with the windy conditions in qualifying for everyone to get everything right in just one lap. It was very easy to lose out a little bit here and there but today I was happier with the balance. Already on the laps to the grid I could feel the car was more similar to Friday so I was very happy once I was in the lead after turn one. Obviously I had to wait a little bit with the safety car before I could unleash the pace but certainly it's a great feeling when you do pull away, and then it's about pacing yourself, pacing yourself to get the range, to look after the tyres etc. Certainly there are a lot of things going on but also it's a nice feeling to have a little bit of a gap because you can take it a little bit easier in some crucial places, to look after the tyres and benefit from that, especially later on in the stint. Overall, you do tend to have quite a bit of work in the car, it's not necessarily... it is a Sunday afternoon drive but not in that regard.

Q: (Peter Windsor - F1 Racing) Just following on from Sarah's question: Seb, a lot of great drivers say they've never actually driven the perfect lap, and I guess therefore the perfect race has never been driven. How was your race today, we didn't see every corner of every lap. In your own standards, did you make any mistakes at all?

SV: Well, it's different these days. If I compare when I came into Formula One, it was more like sprint racing for twenty laps, get a new set of tyres, refuel and go out and do another sprint. Today, obviously, is different because you don't refuel, the car is very heavy at the beginning and naturally, just because of the way that you have to look after tyres. Now we've seen in the past couple of years that these tyres do need some management as well, also in terms of driving style and looking after them and making sure you don't go crazy too soon, because it might hurt you later on, so therefore, if you look at the perfect lap, you can't repeat a 100 percent lap every time, because you need to look after the car and tyres. In the end, I think what you want to achieve is the fastest race to the finish line. I think we had a very very strong race today. The last couple of laps on the softs I was struggling because I running into traffic and the tyres were falling off so we were actually the first to come in this time, despite the big gap, but then the hards seem to last very very well in the end. We had very strong pace. I think I went a little bit wide once or twice into turn 12 under braking but other than that, I obviously tried as well to keep it on the line. It is a little bit easier if you have a ten second gap to the car behind to not necessarily use all the kerbs here and there, to manage the tyres a little bit better.

Q: (Peter Windsor - F1 Racing) The concentric doughnuts you did afterwards looked beautiful. Do you have any set-up that you put into the car before the race in terms of diff or brake balance, to make that happen?

SV: No, no, definitely not. Obviously there's a couple of tricks, we had some... we do have some show runs every year and this is usually when you get to practise your skills when it comes to doughnuts and burn-outs. It just seemed like a good spot. You know, you have to do it in a smooth way

otherwise I get a big bollocking from my engineers for not looking after gearbox, engine and so on, so I try to be smooth but equally you want to create some smoke and just have fun. But not any maps, particular set-ups that go in the car just because of that.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Seb, what do you think that Michael will tell you about this broken record?

SV: Well, in a way I think I have the same approach as him, as probably every sportsman. I don't think we are jumping into the car to beat certain records. At his time, he was breaking a lot of records and many of them will last forever, I think. To come even close and today to beat one of those is exceptional. I think, as a sportsman, you don't jump into the car to break records and equally you don't expect them to last forever. I spoke to him a couple of weeks ago and generally, I think he's very happy with what he has achieved and seemed fairly relaxed. I think he's riding a lot of horses lately so he's quite happy to go karting with his kids and enjoying his life after Formula One. There's a huge part of our lives if you consider that there's a lot of years left once we retire. It's good to enjoy those as well.

Q: (John Sturbin – Ft. Worth Star-Telegram) Sebastian, on Friday, the technical directors were in here including Adrian Newey talking about next year's changes and how that might upset the balance of power. Is that something you were maybe referring to in your post-race message, you were talking about 'this is something we need to remember?' Are you worried about next year and how it might upset everything?

SV: No, to be honest... Yeah, I remember Adrian said the same thing. I think we have all been there. Yesterday evening I took a shower and I had some thoughts about the day, finishing on pole. It's a little bit of a shame that obviously because of the run we've had lately, people take it as guaranteed that you deliver the result on a Saturday afternoon and Sunday afternoon because I think people tend to in a way respect the result and what it means, the effort behind it and I think it's natural that as an athlete you have ups and downs. Right now, you could say that it's rather more up and then down but you never know what's going to happen, next year is an unknown. I'm sure we will push very very hard and I'm sure we will fight a lot to maintain our position but there's no guarantee that next year will be like this year. With the new regulations coming in, I think nobody really knows where he will stand. You will have the big teams in front but the question is who and the question is also in terms of gaps. Yesterday was one tenth between Mark and myself which is very very small, it's a small gap and certainly there's a reason to believe that next year the gaps will be bigger and the season will be less consistent for everyone. It's unknown at this stage but generally I think we need to remember and therefore enjoy the moment and the days we're having.

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## F1 Austin Blog – Race report

While Sebastian Vettel started the United States Grand Prix in his usual fashion, holding onto the lead off the line and opening up a lead over the course of the first lap, contact between Adrian Sutil and Esteban Gutierrez led to retirement for the Force India driver and an early Safety Car. Despite Bernd Mayländer's arrival on the track, Vettel crossed the line to begin the second lap with 1.6s in hand.

When racing resumed on lap 5, Vettel had a 0.9s lead over Romain Grosjean, who – with Lewis Hamilton – had made short work of passing Mark Webber in the run up to Turn One at the race start. One lap later, and it was up to 1.9s, setting the stage for a record-breaking eighth consecutive victory in a single season from the Red Bull racer.

It may not have been a lights-to-flag win for the German, who briefly lost track position to Grosjean before the Frenchman's stop, but at no stage of the race was there any doubt about the identity of the man who would be gracing the top step of the Austin podium. Behind Vettel, there were few changes to the order aside from typical shuffling around the first round of stops.

Pirelli's decision to bring the hard and medium compounds to the Circuit of the Americas provided fans with a taste of 2014 racing as it might be if the tyre supplier delivers on their promise – threat? – to deliver tyres designed to endure, bringing about a return to the deathly dull one-stop races that were a feature of the Bridgestone era.

With the medium compound easily lasting 27 laps for most of the grid, one-stop strategies were the name of the game for the bulk of the pack, with Paul di Resta, Heikki Kovalainen, Felipe Massa, and Esteban Gutierrez the only exceptions. It was the wrong strategy call to make, with the quartet all finishing far from the points despite not encountering any problems during their individual stops.

Behind Vettel there were some moments of drama in the chasing pack, but tussles for position in groups fighting for tenth, eleventh, and twelfth place are not the stuff classic grands prix are made of.

Nico Hulkenberg was one of the men responsible for some of the more interesting moments of the afternoon, fighting hard with Sergio Perez in the opening phase of the race before Fernando Alonso joined in on the fun, fighting to secure as many points as possible to help Ferrari in what is looking like a battle already won against Lotus in the constructors' championship.

Hulkenberg won the battle for fifth place in the first phase of the race, and when the German driver emerged from the pits on primes on lap 28, he returned to the track back in fifth, shuffled there by the stops around him. Alonso had pitted one lap earlier, returning to the track in seventh, and the Ferrari driver proceeded to spend the next 18 laps chasing down the Sauber before eventually making it past on lap 45.

Having made it past Hamilton for third on lap 13, Webber then spent the rest of the afternoon giving chase to Grosjean. The gap between the two men waxed and waned over the course of the US grand prix, with Webber setting a series of purple laps to reduce the Frenchman's lead, but at no point was the Australian in with a realistic chance of making it past the Lotus. Instead, Webber concentrated on getting his car to the chequered flag, Hamilton a distant memory 20 seconds behind him on track.

### 2013 United States Grand Prix results

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1h39m17.148s
2. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) + 6.284s
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) + 8.396s
4. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) + 27.358s

5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) + 29.592s
6. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) + 30.400s
7. Sergio Perez (McLaren) + 46.692s
8. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) + 54.509s
9. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) + 59.141s
10. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 1m17.278s
11. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) + 1m21.004s
12. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) + 1m26.914s
13. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) + 1m31.707s
14. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) + 1m35.063s
15. Paul di Resta (Force India) + 1m36.853s
16. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) + 1m24.574s\*
17. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) + 1 lap
18. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) + 1 lap
19. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) + 1 lap
20. Charles Pic (Caterham) + 1 lap
21. Max Chilton (Marussia) + 1 lap

Adrian Sutil (Force India) RET

\* After the race, Jean-Eric Vergne was issued with a time penalty for colliding with Esteban Gutierrez on the last lap, dropping the Toro Rosso racer from P12 to P16.

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## FI Austin Blog - Saturday press conference

There was a certain sense of deja vu about the line-up for Saturday's post-qualifying press conference at Austin's Circuit of the Americas.

Present were Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), Mark Webber (Red Bull), and Romain Grosjean (Lotus).

Q: Sebastian, you saved the best 'til last there. A satisfying pole I imagine here in America, in very difficult conditions it looked like today, and also on a special day for your team boss Christian Horner, his 40th birthday.

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, happy birthday to Christian. Obviously a good result to have both cars in the front row for tomorrow. It was a tricky session because the wind, I think, picked up quite a lot from this morning and... yeah, it does influence the behaviour of the cars so, not that easy, especially around the high-speed corners. I wasn't that happy with my first run in Q3 but I think I had a solid run at the end which I think was enough to put the car on pole. I think it was very close with Mark, he seemed to get closer and closer the longer the weekend went on. Fortunately I could just manage to stay ahead. I think he might have had a mistake in his final shot but yeah, obviously very happy with pole position today. I really like this place, I like the circuit and looking forward to tomorrow. I think it's important as well to start on the clean side, so we'll see what we can do.

Q: Mark, did you think you'd done enough after that first run? A tenth and a half over Sebastian in Q3, doesn't happen all that often. Where did it go wrong in that final run?

Mark WEBBER: No, I didn't think I'd done enough, you need to improve. Obviously there are two shots, we both had two sets of options. The first part of the lap was very good, I was happy with that. Didn't quite get 19 and 20 as I wanted. If I just repeated what I did initially in Q3 probably it was going to be enough but tried to squeeze a bit more out. It's easy to unload the car a little bit in these conditions, so yeah, sometimes you're happy that you've given your best and you're on the front row but today one slipped through the fingers. But anyway we're up there and well done to Seb, obviously. He put the three sectors together so... I put two-and-half together and just dropped it in the last sector, so, yeah, it's not satisfying when you do that. It's not your job to do that. Pushing the boundaries and overall, yeah, pretty happy to be there.

Q: Romain, pretty consistent form from you, your third top-three qualifying in the last six grands prix, already five podiums in this season. Some good momentum behind you at the moment.

Romain GROSJEAN: Yeah, I think we are doing a good job. It wasn't an easy weekend for us. We struggled a little bit yesterday and this morning. I think conditions are not so easy starting early in the morning - and I don't like to wake-up early as well so it doesn't make it easy. And then I think quali went pretty good. We did manage to go through Q1 on prime. That wasn't the plan but we were quick enough and then, quickest of the rest but it seems that those blue guys are very, very quick. We have to still try to catch them, the race is long and, y'know we will see what we can do with the strategy and everything but it's good to be here and good to show that we are still in the front row.

Q: Sebastian, looking towards tomorrow's race. Are you someone who feels a sense of unfinished business, given what happened in the way you lost the race here last year? Is it important for you to tick this one off?

SV: Ah, well, I think no regrets to last year. Obviously it was a tight battle with Lewis. I think in the end he was just a little bit quicker so we were having a hard time to stay ahead of him. Obviously the way he then passed was not the nicest way with traffic but, y'know, it's a long time ago, so looking forward to tomorrow and, as I said, I like the circuit. Yeah, definitely, if you have the chance to win then you want to go for it. At the moment things are looking good. We did the job right today, focus on tomorrow but we go step-by-step. It's a long race, tyres could be tricky. I think the strategy should be more or less clear but then again with these tyres you never know.

Q: So Sebastian, obviously you made it through Q1 only using the harder tyres, a tactic that all three of you adopted. I'm interested though in your final run in Q3. It's not the first time that we've seen you do this where you perhaps hold back a fraction in the first sector in order to have more performance in the final sector which is where you seem to make the difference today. Is that a conscious tactic or just the way things worked out?

SV: Well, I think first of all Mark is quick in the high-speed stuff, so I knew it will always be close. I think he was a little bit quicker in sector one. But you're right, obviously, it's a long lap. Especially the first run in Q3. I started to feel a little bit uncomfortable with the rears at the end of the second sector and then in the last sector, so... yeah, I think I got it a little bit better the last time around but also tried to... well, you can't look after the tyres

that much on one lap but just tried to keep it clean, get a clean lap. I knew I had more pace than the first run, so managed to do that and fortunately managed to get pole.

Q: Mark, twice pole, once second in the last four races. A very competitive run of form at the very end of your Formula One career. Not having second thoughts about retiring, given how well you're going?

MW: No, that's why it was so frustrating to not get pole today. Would have been good to get another one off Seb at the end with a few grey hairs – but didn't happen, he did the lap. Anyway, I'm having no second thoughts. Good timing for me. Hand over to quicker guys.

Q: You seem to be driving with a lot of confidence. Is it because you're feeling very relaxed, heading for the exit door?

MW: I don't think so. I think the tyres, when they're fresh-ish I can still turn not a bad lap. So, confident we can have a good race tomorrow. It's a pretty nice circuit with some nice, fast sections at the start. All in all my form this year in terms of pace hasn't been ridiculous. Obviously Seb's been still pretty strong in quali overall but we know we've performed pretty strong in terms of pace in general. Obviously we've lost a huge amount of points for other reasons but want to finish the year strongly and hopefully we can do that again tomorrow.

Q: Romain, you too got through Q1 using only the harder tyres. It's not the first time that you've done that. It's a fairly confident thing to do, given that the cut-off is quite marginal sometimes. It's caught you out at other times. Can you talk a little about the confidence you've felt going into this session – and did you always feel throughout Q1 that you were going to get away with it again?

RG: To be honest, it wasn't the plan today. After India I think we had to take a little bit of caution, the team constructors' is very important to us so it wasn't the plan to go... we were prime and option but basically the car felt very good on prime, lap time was good enough and when I came back they told me "that may be good enough", and then it was. So an easier time than what we knew previously.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sebastian, what does it mean for you, this pole position, after such a tough fight against Mark?

SV: Well, I think both of us would like to have the upper hand. I think two weeks ago I felt like Mark probably feels now and I feel like he felt two weeks ago, so obviously very happy for myself. I had a good run in the end. I think it's always tricky to go with the track on Saturday afternoon, as the track is changing, I think you are able to extract more and more from the tyres, given that you set up the car in the right way. It's not that simple but I think it's the same for all of us, so happy that we did the job today and as I touched on earlier, I think it's important for the race, so now focusing on the start.

Q: (Peter Hubbard – COTA PR) Mark, during qualifying and practice three there were several spins on turn 19; was it wet down there? What seemed to be the problem, several drivers went off at that point?

MW: Turn 19 is quite blind, you can't quite see the apex, you have to imagine that our eyes are very low in the cockpit so when you go there in a Formula One car it's not easy to see the apex so you have a little bit of a leap of faith in terms of how accurate you can be in the first part. Sometimes you run out of road, sometimes you don't. I was in that club in the last part of Q3. It's easy to not get that right just because of the blind nature of the corner.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Seb, can you explain the shake 'n' bake reference that we heard over the radio messages at the end of qualifying between you and your engineer?

SV: Well, he started it! Yeah, I think there was a movie a couple of years ago which was about racing and I think it was more a piss-take than an actual movie. It was a nice quote, I think it suits. Obviously we're in America... especially my engineer has a lot of history here, knows a lot of people, he did a lot of racing (here) early in his career. You need to ask him whether it's what he used to say when he secured pole position in the US.

Q: (John Sturbin – Ft. Worth Star-Telegram) Sebastian, if you win tomorrow, will you continue the doughnut celebration thing, very American?

SV: Well, to worry about that is a nice problem to have but first of all we have to focus on tomorrow's race. I'm sure Mark will try everything to get past as well as the people behind – Romain and so on – so it will be a long race, there are a lot of things that can happen. I think we always push the car to the limit so you never know what might happen, therefore I don't think it's the highest priority to be honest to worry about that right now. I think it has to happen very spontaneously.

Q: Because you are going for your eighth consecutive win tomorrow which would be a new record if you pull it off? Do the numbers matter to you at this point?

SV: Well, I think maybe I'm not that clever so I'm not trying to think that much about these things. Lately I seem to have succeeded so I think it's not the right mindset to go into the race thinking about a higher target than just the race. So I think we've done pretty well with that kind of approach so far, the last couple of years, so I don't see a reason to change.

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## F1 Austin Blog – Saturday report

With penalties for Jenson Button and Charles Pic going into qualifying, Sunday's grid will look rather different to Saturday's classification.

One thing that is not expected to change, however, is Vettel's permanent spot at the sharp end of the grid. The Red Bull racer dominated both FP2 and FP3, and would almost certainly have ruled FP1 had the session been a typical one not curtailed by fog and absent helicopters. Such was the team's confidence going into Q1 that Vettel and Webber remained in the garage for much of the session, emerging only for a quick run on the prime compound when the track was nearly empty.

There was impending drama for Pastor Maldonado, who was on a speed run when he came across the Sauber of Esteban Gutierrez at Turn 20. The latter man was weaving as he warmed his tyres, and there was a close call which the stewards investigated after qualifying.

Despite strong winds that slowed the drivers as they lapped the circuit, the Q1 cut-off was 1m39.094s, something the Red Bulls were easily able to manage on hards as their rivals opted for the safety of mediums. But with the Q1 dropout zone usually a fixed quantity, it was in Q2 that the action

became interesting.

The early Q2 runners headed straight out on mediums, faced with a track two degrees cooler than it had been in Q1. The falling temperatures plus increasing winds added to the challenge faced by the drivers in the 15 minutes of Q2.

Webber went straight to the top of the timesheets on his first run, shod in mediums, while Vettel pulled off his customary trick of finding pace where others have none, crossing the line with two-tenths in hand over the opposition. The medium was the tyre of choice for all 16 runners in what proved to be a close-fought session in the middle of the pack, from Esteban Gutierrez' 1m38.031s that put the Mexican in P8 down to Nico Rosberg in P14 with a 1m38.364s lap.

Having topped the timesheets in Q2 with a comfortable three-tenths in hand over his teammate in second place, pole was there for Vettel's taking on Saturday afternoon in Austin. Making life slightly easier for the drivers was the fact that the track and air temperatures had stayed consistent between sessions.

Webber topped the timesheets with a 1m36.699s lap, and contrary to expectations Vettel did not better that on his first run, crossing the line in 1m36.851s, with plenty of time to spare for further attempts. Romain Grosjean in third was 1.1s behind Vettel, emphasising the speed advantage Red Bull have at every circuit.

Valtteri Bottas, who has been on stunning form all afternoon, snatched provisional third from Grosjean but was still one second behind the slower of the two Red Bulls, sparking fears of a very dull race on Sunday. Nico Hulkenberg got closer, with a 1m37.2s, while Grosjean trimmed the gap to Red Bull by another tenth, as Vettel shocked no one by claiming pole with a 1m36.338s lap.

#### Provisional grid

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m36.338s
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m36.441s
3. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m37.155s
4. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m37.296s
5. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m37.345s
6. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m37.376s
7. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m37.452s
8. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1m37.715s
9. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m37.836s
10. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m38.034s
  
11. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m38.131s
12. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m38.139s
13. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m38.364s
14. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m38.592s
15. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m38.696s
16. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m38.217s \*
  
17. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m39.250s
18. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m39.351s
19. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m40.491s
20. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m40.528s
21. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m41.401s
22. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m40.596s \*\*

\* Jenson Button qualified in P, but incurred a three-place grid penalty for overtaking under red flags in F1 and will start from P.

\*\* Charles Pic qualified in P21, but incurred a five-place grid penalty for an unscheduled gearbox change and will start from P22.

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## F1 Austin Blog - Friday press conference

For the last time this year, it was the technical boffins who were called by the FIA to face the media at the Friday press conference.

Present were James Allison (Ferrari), Nick Chester (Lotus), Paddy Lowe (Mercedes), Sam Michael (McLaren), Adrian Newey (Red Bull), and Rob White (RenaultSport F1).

Q: Three of the gentlemen here are, of course, in new roles, one within the same team, in Nick's case, but in Paddy and James within different teams, so plenty to talk about. James, can I start with you? How big is the job you've taken on at Ferrari and what's it going to take to get back to winning ways?

James ALLISON: I think technical director at any Formula One team is a very big job, it certainly doesn't leave room for much else than the job in your life, Ferrari is an extremely prestigious Formula One team with a lot of resource and an extremely high level of expectation. There is really no result other than winning that is good enough at Ferrari. So there is a lot of pressure to make sure I play my part in achieving that, but it is a wholly realistic ambition. It's a team with the kit, with the resource, with the people and with the drivers to get the job done, so looking forward to being there when it happens.

Q: You've been in the post for a few months now, what's your assessment of what you've seen so far? Have you seen where changes need to be made and have you already started making those changes?

JA: I've, first of all, been very fortunate to arrive at Ferrari at a point in their cycle when a lot of the changes necessary to return to the front rank – I mean right at the front rank, i.e. winning championships – a lot of the changes necessary to do that have been put in place by Pat Fry. I think I'm particularly lucky to have arrived and been able to benefit from those investments rather than having to start them from scratch. There is much more to be done but I'm a lucky chap to be picking up where I am.

Q: Thanks for the moment. Coming to you Nick. Obviously we have to start with Heikki Kovalainen and his performance this afternoon – fifth fastest in the free practice session. Was that as impressive within the team as it looked from the outside?  
Nick CHESTER: Yes, it was. We feel he's done a brilliant job today, particularly with all the procedures and getting used to driving a new car. We felt it might take a little bit of time. But actually straight away in P1 he was already looking after the car very well and in P2 he was fifth quickest and good long runs, I think he's done a great job today.

Q: Like James, you've been in your role for a little bit of time now, taking over from James at the Lotus team. What's your route forward? Are you going to continue the path he had set or have you got some changes you want to make in the technical structure?

NC: There are a few changes. There are a couple of areas where we felt things could be moved on. Those are going into place now. Most of it's a good baseline. It's a very good team and there are a lot of good guys there. But there are always chances to look at things you could do better and you have to move those things on when you can.

Q: Thank you for that. Paddy, coming to you. Like these other two gentlemen, you're a few months into your position at Mercedes. What excites you about the role you have and how do you see it evolving over the next period of time?

Paddy LOWE: It's fantastic to come to a team like Mercedes, they've got a very positive momentum. We've seen the progress made since last year through to this season. So it's just fantastic to come into that team. Had a great welcome from Ross and all the other people there. It's just very exciting to build on that. I really feel I can make a difference, but they're already in a great place, with momentum going the same way.

Q: Obviously, you're locked in a fight for second place in the Constructors' Championship with James' team and Nick's team. You've got it at the moment. If you were to finish there on Sunday in Sao Paulo – second in the championship – would you consider that a success for Mercedes this year, particularly given the distance behind Red Bull. And also, would it build a sense of expectation within the Mercedes board in terms of 2014?

PL: Absolutely. Formula One is a very tough business and you can't build to championships from nowhere. Our target this year was actually to come third, so if we can get third or exceed third that would be meeting our ambitions. We very much hope we can get second and that would be a fantastic platform from which to mount an attack for the championship next year. But we have tough rivals around us, so we're not underestimating how difficult that would be.

Q: And expectations from the board if you were to do that [finish second]? Would that be a positive thing or would that put extra pressure on you?

PL: We get tremendous support from the board. Daimler is a very big company, with a huge, long pedigree of motor racing success. They're full of support for us but they want us to win, clearly, and that what we want to do.

Q: Coming to you Sam. Obviously we have to start by talking about the decision this week to replace Sergio Perez with Kevin Magnussen. Simple question: why was this the right thing to do?

Sam MICHAEL: I think it doesn't overshadow the fact that we haven't had a good enough car this year, I think that's been pretty well documented, so it's one of those decisions that every team takes every year. You look and assess where your capabilities are where you think you can improve and the view internally is that we could improve by going with Magnussen. As I said, Checo's doing a fantastic job at the moment considering the pressure that he's under. He's keeping his head level and being very professional about it. So, very commendable his approach over the recent races, and as recently as this one. It's obviously a discussion that's been going on for quiet some time. It's always going to be difficult when you make a call like that. But I think we're in a very fortunate position at the moment with our young driver programme, in that it's very rich with talent and Kevin's just the first of the guys in that pool. I've come across lots of drivers in my time in Formula One and when you see drivers like that come along, it's very important that you react and make the most of those opportunities. So really, it's always a twofold thing. It's what you currently have and what you can do to improve yourself. To be honest, it's not that much different with engineers and designers and all your people. You're always looking to add and improve the team. Clearly, the driver is much more in the public eye, because there's only two of them and they're in the race cars at any one time. Anyway, it's a decision the team has taken and we're looking forward from here.

Q: Jenson Button was saying yesterday that there's a lot of work to do with the new technology for 2014 with these cars and obviously it's an extra challenge having a rookie driving one of the two cars. To what extent have you factored that into your plans and is there an element of risk there?

SM: I think we've factored all of those sort of things into what we're doing, including the testing he's done for us already, all the simulator work, his performance in the lower categories and any sort of work that we can do between now and the start of next season. I think with the rule change – and it is a huge rule change, on the powertrain and aerodynamics – the way you drive the cars is going to be quite different. We've already done quite a lot of work in the simulator on that at this point and, if anything, it probably lends itself some good opportunities for change. To be honest you can argue that either way: you can argue and say experience is going to count; you can also argue the benchmark is being reset. But ultimately it's four tyres on the ground that you drive as quick as you can around a circuit. We've got a good balance of Jenson, who's a world champion, plenty of experience, and if you're going to have the risk that you take of putting a young guy in – because there inevitably is – then it's a good time to do it.

Q: Adrian, obviously the standout story of this season is the way that you have developed this Red Bull car and also, Sebastian's way of driving it. Now that the title is decided and obviously the technology is obsolete for next year, can you tell us how you did it?

Adrian NEWEY: There's no magic bullet, it's the usual development story I think. This year's car was a very close cousin of last year's. Relatively small evolutions over the winter with essentially stable regulations. So really started this year where we left off last year from a car point of view and it was just about developing it, understanding it. I think the change in tyres back to the 2012 tyres was also obviously something that had an effect on the car and possibly suited us – it's difficult to know exactly. So general development, no magic.

Q: Obviously continuity is an important part of your success, as it was with Ferrari's ten years ago. You're losing one of your

closest lieutenants in Peter Prodromou who's moving on at some point in the next couple of years. What's your feeling on that? How disappointed are you in that and how difficult is it to keep a winning group together?

AN: Movement is the nature of Formula One – and you only have to look at the people sitting at this table. I think it's healthy in many ways that there is a bit of movement otherwise it would all go stale. I am sad that Peter's leaving because I've worked with him for many years but I guess he has his reasons for wanting to move on. I think we've got good strength in depth in Red Bull so we will carry on as well.

Q: Rob, as Adrian was saying, there has been a fair bit of movement between teams of engineers and obviously the same thing's been going on to some extent within engine builders as well. As a result of that do you feel you have a better understanding now of where you stand relative to Mercedes and Ferrari in terms of 2014 technology – and where do you think that is?

Rob WHITE: I think the first thing to say is that traditionally – and it's still the case – there's perhaps a less volatile environment amongst the engine people and that remains the case and there hasn't been substantial movement around. Answering the question about does that give us insight into where we stand relative to the other guys in 2014, we have very little way of knowing where we shall be in 2014 relative to the others. At the moment, it's absolutely about getting the best out of our own programme, making the best of the resources that we have. I feel that we have everything that we need to do a good job but we're now in a phase where actually delivering is absolutely the top of everybody's job list.

Q: And how much will driving styles have to change next year, do you think and how much slower or how much faster will the cars be do you believe than they are this year?

RW: I think driving style... I'm not sure I can give a good answer to that but one of the things that I think will be important and perhaps a differentiating factor is just the capacity to get the most out of these new and complex power units and the way in which they'll be operated over the course of the race weekend. Clearly we've had some idea of what this would entail for some long time but we're getting up close and personal now with the necessary tools and procedures necessary to do that. Some of the underlying engineering work is still under way. Some of the code-writing in order to execute the necessary control systems on the cars is still under way and the tools that the engineers and technicians in the garage will use to look after it all is still work in progress. I think the drivers adapting to the new environment will be something that will be interesting to watch.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and National Speedsport News) For the five chassis guys, how do you see next season unfolding and what is the target for your team?

NC: Our target is to carry on where we've been now, so try and be around the top three in the constructors. It's a bit hard to say how it's going to develop right from this point. The changes are so big, it's the biggest change in regulations that I've seen in 20 years in the sport and there's going to be a lot of different solutions. It will be very interesting to see what everyone takes to the first race. There will be different solutions for aerodynamics and some cars will be better packaged than others.

SM: I think that Nick's right about the magnitude of change. I think it's going to be a development war all the way through the season and probably into the next year as well, it's such a big change to not just the powertrain but the aerodynamics and knowing that the slope that we currently have in the wind tunnel... when you have a slope so steep, then it normally means that you're far away from the optimum when you first make these type of changes. The powertrain is probably bigger in reality and probably more visible because you have such a brand new gearbox, brand new engine, completely new ERS system and don't underestimate how developed these current powertrains are on all fronts because they've been... especially the engine, obviously, but also the gearbox so those changes are significant as well. I'm sure you will see different levels of reliability, even though teams are much better now than what they used to be 10/15 years ago with dynos and simulations etc, there's nothing that has anywhere near... you can't replicate the almost decade of powertrain mileage on the track across different teams so I think that's going to be a big player in the next year and potentially a bit longer.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and National Speedsport News) And the team's target?

SM: To win.

JA: Ferrari's target is always to win. As far as how next year will work out, I think that the size of the rule change means that there will be some unanticipated reshuffling of the pack in terms of where all the teams will find themselves in the pecking order. However, I think – notwithstanding the size of the changes – over the years it's been fairly clear that the teams, although they're hundreds of people in different places end up producing cars independent of one another that come together and are very competitive with one another and I would expect that to be true next year as well. I would also imagine that the first half of next year is likely to be heavily affected by reliability. Next year's rule changes are big enough, just in terms of the configuration of the car but they also place a much higher burden of reliability on us as well.

Q: Adrian, Mark Webber was saying that he sees Red Bull as the clear favourites for next year. Do you see it that way?

AN: Don't know to be perfectly honest. I think that first of all, as James said, the cars are hugely complex compared to the cars that we've been used to. The level of reliability that everybody's achieving now is the result of a lot of evolution on what actually looks a relatively simple product compared to what we're facing next year so I think reliability's going to be quite an issue for the teams, could well be a deciding factor in the championship, who knows? And then, as everybody's said, then effectively you can divide it into the very large powertrain regulation changes which is obviously in the powertrain itself down to the three manufacturers for next year, but then from the team's point of view, how you install the engines and the power train... I'm sure there's going to be a lot of different solutions to start with to what is a very complicated problem.

PL: Our target is to win and I think the exciting aspect about next year is that we return to competition amongst engines. The last seven or eight years, the engine has been a frozen product. Of course there are differences between the engines but not in the way they used to be, so we return to an issue of a campaign not just with the chassis but with the power unit as well and I think that's really exciting and a good thing for Formula One.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) James, having worked with Kimi for a while at Lotus, how important do you feel your familiar face will be to him at the start of next season to ensure that he hits the ground running?

JA: I don't think it will make much difference to Kimi at all! Beautiful though I am, I don't think I have a massive impact on his life. Kimi's relationship with the team is predominantly with the people that are at the track, racing the car, with him, with his race engineer and with the chief race engineer and the people that campaign round the world with him. My job is mainly a factory-based one and while I would try to lead a factory team that is sensitive to what the drivers are saying about the car and hopefully making the most of the feedback that they give us, my day-to-day interaction with the drivers is not overly extensive.

Q: (Karen Crouse – New York Times) Adrian, what are the one or two qualities Sebastian possesses that you think separates him from all the other drivers right now?

AN: Crikey. I think he, like all the true greats, then he has the ability to drive the car and at the same time have enough mental reserve to be able to understand how he's driving the car and be able to play that back and understand when to push and when not to, how the race is unfolding. I think he



has very good recall which means that when he gets out of the car he's able to play back in his own mind what he's experienced, digest that. He works hard in the evenings with the race engineers and the result of all that is that when he steps in the car again the next day he's learned that little bit more. You apply that over many races then he keeps improving.

Q: (Edd Straw – Autosport) Question for the three in the front row: obviously, from a performance point of view the answer is not at all, but how important is it that Formula One cars look really good, look spectacular and therefore how important is it that the regulations that dictate what the cars look like are conceived with that in mind?

PL: Yes, it's an interesting question. I think, in the end, cars tend to look good when they're quick, so we take a while to get used to change but it's surprising how you look back at old cars and they suddenly don't look so attractive when you didn't like the change that came. But I think any car that actually is quick tends to start looking good, that's my view.

Q: James, do you agree with that?

JA: Yeah. I think if you look back over the years there are some prettier years than other years. When 2009 came along, I didn't like the look of those cars at all but I'm wholly used to it now and I think they look pretty sexy. The stepped nose... again, I didn't like that to start with but I'm OK with it now. So I think as a technical team, we really have a duty to try and make the thing quick rather than make it beautiful. Hopefully the beauty is got for free along the way.

Q: Adrian, are aesthetics important to you when you put a car together?

AN: They are important but they are kind of dictated by the rules inasmuch as technically obviously our job is to try and make the car as quick as possible rather than to win any styling awards so we are at the mercy of the regulations in that regard. I must admit that I think the regulations have caused some ugly areas... in terms of the stepped nose I think aren't as attractive as they used to be. Probably, in truth, the narrow track cars I don't think have ever looked quite as attractive as... they've always looked a bit out of proportion compared to the pre-'98 cars. The low nose that we have next year, I think there could be some fairly awkward looking aesthetics, nose arising. So it's something that in my view should be given a bit more consideration when the regulations are drawn up.

Q: (Craig Scarborough – Scarbs F1) You've all spoken - looking towards next year - about unreliability being a big issue; with winter testing being quite a limited amount of time... you can obviously spend a lot of time with red flags with your cars in the garage, how's that going to affect your winter testing approach, and equally, is there a case for two car test teams now?

NC: Well obviously it puts a lot of impetus to make sure we get to the first test with a car that can run as much as possible, so that means you put a lot more effort into the dyno work and you try and get there with something that's going to get you out on track as much as possible but I think everyone's expecting they're going to find a few problems. I think the development through the first three tests and up to the first race will be very strong.

RW: In real life, the opportunity to substantially change the specification as a result of what happens in testing independent of the timing, give or take a week or two, is quite limited but it's absolutely a key part of the final phase of preparation to go racing. Yeah, reliability is a tough call. We have to aim for the same place, which is of course not to break down, not to stop the car. It's more difficult to achieve because the systems are more complicated, more numerate on the car. It's more difficult to achieve because the durability requirement is higher. Coming back to the question: how would it affect the way we approach testing, I think paradoxically then we have a responsibility to be more ready and to be aiming to role-play the race weekend right from the very start of private testing. I'm sure that there's so much new stuff to come in all of the procedures in every stage of the weekend that we'll going to be trying to practise those right from the get-go.

SM: I think it's the same as what those guys said, it's going to be pretty tight in that time. If you have major problems they are difficult to solve, not impossible, that's what F1 teams are quite capable of proving, impossible things are possible in that short period of time as with all the experience round here. So I think it's an entirely necessary area. If you get into fundamental redesign such as bearing issues or cooling problems, they can be quite damaging but I don't think it really changes... I think in terms of... one of your questions was about two car testing, I think one of the reasons for going with a single car was cost and containment. I think in terms of parts and things like that, it would be a pretty tall order to go and produce two cars at this stage of the day.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Paddy, we've had a lot of speculation about Ross's position over the past month or so. Are you able to shed any more light on that, going forward, your prospects of taking over as team principal? Is it being mentioned at all in any meetings with Daimler etc?

PL: There's been a lot of talk about this in the last few months, you're right. The fact is that Ross will step back at some point. It's not clear what the timing is for that or whether he will step back completely or remain in a different role within the team. At the moment we're waiting for Ross's call on that. In the meantime, I'm working very well with Ross and with Toto, there's no issue there, we work very well together. I would like to say there's no impatience on that aspect, so we'll just have to wait and see how it turns out.

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## F1 Austin Blog – Friday report

The Austin Grand Prix weekend got off to something of a shaky start on Friday morning, with FPI delayed by forty minutes due to heavy fog. When the pitlane finally opened for business there was a scant fifteen minutes of track action before 'further problems with the medical helicopter' – which did not appear to be on site – led to the session being red flagged.

Unusually, FPI began without the medical helicopter present. The presumption was that the chopper was airborne and en route to the track from nearby Austin airport, which is why the session was started without it, but that when it emerged that the helicopter was in fact nowhere near, the red flag was necessary. At 10.28, two minutes before FPI was set to end, the helicopter finally arrived and the session was restarted with thirty-one minutes on the clock.

It was a serious blow for Daniil Kvyat, who was set to make his grand prix debut for Sauber on Friday morning. The Russian driver – like fellow FPI reserve replacements Alexander Rossi and Rodolfo Gonzalez – was limited to half an hour's running on what should have been a ninety minute debut.

Fernando Alonso was fastest for Ferrari at the end of the truncated session, closely followed by Jenson Button and Valtteri Bottas. The only incident

of note – other than the helicopter chaos – came about via Gonzalez, who stopped his Marussia on track with two minutes remaining.

Shortly before FP2 began, the FIA announced that Button had been issued with a three-place grid penalty for overtaking under red flags during the morning session.

The second practice session was a far more traditional affair, dominated by Sebastian Vettel for most of the afternoon. The quadruple world champion was knocked off the top slot briefly by Nico Rosberg and Mark Webber when they made an earlier switch to the medium compound, but Vettel's first option run saw him back in his usual position at the head of the pack.

Max Chilton suffered brake failure towards the end of FP2 that resulted in the Marussia being abandoned at the final corner as the recovery truck struggled to remove the vehicle: the end of the session was run under yellow flags as a consequence.

Special mention should be made of Heikki Kovalainen, who was quickly back in the swing of things in his first day as a Lotus driver. The Finn ended FP2 in fifth place, two-tenths faster than temporary teammate Romain Grosjean.

#### FP1 times (unofficial)

1. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m38.343s [16 laps]
2. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m38.371s [25 laps]
3. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m38.388s [17 laps]
4. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m38.532s [18 laps]
5. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m38.657s [21 laps]
6. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m38.979s [21 laps]
7. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m39.005s [17 laps]
8. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m39.083s [17 laps]
9. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m39.158s [17 laps]
10. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m39.200s [15 laps]
11. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m39.238s [13 laps]
12. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m39.256s [17 laps]
13. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1m39.487s [18 laps]
14. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m39.699s [15 laps]
15. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m39.836s [15 laps]
16. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m39.863s [19 laps]
17. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m40.065s [20 laps]
18. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m40.662s [21 laps]
19. Alexander Rossi (Caterham) 1m41.399s [21 laps]
20. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m41.605s [19 laps]
21. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m42.054s [19 laps]
22. Rodolfo Gonzalez (Marussia) 1m43.716s [17 laps]

#### FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m37.305s [35 laps]
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m37.420s [37 laps]
3. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m37.785s [38 laps]
4. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m37.958s [38 laps]
5. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1m38.073s [41 laps]
6. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m38.229s [40 laps]
7. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m38.254s [40 laps]
8. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m38.255s [33 laps]
9. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m38.269s [34 laps]
10. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m38.461s [33 laps]
11. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m38.719s [31 laps]
12. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m38.938s [37 laps]
13. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m38.941s [31 laps]
14. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m39.246s [28 laps]
15. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m39.410s [34 laps]
16. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m39.512s [37 laps]
17. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m39.579s [36 laps]
18. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m39.784s [33 laps]
19. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m40.376s [39 laps]
20. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m40.563s [35 laps]
21. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m46.226s [31 laps]
22. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m47.009s [20 laps]

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## F1 Austin Blog - Thursday press conference

The Thursday press conference in Austin was a primarily Latin line-up, but the vast majority of drivers in attendance were men whose F1 futures are far from being assured.

Present were Jules Bianchi (Marussia), Paul di Resta (Force India), Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber), Pastor Maldonado (Williams), and Sergio Perez (McLaren).

Q: Sergio, we know that you're leaving McLaren, because you've told us that, and obviously we learned today who will be replacing you, but could you explain how this came about and particularly the timing?

Sergio PEREZ: First of all, hi everyone. As you already said, on the letter I did, and I published that. There is no secret. Everything came really late, which puts me in a very difficult position for my future. But at the end it came. I'm relieved. Obviously, McLaren is a great team, I have nothing bad to say about them. I really want to wish them the best. We have had a very difficult season all year long. It was definitely not what I was expecting and also not what McLaren was expecting, especially as when I signed for them they had such a competitive car and it's not what we have right now and we didn't have it all season long. It's no secret that it has been a disappointing year for both parts. McLaren decided to go another route, I have to find my own route and hopefully I can find the best possible seat available for my career, because I am only 23-years-old, I have a lot to give to the sport and I really hope I find a good seat.

Q: As you say, it's all happening quite late now. What are your options for next year and do you feel there is still time, because it seems a very fluid driver market at the moment?

SP: There's no secret, it's very, very difficult right now. I know there are some options. As I said before, I want to stay in Formula One but I will not stay in F1 just to stay. If I don't find the right option for myself then I have to look at something else but I'm pretty confident something good will happen and hopefully I find a good seat. I think I have a lot to offer a team. I have been three years in F1, one year with McLaren. A very difficult year but I think I learn a lot. I think this year, although it has been very difficult and probably one of the worst in terms of results for myself, I think I am a good driver and I can do good things out there.

Q: Thank you for that. Moving on to you Esteban. Obviously you've been doing pretty well lately, a big score for you in Japan. What's been the catalyst do you think for your turnaround in the last period?

Esteban GUTIERREZ: Well it's all related to a balance between how conservative you want to be and how risky you want to be and how much you want to put yourself in a risky position. It all takes time. In Formula One right now there's not a lot of testing, I didn't do a lot of testing at the beginning of the year and a lot of things I took time to adapt to. Somehow during the year I was gaining a lot of experience even though the team situation was not the best. There was always quite a lot of distractions around with the economical situation but finally I found myself through a good challenge and to find myself and to find the right balance on every aspect and then decided to do a step into the more aggressive side and it worked out pretty well. This is the rhythm we have been showing lately and this is how I plan to go towards the future.

Q: As we've been mentioning, one of the themes of this part of the year is a very fluid driver market for 2014, where do you fit into that?

EG: There are a lot of things happening around, that's true. At the moment I'm focused on what's happening right now. Right now we are in Austin, it's a very important race for us, one of the most special of my career, of our careers, because we are both Mexicans. We are here to do our best and we have great opportunities to do good results in these last two races. So I'm going to try to take advantage of that and then after that see what's going to happen. Obviously at the same time we have been looking to different options. My idea is to continue with Sauber, obviously, because we have been working on a good relationship for a long time and we'll see what's going to happen next year.

Q: Paul, 48 points on the board now in the Drivers' Championship, big score last time out in Abu Dhabi, points in the last two races. Has this put some momentum into your season at an important moment?

Paul DI RESTA: I think the result in Abu Dhabi was massive and I think very crucial for us to try and do what we did. I think, given on the back of the points we scored in India, we went to Abu Dhabi with a car that was very consistent and achieved in the race something that nobody else did. But I think more importantly, if you have the confidence in the car you can do it. It's such a crucial point of the year for our championship position over the likes of Sauber. We showed that we didn't have the speed over one lap but we had the speed over a race and we definitely scored big. Hopefully that's going to be enough and we can come into the last two races trying to secure the Constructors' position but equally trying to score points because the vibe in the team is very good. I think that given very little has changed... I think it's more about team effort and everybody's lifted their game and the results show that.

Q: Presumably it's quite important because, as we've been discussing, a very fluid situation in terms of the driver market at the moment. Does it feel quite late to you, for this all to be going on now, particularly given that 2014 is all about new technology, the packaging of the driver etc., there's an awful lot of work to do. It's quite late for all of these driver options to be up still.

DIR: I think it's very late, given where it all is at the moment – but what can you do? You need to accept where the team principals and equally the shareholders, where they are. But I suppose in probably less than ten days' time is when the focus is going to change away from this year and more importantly onto next year's car. The big task for us as a race team at the moment is to get out there and score points in these two and not take the focus away. That's what I'll do this weekend but we need to continue to keep doing that and hopefully it's enough.

Q: Jules, obviously the only driver sitting here at the moment that has a confirmed seat on the grid for next year. Is that a relief, sitting here right now?

Jules BIANCHI: Well for sure it's a great thing for a driver to be confirmed for next season, you know? I feel really confident with the team and I am really happy to stay in Marussia and that's why we're trying to do our best for the end of this season and I am focussed 100 per cent to finish well these two races. I think it's great for me.

Q: It's been a pretty good season for you all-in-all. Marussia still tenth in the championship based on that result you go early in the year. Do you feel you've been as consistent as you hoped to be as the year's gone on.

JB: Well for sure we started really well. We were quicker than the Caterham and then we started to struggle from Barcelona. We tried to catch them back: it was difficult; it was a tight fight but they were in front. A few races ago we were back in front so we were really happy with that, really happy with the work we did but in Abu Dhabi again it was a really difficult race and they showed that their pace was much quicker than us in the race – so we really need to make a good job in these last two races because we know that in Brazil, for example, you will have the possibility to have a crazy race and in that case we have to be in front of them and try to do the best result possible. So we have to keep pushing.

Q: Coming to you Pastor, obviously two clear areas to discuss with you. First of all, we know that you're leaving Williams and you said yesterday that you thought it was the best thing for you and for the team. Could you explain a little about that?

Pastor MALDONADO: Yeah, I think for sure it was a tough decision from my side. I spent three years with the team, special years. They gave me the opportunity to become a Formula One driver, we won a race which is quite special as a driver and I think as a team. Even for them, after eight years without winning anything, so I think it was the most special moment for us – but sometimes you need to take some hard decisions. It's my case at the moment. I'm feeling quite good. Leaving is an important moment for my career, improving every time, doing some solid races, trying to get the maximum from the team, trying to get the maximum from the car. For sure this season has been very, very hard for all the team. We were expecting something more from the car, from the total performance and... yeah, we couldn't achieve our targets but yeah... sometimes Formula One is like that, sometimes you can, sometimes not. You need to learn from the mistakes and try always to do your best.

Q: Well obviously if you're leaving a team you must have a pretty good idea where you're going to. Would it be fair to say that you know where you will be racing next year?

PM: Yeah, for sure I know. I have a couple of options. We are still working on it and I really hope to have a clear answer soon.

Q: (Ben Edwards – BBC Sport) Sergio, just coming back to the decision McLaren have made, do you feel let down by the team at all, not so much in terms of the performance of the car, but in terms of how this has evolved in the last couple of months? As you say, it's given you very little chance to get into the drivers' market, so do you feel let down by the team?

SP: No. No, not let down at all. As I said, it's been a difficult year. People from the outside can think whatever they want, but inside the team, every single person that works in the team knows the amount of pressure we are having, everyone, from Jenson, myself, Martin, everyone, everyone. With McLaren and the year that we have had it was so disappointing for everyone so they have had to make some changes and yeah, they had to change me and that's racing.

Q: (Karen Crouse – New York Times) Starting with Sergio, could each of you give what you think are one or two keys to the season that Sebastian is having?

SP: Well, Sebastian is a great driver and a great example for all of us. Also, I think the key was that he's having a great team effort, the team is doing a fantastic job for him, he's doing a very good job for them, so it's a combination. This is a sport where you really need the team to be with you, to work together. They have been (together) for a couple of years already so I think they're pretty strong and they will be hard to beat in the future.

EG: Well, I think that right now he's doing a good compliment with Red Bull. They have a great team, he's driving at the peak of his career as well and he's being very consistent so as Sergio said, he's a good example for all of us and I think that it will be quite interesting to see how it will change or influence next year on the rule changes. Hopefully it will make everything more competitive and more opportunities for other drivers as well to be at the front, fighting.

Q: Paul, perhaps you know him a bit better than others having raced with him as a teammate back in F3 days. Your thoughts on his season?

DIR: I don't think there's really much more you can say than what Sergio said. I think he's summed up where he's been for the last three or four years. They've done a very good job, very consistent, driver and car, it's been on top form. It would just be nice to be up the front racing where you should be.

JB: Yeah, obviously Sebastian and Red Bull are doing a great job. They are just winning everything for three years now so it's great for them and they're just the best now. It's up to the other teams to push harder and try to beat them.

PM: Yeah, I agree with him. I think they are the number one team at the moment. Sebastian has been doing a fantastic job and it's all about a team job. Maybe this is the most important thing for which team makes the difference. So many people work for a car, so many people work for a driver and everything must be combined to achieve that kind of result.

Q: (Cristobal Rosaleny – Car and Driver) Sergio, when did you start to know, to think that you were not going to be at McLaren next year, because they were talking about a multi-year contract and this is not what you were expecting, nobody was expecting?

SP: No. I found out a couple of days before you found out, so it was a very late decision. I had no idea, it just came as a shock to me because the team was always giving me good feedback, everything was pretty much settled down and I was going to stay with the team but then something happened in the last few weeks so they decided not to... it puts me in a very difficult position now, to look forward for my future.

Q: (James Allen – BBC Sport) I have a question for Sergio and Esteban: how many Mexican fans are you expecting here this weekend? Are you expecting as many as last year or more?

SP: Well, I hope more, now that we have Esteban. Last year there was only myself and we had a lot. This year, also, the results have not been too good for both of us, but I think there will be good Mexicans out there and I really hope to see them, otherwise the grandstands will be empty with no Mexicans.

Q: And Esteban, your home town is five hours away by car, so are you expecting a big crew to come up?

EG: Yeah, it is. I have lots of friends, lots of family coming and also a lot of supporters as well, which we have in the... I think it will be a really special feeling, I've not experienced this before in my career so it will be kind of like a new experience and I'm really looking forward to it. I think it gives great energy, great motivation to the weekend.

Q: (Carlos Jalife – Fast Mag Mexico) For Esteban and Sergio: if things turn out in a certain way, you might be teammates next year. What are your thoughts on being a teammate with a Mexican driver?

SP: Well, let's see, let's see what happens with my situation. I think it would be good. Why not? The thing is, it will be Esteban's second year and he will be experienced. I think we can be good in a team. I will then have a problem.

EG: Definitely not! Mexican power.

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