

F1 Silverstone Blog - Sunday press conference

It was an action-packed grand prix determined by the tyres, and the post-race press conference was similarly rubber-focused.

Present were Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), Mark Webber (Red Bull), and Fernando Alonso (Ferrari).

Q: Nico, you've kept your cool when all around you were losing theirs. There were tyres going off, there were cars breaking down. Tell me, how do you feel to have won the British Grand Prix?

Nico ROSBERG: Fantastic! It's a very, very special day and I think what makes it more special is that our factory is so close, and our team has done such a fantastic job to come through during the season. We have such momentum going at the moment, progressing all the time. Really, really massively quick in qualifying, also getting faster and faster in the race. I think today we had equally the fastest race car as well. So, it's a very special day for me. And this goes out... this is for all of my team colleagues working in the factory. I hope many of them have been in the grandstands watching. This one is for all of you out there. Thank you very much.

Q: It was a dramatic race. You had two guys in the front who you had to beat. We lost Lewis Hamilton early in the race, that was a big disappointment to the British fans and then you were charging, you were chasing after Sebastian and then the leader of the World Championship, his car failed right here. What did you feel when that happened?

NR: With Lewis, definitely I feel sorry for all the British fans. It would have been a great race for Lewis here in front of his home crowd - that's always a massive disappointment, but that's racing sometimes. When Sebastian stopped, to be honest, I won't lie, I wasn't disappointed by that one. And then from then it was a great race to win.

Q: Mark, what a storming drive. You must have thought it was all over, the start didn't go so well, tell us about it.

Mark WEBBER: I didn't have a clue what happened off the line. We've had two or three good starts in the last few races and then the lights went out and we're back to our normal tactics. So, I'm not sure. We need to have a look at why they pop up every now and again. That was frustrating. Then I had, I think it was Grosjean, take the front wing in the first corner, so the first stint was compromised by that. The boys did a great job to put a fresh front wing on at the stop and then we started to get the race underway from there. Obviously there was a lot of people with issues with the tyres which helped a bit but we were lucky not to have any issues. It was a clean race, good strategy. I think that, yeah I would have liked a few more laps at Nico but he deserved the win. He was quick all day, obviously. Little bit of fortune but anyway you've got to be there to capitalise. I'm very happy with second, team have done a good job and thanks - last time here in Formula One in front of the British fans - thank you very much.

Q: Fernando, you again drove a storming race. You really got caught out by the second safety car - you were down and had to charge back up through the field. Fantastic drive back into the podium.

Fernando ALONSO: Yeah, it was a good race for us. With the last safety car we lost six positions because of the safety car. But overall I think it has been a very lucky race for us. Looking at the problems with the tyres of some of the drivers, we fact we didn't any problem we have to consider lucky. And then with Sebastian's problem, as Nico touched on before, we've been also lucky to recover some points. At the end it was a very good Sunday and hopefully we put on a good show for the great, great fans. They've been here from Thursday to today, supporting all the teams, respecting all the teams. Thank you very much.

Q: The championship, is it blown open now? Here you have a points gain on Sebastian.

FA: Mixed feelings to be honest. Happy for the points, we've reduced the gap a little bit in this race but the pace we saw this weekend is not good enough. There were some other Sundays that we lost some points and maybe I was more optimistic. Today we recovered some points but we know there is a lot of work to do. But I trust the team, we are united, we have a difficult weekend, we put the cross and now we think of the next one.

Q: What did you think before Sergio Pérez when his tyre blew? What was going through your mind there?

FA: I've had two moments, that one with Sergio I was so scared and so lucky because I missed the contact by one centimetre. And also at the start into turn one. I locked the tyres and nearly lost the front wheel. As I said, some risky moments. All of them were fine for me today, so I just need to enjoy the result but from tomorrow working in Germany race because we need to raise our game.

Q: Nico, now you're heading to Germany. Second grand prix victory this season and you have a German manufacturer in Mercedes. It's going to be a fantastic event in Germany isn't it, next week?

NR: Yeah, for sure. Going from the team's home grand prix here to my second home grand prix - I already had one - fortunately for me I have two home grands prix, I managed to win that in Monaco. Second one coming up at Nürburgring. And it's very special. I'm very proud to be German, driving a Silver Arrow, going to the Nürburgring, the history there, and having that great car that I have at the moment, really looking forward to that.

Q: The tide's going to change a little bit, isn't it? You seem to have a car that's competitive during the race. The tyre degradation wasn't nearly as bad. Is there any chance, do you think, that this championship could be turning a tide here against Red Bull?

NR: Well, I wouldn't talk about that just yet but definitely the team has done such a good job during the season. Already in the winter, to come up with such a quick car, which we've had all year in qualifying, and now also progressing with tyre management and getting that better and better to allow us to win races now, that's fantastic to see and really gives me... yeah, just very exciting.

Q: Where you happy to continue racing when you were told about the tyre issue?

NR: It's definitely something that needs to be looked into, yeah? Because too much of that today, that's for sure. I had one too - but got a bit lucky

there with the safety car so that worked out great.

Q: Nico, congratulations, great win for Mercedes, based just a few kilometres down the road from this Silverstone circuit. What does this win mean to you, and to them?

NR: Yeah, fantastic day definitely, and it's very special because it's the home grand prix of the team and the factory is ten minutes away. A lot of people, a lot of my fellow team members and colleagues are in the grandstands, watching today and it's very, very nice that I was able to give them such a great race and such a great result. They really deserve it – you really deserve it because you've worked so well all season. It's great to see the momentum we have in the team at the moment.

Q: There was obviously some brilliant driving, some brilliant overtaking but no doubt the big story coming out of this obviously is the situation with the tyres. Your thoughts on what we've seen today.

NR: Definitely that's a problem. Too many tyre failures and they must look into that and see what can be done.

Q: Mark, you almost got him at the end. 0.7 seconds as you crossed the finish line of a race you've won twice – you obviously enjoy it very much here. Great recovery though, after a poor start. Just listening to the tone of your radio messages, is it tempting to say that you feel a win got away from you today?

MW: Oh yes, it's easy to say that. With ten laps to go when you can see the win in sight. It is mixed feelings when you finish seven-tenths behind Nico for the win. But he's also out there doing his things, so he deserved the win. We did recover. I think we had a bit of luck after that but we've got to be there to capitalise on it. We had a good strategy, obviously I pushed very hard on the laps I had to do the business. The start... I don't know. I have no idea how we can get so good some weekends and then not at others. That was a big negative for us. And then Grosjean – someone, I think it was him – touched my front wing at turn one. I had to get that changes at the first stop. And then the race really reset from there. The safety cars obviously helped – although I didn't want them because of the reasons why they were happening. Obviously it's very nervous for all the drivers to see that happening. In the end, very, very good result for myself, for the team, still go something out of it, what was... looked like a pretty random weekend for everyone on race day. I want to thank all the English and British fans for the support that I've had over the years racing here – it's been a real highlight for me to race at this circuit. So, very much looking forward to the next race and hoping to challenge again. I was happy with my performance today.

Q: You mentioned it's a nervous time for the drivers. Four left-rear tyre failures, one front-left tyre failure. Your thoughts on that – and what it feels like to know you've got to carry on and press in that situation.

MW: Well the team are trying to keep us up to date as best they can. Obviously it's a little bit of a moving target for them as well. They are doing their job to inform us as much as they can. It's not a slow circuit, it's very quick, we're committed to the high-speed stuff here, 100 per cent most of the time. It's not December yet, so I'll stay quiet.

Q: Fernando, a very quick call when Vettel retired there, to come in and make a stop. Dropped you down to eighth. I was wondering whether the team had made a mistake there but you managed to fight your way through some amazing overtakes. Did you think you might have blown it at that point? And your thoughts on the race.

FA: No, obviously it was an unlucky situation. They called me in around Turn Five. So, Vettel was not having the problem yet at that point they call me. We were in this lap and we try to pass Webber and Kimi, they were slowing down a little bit in front of us, so we committed to stop before Sebastian's problem. And then yes, I go out of the pits and I see 'Safety Car Deployed.' Obviously it was the worst time possible to have a safety car, when you have just pitted, and we lost an extra five positions. I don't know how many overtakings I did all the whole race. The start was probably the worst start of years. Probably. I was fighting with Hülkenberg in Turn Three, Turn Four, and I remember he was not in the first positions on the grid so I realised I was quite far down there. After the start we recovered some positions, some safety car moments as we touch on, and then the last big push at the end as we try to get a podium. We did it, it's a fantastic result for our very difficult weekend. Sometimes we have very good pace, we have a car that is able to fight for the wins and we are out of the podium. This weekend everything went a little bit on the wrong side for us, we get the podium and Sebastian doesn't finish the race. It's one of these weekends where the result is very good but the feeling is that we must improve for next weekend.

Q: Obviously on the day when your main title rival retires, you want to try to take 25 points and not 15 but the qualifying situation really wouldn't allow you to do that today. What do you go away from this weekend and back to Maranello telling the team?

FA: Well it was not the qualifying, it was the weekend in general. We were normally very fast on Fridays, on the long run pace. It was not the case here. We were not fast on qualifying and not fast on the race – so definitely was the overall weekend we didn't manage to make the tyres work. We've been very lucky – unlucky with the safety car moment that came out but very lucky with the first corner, that it was very close with Mark and Grosjean I think. In the first stop, lap nine, I had a tyre problem also. My tyre was finished and disintegrate in the last corner. For me it was the right rear that I think was new compared to all the other failures and if this happened like Felipe – that I think was in Turn Five when it happened – then I lose the race. For me it happened in the last corner and I pit. At the end it was a very lucky race and I just need to be very thankful for the team, for the luck and try to improve for next weekend.

Q: (Graham Keilloh - F1 Plus) Early in the race, after the first three rear tyre failures, there was some radio contact on the television advising drivers to stay off the kerbs, but it seems subsequently that wasn't really heeded; just talk us through the thought process of that, why you subsequently decided to take the risk?

NR: Are you saying we were still taking the risks of going on the kerbs? Well, for myself I wasn't, I was staying off the kerbs and I got a tyre problem myself, but it worked out well, I was able to pit before it broke apart because the safety car came out. I was a bit lucky there. And then after that, when Mark was chasing me, it was a compromise between how fast is he coming at me and how much am I going to take out of the tyres, so I was staying off the kerbs, taking it easy in the high speed where the most damage is done. Then I had to pick up the pace a little bit towards the end as he was getting quite close so that was really difficult to judge.

Q: Mark, they broadcast at least four or five messages from Rocky (Guillaume Rocquelin) to Sebastian telling him to stay off the kerbs: were you getting a similar amount of that kind of message?

MW: Yeah, Simon was keeping me up to date with the... That's all they could give us was staying off the kerbs because they were saying that they probably didn't really know why the tyres were failing at the rate they were. So yeah, I did what I could in all the right hand corners to have... turn one, exit of seven, also Copse and Becketts and Stowe, all the fast corners, trying to stay away from there. It's not always easy but in general I tried to

adhere to the advice, because yes, you want to gain a little bit here and there, but as Nico touched on, it's not much fun driving a Formula One car on three tyres so you have to make sure that you do what you can to listen to the team: they're on the pit wall with the most information so you have to do what they say.

FA: Same, always the same. They kept telling me to avoid the kerbs but obviously if you're in position twelve you need to attack, you need to change the racing line, you need to use the DRS. This is a circuit where we've been racing for 12 years in my case and I've never had these problems. I think the kerbs were perfectly OK.

Q: (Mike Doodson – Auto Action) Mark, you're not the kind of guy who normally blames his equipment, less so perhaps than other people, but this story of your starts goes back a long way. No doubt you've analysed it over and over again. Looking back today, was it possibly a human failure on your side or was it an equipment shortcoming of some kind?

MW: I need to look. We know it's not the strength of our situation up until Monaco. I think Monaco and Canada, same procedure and we're running into the back of these guys. Same in Canada, I went round Bottas and we were very very strong off the line. Today, reverse was in gear. I was obviously ready for the start, everything was set, but I didn't go anywhere, obviously. I think it was quite slippery off the line but we had a lot of issues getting away. It is frustrating, mate, but I need to go through it and we're working on things to make it more consistent in the future, but it's just such an important part of the weekend and it's a no-brainer that you have to get it right, all the effort that goes in. There's no question about it, it's cost a lot of good points over the time but yeah, it shouldn't be that difficult but it turns out that we've got to improve on that area and I'm happy to be part of that.

Q: (Jaime Rodriguez – El Mundo) Fernando, in the last races, every Sunday you seem to have to overtake five, six positions from the start to the end; I wonder if you would explain what you feel, both physically and psychologically?

FA: I've been doing this for the last five years, unfortunately. It would be nice to start on the front row of the grid but we are not good enough on Saturdays and it's something we try to work on as a team: the package, car performance, tyre preparations, driver maximising the lap. Whatever we are missing on Saturdays, we haven't been on pole position for a long time but we fight, we gain some good experiences in my career, especially in 2008 and 2009 were maybe not so bad seasons in the end, with no good results but very good experience and you try to play safe, obviously when you are fighting very hard with some rookie drivers etc it requires a little bit of extra care but we managed today to do some good moves and some good points, but as I said, it's something that we don't like to do and we would like to improve Saturday's situation.

Q: (Christobal Rosaleny – Car and Driver) To all of you: I know Nurburgring is not like Silverstone in terms of fast corners and all of that, but if somebody tells you that the same thing is going to happen, that the tyres could explode there, would you race or would you tell the people that's enough?

NR: Well, we shouldn't get into that situation. We need to do what needs to be done to sort it out and make the tyres last.

MW: I think we've been trying to have input for the last three years and it's deaf ears. Anyway, we're part of the package, part of the show. The show goes on by the looks of it.

FA: Yes. Same. Theoretically the cars are the same all year. They were OK on most circuits so it should be OK, but for sure it's something that what we saw today is not good but we drive the cars so we understand nothing about what is the real problem or what it is the real solution so it's a question for them, for sure.

Q: (Luke Smith – NBC Sports) Nico, before Sebastian's stoppage, the gap between Sebastian and you had remained quite constant. Do you think you would have been able to catch him if he hadn't have had the retirement?

NR: I was trying, I was pushing hard trying to stay with him but it wouldn't have been possible. No, I would have been close all race but to catch him and pass, I didn't have enough speed unfortunately. But I think pace-wise, possibly I was a little bit quicker, yeah, because very often I was able to come back to him once I started pushing again before the pit stops and when you're in the dirty air from the guy in front, your tyres wear a little bit more and you lose out. I think I had good pace in the race today.

Q: (Stewart Bell – Herald Sun) Mark, you were on fire from that last safety car period to the end; what was that like for you, that last stint, especially given it was your last British Grand Prix?

MW: Yeah, it felt pretty good mate, I knew that I was going to make pretty light work of the guys ahead of me because they were on old tyres. I wanted information on Nico, I wanted to know what compound he was on and how his pace was before the safety car because I hadn't seen him before in the race at any stage. They said that he was pretty quick so I was pretty keen to get past those guys early and then go from there, but both of us managed to get to the end of course on the limit but also managing the scenario with the tyres. So yeah, it was a nice finish to race. It would have been about a hundred cherries on top if I'd managed to get past him but I didn't. He deserved the win and we made him work for it which was good and rewarding, but we could have got much more out of the car in the race today to be honest.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) I think all of you were asked by your race engineers after the tyre failures to stay off the kerbs: how much did it affect your racing, in particular Mark and Fernando who had been in fights or battles with other drivers?

MW: Well, it's a compromise. You want to still push as hard as possible but you have to check your line a bit, change your trajectory, the radius is tighter, obviously, in certain corners, i.e. the quick stuff, Copse, Stowe, turn one, staying away from there. It turns out maybe it wasn't really the kerbs, who knows but it's just better to factor in everything that you possibly can. Some laps, when you're in disturbed air and you get behind a car and you get a little bit wide then that's life, you've got to... you can't be super accurate when you're tucked up behind the guy in the quick stuff so that's just the decisions you have to make and yeah, we managed that as best we could.

FA: I didn't change, I didn't change lines. I didn't change lines. I was fighting with twelve cars all the race through so you go in the dirty air, let's say, and you lose downforce and you go straight out over the exit kerb. As I said, it's hard to believe that the kerbs were the problem because we've been racing here for 12 years with those kerbs.

Q: (Jaime Rodriguez – El Mundo) Nico, do you think that without the Montmelo test Mercedes could be winning races like now?

NR: For sure, yeah. Definitely.

F1 Silverstone Blog – Race report

Nico Rosberg took the chequered flag in a dramatic British Grand Prix that will enter the history books not for the Mercedes' driver's success, but for Pirelli's run of failures.

In what pundits are already calling the Italian tyre manufacturer's very own Indianapolis – harkening back to the embarrassment that was the 2005 United States Grand Prix – Pirelli saw four identical tyre failures that affected the outcome of Sunday's race.

First to be affected was pole sitter Lewis Hamilton, who delivered a textbook performance for the first eight laps of the race, getting a good start and opening up a comfortable two-second gap over the chasing Red Bull of Sebastian Vettel. But as the Mercedes driver was exiting The Loop, heading down the Wellington Straight, his left rear tyre disintegrated and Hamilton was forced to limp back to the pits, from where he emerged in P18, near the back of the pack.

Only two laps later, Felipe Massa suffered an identical failure, at almost exactly the same point on track. The Brazilian racer had done a phenomenal job in the opening phase of the race, launching himself off the start line like a man possessed, getting up to P5 from a grid position of P11. Like Hamilton before him, the long journey back to the pits from the Wellington Straight meant that Massa emerged at the back of the pack, with a lot of ground to make up.

By lap 14, Pirelli had registered a hat trick of failures, with Toro Rosso's Jean-Eric Vergne suffering yet another left rear disintegration. And while it's hard to conflate luck with failure, the Frenchman was incredibly lucky that all he suffered was a blown tyre – Vergne's collapse took place when the Toro Rosso driver was at the end of Hangar Straight, running at around 275kph, and could have resulted in serious injury.

Following the third blown tyre in a seven-lap period, FIA race director Charlie Whiting deployed the Safety Car so that the marshals would be able to clean up a circuit that was littered with tyre debris, from the ever-present marbles to full belts flapping along the track.

But the hat trick was not enough, and Pirelli saw a fourth left rear tyre disintegrate on live television, this time on the McLaren of Sergio Perez. The Mexican racer was 46 laps into the race, getting back into the fight on the restart following the second Safety Car of the afternoon, when his left rear exploded. Perez was lucky to retain control of his car and avoid running into Fernando Alonso, but when he limped back to the pits McLaren elected to retire their driver from the race.

As one bright spark tweeted mid-race, it's a good job Pirelli don't make condoms.

Both Hamilton and Massa recovered well from their tyre failures, helped in part by the afternoon's two Safety Cars, with the Briton finishing six-tenths off the podium and Massa crossing the line a mere 14 seconds behind race winner Rosberg.

The British Grand Prix failures were not all of Pirelli's making, however. Rosberg's eventual victory was an inherited win that came about courtesy of a gearbox failure for Vettel, who retired from the lead that he himself had inherited from Hamilton when he ground to a halt at the beginning of the International Pits Straight, bringing out the second Safety Car of the day.

The farce that was the 2005 Indianapolis race led to Michelin's withdrawal from Formula One. Will Silverstone 2013 be the watershed moment for Pirelli, a much-maligned and oft-criticised supplier who have yet to sign a contract for 2014 rubber?

2013 British Grand Prix results

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1h32m59.456s
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) + 0.765s
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) + 7.124s
4. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) + 7.756s
5. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) + 11.257s
6. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) + 14.573s
7. Adrian Sutil (Force India) + 16.335s
8. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) + 16.543s
9. Paul di Resta (Force India) + 17.943s
10. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) + 19.709s
11. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) + 21.135s
12. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) + 25.094s
13. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 25.969s
14. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) + 26.285s
15. Charles Pic (Caterham) + 31.613s
16. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) + 36.097s
17. Max Chilton (Marussia) + 1m7.660s
18. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) + 1m7.759s

Romain Grosjean (Lotus) RET

Sergio Perez (McLaren) RET

Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) RET

Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) RET

F1 Silverstone Blog – Saturday press conference

After a close-fought qualifying session around Northamptonshire's Silverstone Circuit, the front two rows were locked out by 2013 qualifying masters Mercedes and Red Bull.

Present at the post-qualifying press conference were Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), and Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull).

Q: Lewis, a great lap there at the end to take pole position at your home grand prix. How does that feel?

Lewis HAMILTON: It's incredible! It feels just like it did in 2007. Just to see the crowd here today is fantastic – such a great turnout from everyone. So that was a lap for them. I hope that tomorrow we can do something special for them but this is really down to the team. They've been doing a phenomenal job, improving the car constantly. I haven't been feeling 100 per cent comfortable all weekend – so I was really happy to finally get a lap.

Q: Nico, your thoughts on qualifying. That's the fifth time in six races that Mercedes has been on pole position – and disputing it between you two as well. So, your thoughts on today.

Nico ROSBERG: It's definitely a really, really great feeling, to go into qualifying and having such a car. To definitely have the fastest car... it's really, really cool. It's a great job that the team has done to get us to where we are now. And we're also improving on Sundays – hopefully. I'm confident we have improved so tomorrow should be a bit better. I'm sure that still there are going to be other teams that are a little bit stronger than us but maybe starting on front for sure is going to help and maybe it's going to still be possible to get a great result.

Q: Sebastian, there seemed to be some different tactics at play with regard to tomorrow's race in terms of your saving one tyre of tyre, Mercedes saving another type of tyre. You see this as a very tactical type of weekend clearly.

Sebastian VETTEL: We'll obviously see what happens tomorrow. It's a long race but honestly very happy today. I don't know, either Lewis found a short cut or he has something special around here. A phenomenal lap. I think it wasn't in reach today. I was very happy with the lap I had at the end. And I think it was very close with Mark as well. I think we did what we could for the team and, yeah, it's always nice to position well in qualifying. Especially around here qualifying is good fun, enjoying the high-speed corners and looking forward to tomorrow, for the race. We'll see how well we are with tyres, looking after them. But as I said, for now very happy for the team. Hard to put the car in third place, Mark right behind, so I think it's a good position to start from. Obviously our factory is very close to this track. Milton Keynes is not far away and yeah, I'm looking forward to tomorrow.

Q: Lewis, we've seen obviously this year quite a few times that qualifying is one thing but the race is another. What about tomorrow? How do you feel Mercedes will fare against the Red Bulls in the British Grand Prix?

LH: I think undoubtedly it's going to be tough for us to keep Sebastian behind but our long run pace wasn't as bad as we've seen in the past, so I'm hoping with the temperatures and a bit of care, we can nurture the tyres to get a good result. I'm going to be pushing, giving it my all tomorrow, as I'm sure Nico will as well, to finish up ahead.

Q: Lewis, difficult day for you yesterday, as you were saying in your comments after the free practice. You weren't happy with the balance of the car. It's quite a turnaround from you and the team. Can you talk a little bit about that – and also the crowd power aspect of things: did you feel that today?

LH: The car is... obviously as Nico was saying, we've got a great car and to fine-tune it seems to be a little bit harder than what I've been experiencing in the past. So really trying to get the car underneath me and feeling comfortable and having an equal balance. With a Formula One car you're always trying to balance it on a knife-edge. Just for some reason with this car I'm struggling to do that. In the past I would aim to do that all the time. But got closer. We made the right steps, made a change going into qualifying which helped – still not perfect but it helped. And then the crowd to make a huge difference. After seeing them turn up in their thousands and seeing all the flags waving. Of course this weekend I come here with an extra boost of energy and just want to pay them back. Every year I come... this is the first time since 2008 that I've had a car that I've really been able to compete with so I'm really, really proud of what the team have done and I hope the fans can have a good evening and bring us some good luck tomorrow.

Q: Nico, we mentioned earlier on that the last six races have really been all about this, particularly in qualifying, between the two of you. You've had the upper hand a few times, Lewis has had the upper hand a few times. Can you talk a little bit about how you're enjoying this in-house battle with someone you've known and raced against for such a long time?

NR: Yeah, it's a big battle we have, and usually it's very close – not today – Lewis did a great lap in the end. It's also a really, really big push, also for the whole team, that we're pushing each other all the time, and that's really good. We're really lucky because we have a great atmosphere at the moment in the team, everybody's going in the same direction and sticking together, so it's fantastic momentum that we have at the moment.

Q: Sebastian, do you feel that you've got the most complete package for this weekend? Obviously you've given a bit away in qualifying but you're here, some of your rivals for the championship are behind you tomorrow, how's your approach?

SV: Well, certainly we're not giving away anything consciously or on purpose. They are bloody quick in qualifying, I think that's what it is. I think we are not too bad but obviously they seem to be in a different world on Saturday afternoons. I think something, yeah, they manage pretty well around the tyres which allows them to get a very, very strong lap in. Plus Nico and Lewis are doing a great job. Doesn't help if you want to qualify on pole. But points are scored on Sunday and the last couple of races have been pretty good for us. I think, to sum it up in both – in qualifying and in race – so for sure today I think P3 was our maximum but for tomorrow y'know, who knows? They are also getting better. It helps the more time we spend on the tyres – let's leave it there – and yeah, I think we all try to understand more and more and as the season goes on we do get better and there's less and less room for improvement. For the moment it seems that we have a strong car in the race, maybe a little bit better than the Mercedes. Whether it will be like that tomorrow? Well, we'll find out. But that's the fun part. I'm looking forward to finding out.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Lewis, obviously none of us have experienced putting together a pole lap like the one we just watched and it really was a phenomenal performance. Could you explain what it's like actually sitting in the cockpit: do you sit there completing your sectors going 'wow, I'm really on it' or is it only afterwards that you realise how well you've done?

LH: No. You have a delta time on your dashboard so you can tell as soon as you cross the line into turn one and when you start the lap whether you're up or not and so you kind of keep checking it, halfway through, after each corner, after each sector so already by turn nine I could see that I was two and a half tenths up and you just don't want to lose that, so you have to take extra care after that, but also you want to improve. But yeah, you also feel that it's a feeling having the tyres up to temperature, the brakes up to temperature and the car just beneath you and not trying to get away from you. Sometimes it is like a wild bull, you're trying to tame it which is very very difficult to do. But when you do, and you pull out a lap like that, it really felt like 2007. I couldn't hear anyone still, because the car's too loud, hopefully I got a good roar today.

Q: It looked like the track improved a lot, two or three tenths improvement from session to session this afternoon.

LH: Yeah, each time we go out we seemed to... which is kind of normal but it's quite a good surface here at Silverstone so the grip does continue to go

down (on the circuit) and hopefully that will be good for us tomorrow.

Q: (Julian Harris – City AM) My question is for Lewis as well: are you still learning this car, are you still finding out more each week and do you think you're getting better in each race, or do you think you've pretty much got it sussed now?

LH: I definitely haven't got it sussed. This weekend's been a tough weekend. Every weekend is tough, even if you are used to a car it's tough but I really have been struggling with the car, trying to tune it, trying to get it to behave the way I want it to, and then drive it and extract what I want from it. Out of all the cars I've driven, it's one of the hardest cars to drive. So when you pull it together, it's a great car and obviously very quick. Each weekend I'm working as hard as I can, each weekend it does feel like it's improving a little bit. We made another improvement on the brakes this weekend which is another step in the right direction so I hope we can continue going forwards.

Q: (Peter Farkas – Auto-Motor, Hungary) Lewis, obviously Paddy Lowe is now at Mercedes and he is here, working with you. Is it a boost for you personally to have him in the team since you have known him for a long time, and did you influence the decision that he would join the team in any way?

LH: I don't believe I had any influence on him coming here. I think that was a decision of his and Ross and Toto. Is it a boost? It's a boost to the team. We already have some incredibly talented people in the team, doing fantastic things and coming up with great designs but the stronger the package, the better it is for everyone. He's a good addition to the team and hopefully he will only help us moving forwards.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Sebastian, you started Q2 with hard tyres. It looks like you are very comfortable with tyre wear... No?

SV: You said I started Q2 on the hard tyres?

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Yes.

SV: No. I did only one run in Q2 with the soft tyres, well, medium.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Well, it looks like you are very comfortable with tyre wear for the race. Is that correct?

SV: Well, it depends. I think comfortable or not depends on where the others are. I think we were happy with the runs that we had yesterday. I had another one this morning, so I think we are pretty happy with that but it's difficult to judge, because you don't know what fuel loads other people are running, the usual stuff, so we will find out tomorrow plus in the race it's always a little bit different. Tomorrow is supposed to be hotter which is nice for the crowd after the last couple of years, I think it was always quite miserable on Friday, so now we've had a good Saturday and tomorrow, as I said, again a little bit warmer so it could change the balance of the car and how the tyres work. I think we've saved as many tyres as we could and the ones that we liked so let's see what we can do tomorrow.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sebastian, Alonso is only tenth today. It's good news, thinking about the championship?

SV: Well, I didn't really think about that. I think it's not good news for him. For sure he wanted to be a little bit higher up as well as Ferrari. It's a bit of a surprise. I think they've been very competitive here the last couple of years but this is also a circuit - let's not forget - where the balance is very important so even if you have a good car, if it's not coming together it can make a big difference, especially over one lap. And the other thing, that's why I'm not too interested to look at the results today. In the race we've seen that a lot of things can happen and people starting from further back can still score a lot of points and come through the field, so I think in terms of race pace and tyre wear they will be strong tomorrow and surely, should everything go as per plan for them, they will finish higher up than tenth. Everything else, I think, would be a surprise.

Q: (Sarah Holt – CNN.com) Lewis, before you got in the car before qualifying, we saw you wave to the crowd. Did you feel, having lost pole to Nico over the last few races, that you needed to psyche yourself up and find something extra today?

LH: Not really. It's not about psyching myself up because I'm always mad for it, I'm always on the limit, I'm always on the edge. I always have the determination and the will but it's just trying to get my car to where I want it to be so when I went out there, I was hoping that my car was where I wanted it to be and it's also... The fans sit there for a long long time during the day and don't really get to see our faces so it's the one opportunity that I do get to see them and try to extract what I can from them, because the support means a lot.

Q: (Derek Bish – Anglia Newspapers) Lewis, you've obviously been here in junior formulas as well: what sets apart the Lewis Hamilton that puts together a lap like that today from the one who was here in GP2 and before that?

LH: Yeah, my age, getting older, older and wiser, I think. I'm still very much like the GP2 driver I was. I just have more knowledge now. Of course, we all change over time but yeah, I think I'm a little bit more sensible and a little bit better at making decisions than I was back then. And hopefully that approach helps me win in the car.

Q: (Phil Agius – Racing Post) Sebastian, Toro Rosso have been going well this weekend and I think Daniel Ricciardo is sixth on the grid. Would you be comfortable with another Australian teammate next season?

SV: I think first you should see the individual rather than the country where he comes from but surely I haven't got a problem with Australia. I like going there, it's a nice track, we go every year too, so I'm looking forward to going back next year. Congratulations to Daniel. It seems that both of them, the whole weekend... I don't know what happened to Jean-Eric in qualifying but both of them had a car that was good enough to show their potential so happy for them and hopefully they can keep it up throughout the race and score some good points for the team. In a way, obviously, we're all fighting for ourselves; secondly we are fighting for our team but obviously we have more connection to Toro Rosso than Mercedes for example so not a surprise is it? So yeah, all the best to Daniel and Jean-Eric tomorrow.

F1 Silverstone Blog – Saturday report

To the widespread relief of teams, drivers, and fans alike, Saturday morning in Silverstone dawned bright and clear, with nothing in the sky to indicate reduced running time in either morning practice or afternoon qualifying.

The morning practice session saw Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton claim the top slots on the timesheets, chased by the Red Bull pairing. The main

moment of drama in FP3 came about courtesy of Sergio Perez, who suffered a cut in the sidewall of his tyre that led to a dramatic puncture – but emphatically not a delamination.

By the time qualifying got underway temperatures had climbed to a balmy 18 degrees in the air and 29 degrees out on track, giving the teams their best chance of the weekend to undertake running in conditions expected to be representative of Sunday's race.

In the first phase of qualifying the Mercedes drivers continued their strong run of pace, with both Hamilton and Rosberg taking turns at the top of the timesheets before the session reached its midpoint. But when Hamilton sat in the top spot with a 1m30.995s lap under his belt, both Sebastian Vettel and Mark Webber were still in the garage, yet to run.

Both Toro Rosso drivers put on a strong showing, the pressure very much on now that – for the first time in Daniel Ricciardo and Jean-Eric Vergne's F1 careers – there is a definite vacancy at the Red Bull senior team next season. With Kimi Raikkonen in the running for the Red Bull drive, it is up to Ricciardo and Vergne to prove that they are the better bets for the team.

Webber's first timed lap was good enough for third on the timesheets, while Vettel crossed the line two-tenths slower than his teammate and wound up in P4.

With less than three minutes remaining of Q1, Jenson Button started his first timed lap, while Giedo van der Garde remained in the garage. Given the Dutchman's ten-place grid penalty incurred in Montreal, there was little point in using too much rubber on Saturday afternoon, although van der Garde did complete one timed run for show.

Worryingly for the Scuderia, both Fernando Alonso and Felipe Massa ended Q1 on the edge of the dropout zone. Knocked out were the Caterham and Marussia pairings, Valtteri Bottas, and Esteban Gutierrez.

Webber was the first man to set a time in Q2, crossing the line in 1m31.341s on the hard compound. Shortly after crossing the line, the Australian was told over the radio that the team thought his lap time was around the Q3 cut-off point, so he would have to run again.

Given that, Massa would appear to be in trouble – the Brazilian racer was nearly a second slower than Webber despite running on the medium compound, while Alonso (also on the medium) was less than a tenth slower than his Red Bull rival.

The themes from Q1 carried over into Q2, with both Mercedes drivers demonstrating good pace, and strong performances from Ricciardo and the Force India pairing. Yet again, Vettel stayed in the garage for the bulk of the session, heading out on track for the first time with less than five minutes remaining. The defending world champion's first timed lap saw him cross the line in 1m30.990s, good enough for P1 on the timesheets.

In the final minute, Ricciardo impressed with a P3-worthy 1m31.182s lap, while Sergio Perez and Nico Hulkenberg found themselves in the dropout zone after their first (late) timed laps. Both men had one more lap with which to have themselves.

Button dragged himself out of the dropout zone and into a precarious P10 before being eliminated by Kimi Raikkonen. Knocked out with him were Massa, Vergne, teammate Perez, Hulkenberg, and Pastor Maldonado.

With the first half of Q3 given over to outlaps, the action only kicked off with six minutes remaining. First Ricciardo grabbed provisional pole, but Webber crossed the line one second faster than his countryman. In nanoseconds, Rosberg had eclipsed Webber but then Hamilton crossed the line in 1m30.096s, claiming the top spot for himself.

Vettel's first timed effort was a P-worthy 1m30.677s, one tenth slower than Webber's first effort.

Further down the top ten, Adrian Sutil, Paul di Resta, and Raikkonen were still in the garage with three minutes remaining. At the two minute mark, the pits were empty and all ten out on track.

Times fell as the session drew to a close, with Rosberg reclaiming provisional pole from his teammate before Hamilton trounced them all with a 1m29.607s lap, the only man to break below the 1m30s barrier all weekend. Vettel seemed to struggle to put together the perfect lap in Q3, but the Red Bull driver still shares the second row with his teammate.

Provisional grid

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m29.607s
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m30.059s
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m30.211s
4. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m30.220s
5. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m30.736s
6. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m30.757s
7. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m30.908s
8. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m30.955s
9. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m30.962s
10. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m30.979s

11. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m31.649s
12. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m31.779s
13. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m31.785s
14. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m32.082s
15. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m32.211s
16. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m32.359s

17. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m32.664s
18. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m32.666s
19. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m33.866s
20. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m34.108s
21. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m35.858s
22. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m35.481s *

* van der Garde qualified in P21, but was issued with a ten-place grid penalty in Montreal for causing a collision with Mark Webber.

F1 Silverstone Blog - Friday press conference

Given the big stories of recent weeks, it was refreshing that despite - or because of? - Paul Hembery's high profile absence, Friday's press conference wasn't all about the tyres.

Present were Eric Boullier (Lotus), Ross Brawn (Mercedes), Christian Horner (Red Bull), Graeme Lowdon (Marussia), and Martin Whitmarsh (McLaren).

Q: Gentlemen, a general question about the International Tribunal. It's the first time it's been used in Formula One. What did you think about it and what about the outcome? First of all, Eric.

Eric BOULLIER: I think the system went quite well I think. All the judges and the way it was working went quite smoothly and as far as I understand the process was fine.

Q: Graham?

Graeme LOWDON: As Eric says, the process itself, it's the first time we've seen it in action and from what we could see it was a pretty fair and transparent process. We were happy to see the outcome in terms of how the Tribunal saw it. I can't really comment on the penalty that they suggested as I think that is entirely down to the Tribunal but the thing we could probably do with a bit more clarity on, is that the Tribunal referred to the mitigating circumstances in choosing the penalty and we couldn't really see very many. The mitigating circumstances didn't look terribly mitigating. Perhaps that's something that will come over time with the process.

Q: Martin?

Martin WHITMARSH: I haven't got much to add really. We didn't take an active role. I know some of my colleagues here were there, they saw it. I think it's clearly an independent process and that's a good thing. In regards to this particular case I think others are better equipped to comment on it.

Q: Ross, obviously you were involved - your thoughts?

Ross BRAUN: Very involved yes. I think rightly or wrongly there has been criticism in the past of the process and I think what the FIA has done, particularly with the president of the FIA, is put in place a process which I don't believe there can be any criticism of it in that respect. It's an independent tribunal. People may always have their opinions about the opinions of the Tribunal but I think the process itself can't be criticised. This is the first time we've seen it in action and I think we can have confidence in the future that at least it will be independent. My understanding was that the selection of the judges was completely independent, coming from a potential panel of 12, people who obviously have some knowledge of sport, particularly motor sport and they judged the case on the facts and did what they felt was appropriate. We can have opinions about the outcome of the case but I think the process is very encouraging for the future and one that should give teams in Formula One or teams in motor sport confidence.

Q: Christian, your thoughts on the process and the outcome?

Christian HORNER: I think the process was fine. It was the first time it happened. I think that the relevant parties made their case and that the judges did a good in running the Tribunal and had all the facts placed in front of them. The verdict they reached was, I think, the right one. The penalty they applied? I have to be a bit careful because he's bigger than I am, sitting next to me! Possibly it was a bit soft but, you know, it was a fair process and it was certainly interesting to see how it panned out. I think the biggest thing to come out of it is clarity. We need to know what the rules are - whether you can test a 2011 car for more than a 1000km or whether you can test a 2013 car etc, etc. The big thing for us moving on from the Tribunal is to get absolute clarity for the remainder of this year and moving forward as to what constitutes testing and what does not.

Q: Ross, I'll give you the chance to come back on that. Christian says it was a bit soft. It was the penalty your QC suggested at the end of the proceedings, so do you see it that way.

RB: No, I'm bound to disagree with Christian.

Q: I'm sure there'll be more on this later. Returning to Eric then, a new consortium since we were last all together has come in and bought a shareholding in your team, a 35 percent shareholding. Why this moment and why are they the right investor?

EB: Why this moment? I think it's just because the opportunity came up. As Genii Capital said a long time ago they are picking the right partner to join the team. We were the only team in terms of structuring only one owner. They were thinking for the right partner and once they found it I guessed they signed it and I guess this is the timing.

Q: Obviously with Mark Webber announcing his retirement there's been a lot of speculation suggesting Kimi Raikkonen your lead driver is a target for Red Bull. He says he's out of contract at the end of this season, what do you say?

EB: I say the same, he's out of contract, yes! It's going to be his decision, obviously. I think yes, Red Bull is chasing Kimi and we want to Kimi. Kimi will decide what he wants to do. He will decide what's best for him. He knows what he has with us. He gets what he could get. It's attractive to go to Red Bull as well, but he knows what he has. Now we are just talking with him and seeking some let's say understanding of where we go and what we are building because in terms of ownership we are new, just four years existence. I think so far he is happy with what he has.

Q: Christian, I'll give you a chance to come back on that. Obviously you are believed to have said this morning that Raikkonen and the two Toro Rosso drivers are the likely candidates. Can you share your thoughts on Mark Webber's announcement, the timing of it and where you go from here?

CH: Firstly, Mark has obviously chosen to announce his retirement. I think we need to recognise everything Mark has done for the team. Since joining in 2007 he's grown with the team and all his nine victories so far and his 30-odd podiums have come in Red Bull racing cars and he's made a significant contribution to the three Constructors' World Championships we've managed to achieve and how the team has performed over the last few years. Obviously a big decision for any driver to draw a close to their career. He's decided to do that early and therefore he's removed himself from any speculation about next year and that puts us in a situation where we want to pick the best candidate for that role. We're fortunate that we have the pool of talented young drivers at Toro Rosso to draw upon and we will also gauge what else is available in the marketplace. Kimi Raikkonen is a driver you would be foolish to ignore. We're going to take our time, it's important that we make the right decision; we don't need to be in a rush. We'll evaluate the options available to us and try to make the best decision we can.

Q: Going back to you Ross. It looked like the race tyre management was better, particularly on Hamilton's car, in Canada. Montreal obviously doesn't treat the tyres quite as roughly as this place. You were quick this afternoon in free practice but how do you feel you're fixed for this grand prix?

RB: It's a little bit difficult to judge at the moment. The tyres are still not where we expect them to be on Sunday, they look a little bit dry, they look a little bit cool. So we've got to try to anticipate what we're going to face on Sunday but it didn't look too bad. Graining was the thing that was slowly creeping up on a number of cars. You could see it on the TV and we weren't unique in that respect. It may be a slightly different issue we'll have here than at some other races. I think the thing I would comment on is that we know there is a cliff that we tend to fall over and if we don't get to the edge we're fine. Maybe take a race like Malaysia, we weren't on the edge of the cliff, we had a good strong race the whole race. It depending on how close we get to that edge before it becomes a problem. Clearly there was a problem in Barcelona but it may not be an issue here. We'll have to wait and see.

Q: OK, going to Graeme. We've heard you speaking out recently about not having a commercial deal in place. Why now and is there any progress on that?

GL: Well why now, it's not just now actually, we say it pretty much any time. I find myself as part of our management team in a different situation to the other gentlemen in this press conference in that our team doesn't have an agreement with the commercial rights holder. We are fully part of the process for negotiating a new Concorde Agreement - we play our part in that process like all the other teams. But like everybody else here I have an obligation, together with our management team, to our employees and their families. These are people who are earning their livelihoods in Formula One and I have an obligation to them. We find ourselves in a situation where, at present, there is no Concorde Agreement, so there is a gap of some period of time and who knows how long that time could be. Certainly the Concorde Agreement is not going to be signed next week and in theory it could go on for years. There is no finite time limit on that. Now all the other teams on the grid including those in front and behind us have a bi-lateral agreement with the commercial rights holder and for whatever reason we don't and I think that's an unusual situation. There's a very clear structure to this sport and certain companies play a very dominant position in that structure and we have to operate within that structure and it is quite difficult, in the situation that we currently find ourselves in. Why that should be the case I really don't know. It would certainly be nice. I think everybody here would agree, whether it's a sporting matter or a financial matter or commercial, all you ask for is a level playing field and for all teams to be treated equally. I think it's a reasonably straightforward thing that we're looking for.

Q: Thank you for that. Coming to you Martin. Obviously today the World Motor Sport Council has issued quite a lot of changes for next year, among them the new penalty points system for drivers. I wonder if you would like to comment on that and any other things in here that you find of interest?

MW: Well, I hope you don't test me on it, because there's quite a bit to me there and it came out whilst we were on the pit wall. On the penalty points, it's been discussed for a long time. It's clear; it's written down. Potentially you can imagine being in a situation as a driver or as a team with a driver who is close to being prohibited. I think that could be uncomfortable but we'll have to see how that develops. The other very significant decisions that have been announced are the introduction of four in-season tests next year. That introduction, not everyone is comfortable to have more testing but I think that it replaces quite a lot of other extraneous testing is probably a beneficial thing, given that it's being arranged in Europe at circuits after we've raced there. I think they are fairly sensible proposals on testing and certainly it's good for young drivers and people who are trying to develop young drivers. I think it's a good initiative. The other is obviously a further restriction on aerodynamic testing, both wind tunnel testing and CFD capacity. I think that's prudent and sensible and something that we have to do to try and develop more sustainable business models across the whole grid. I think there are no great surprises. Obviously a lot of work, manoeuvring and voting has gone on to arrive at some of those decisions but generally nothing surprising. I think most of them are pretty sensible and the right thing for the sport.

Q: (Ian Parkes - PA) Question to Christian and Eric: if you two guys are squaring up to a tussle over Kimi Räikkönen, with the exception of money - bearing in mind he's already quite a wealthy guy - what do you think will be the attraction to either a) bring him to your team, Christian? or b) keep him at your team, Eric?

CH: At the end of the day I guess it's going to be the equipment at their disposal. They're going to want to drive - any driver, any competitive driver - is going to want to be in the most competitive environment that he can be in. I guess that's the same for Kimi as it would be for any driver. But let's just be clear here, we're not just looking at Kimi Räikkönen, we have Daniel Ricciardo and Jean-Eric Vergne who are true contenders for that seat. We just need to take a bit of time to look at all of the options available to us.

Q: Eric?

EB: I think the environment he has with us obviously suits him. I think he told this many times. As Christian says, he's a driver, a competitor, so he can see every year we keep improving the team performance and obviously we expect to keep going in this way and match at least Christian's team's performance as soon as possible. So, being part of the environment you can like and build around yourself is one of the nicest challenges for a driver.

Q: (Luc Domenjoz - Le Matin) For Christian Horner. We heard what you say about Kimi Räikkönen and the two Toro Rosso drivers but what about Sébastien Buemi? We understand he makes a valuable job as a third driver but would you consider him for next year and if so what are his chances?

CH: Sébastien has made a great contribution this year as third driver and doing development work in the simulator. He had a great run at Le Mans last weekend which was super to see - but he's not a contender for a race seat at Red Bull Racing. He's an important member of the team but our choice is more focussed on the current, active Formula One drivers.

Q: (Luke Smith - NBC Sports) Question for Christian: are you looking for a driver to simply accommodate Sebastian Vettel or someone who can actively challenge and rival him?

CH: We want the best driver that we can possibly get. Sebastian wants to be challenged, wants to be pushed and from our perspective there are two championships. There's a Drivers' World Championship and a Constructors' World Championship and you don't win a Constructors' Championship

with one driver. So, from our perspective, we want to field the most competitive line-up that we can and do our very best to support both drivers as we always have done.

Q: (Bob McKenzie – Daily Express) Sorry, this question comes up occasionally so you've probably got the stock answers but what do you think it does for the image of Formula One – particularly here, at the biggest Friday crowd anywhere in the world – to have them sitting around for ninety minutes watching virtually nothing? It just doesn't look good, does it?

GL: Well, it doesn't look great but equally I think it's not the easiest thing to solve. I think Formula One is getting much closer to the fans and I think that's a really good thing and there's a lot of initiatives that are being done through the sport, through the teams and to help in other ways, to try and get ourselves nearer and try and give the fans more to engage with. I don't know what the solution is, Bob, as far as livening up a session like that. It was quite difficult circumstances. It does just seem to happen at Silverstone a little bit more often so I really don't know what that solution is but I do think that in other areas teams really are doing quite a lot to engage the fans and make being a Formula One fan more interesting, more exciting and more rewarding.

EB: I can understand the question, the frustration for the fans but I do tend to... in other ways, the debate is coming back all the time, because if you look at Wimbledon it's the same, they stop the game when it's raining. Any other sport is the same at least, so if we don't run or the car does run there's a safety issue but there are many other issues and we are the first ones to ask our drivers for the cars to be on track when we can. We try to do our best to engage with the fans and to do whatever we can but we obviously can't be blamed if the car is not on the track when it's raining and there's too much water on the track.

MW: Well, it's not good, clearly, and I think we've got to be conscious of that. It has been announced today, as some of you may know from the World Motor Sport Council that there's an extra set of dry tyres available which have to be consumed in the first half hour of the first practice session, so that's a clear step in dry conditions, where we've had circuits which have high levels of evolution and people have been reluctant to go out even in a dry session. In the wet, we've got to be very conscious. We're here at Silverstone, we have a finite number of tyres, so we have three set of wets and four of intermediate tyres and it's always possible that you need to use those and that being the case, you can't damage them or use them early in the weekend. So it's to do with the number of tyres and there's got to be a balance. You've got to be sensible about the number of tyres we can consume during the course of a race weekend. We've done something today in the sport about this sort of thing happening in a dry session. It will always be difficult when we have a wet first practice session.

RB: I think we've been proactive with the extra set of tyres that Martin mentioned. They've got to be used in the first part of first practice, so you will get cars running. So I think that's a good initiative. I think the difficulty is, quite frankly, that there's a fairly high risk in those conditions and if there's nothing to be gained, the teams tend to be conservative. If we think the race is going to be wet, we think qualifying is going to be wet, then we run. If we don't – and that's the forecast we have this weekend – then the objective is not as strong to run in those conditions. It does make it very difficult but we have to acknowledge that it's not the greatest show when that happens. Luckily the second session was pretty full and there was lots of running thereafter, but if it had been wet all day, then there wouldn't have been a lot of running.

CH: I think it's a great shame for the fans that all the cars are sitting in the garage and they're sitting in the grandstands getting wet to see their drivers and teams that they want to see out there. From a team perspective, we want to be out there because you want to learn and we're limited on track testing as it is but unfortunately you can't fully predict the British summer. And it was a bit marginal, actually. We sent Sebastian out early on to have a look and he said it was right on the edge in terms of aquaplaning and with the limitation on parts and so on, we had to make a decision to say OK, we need to wait a bit later until the circuit conditions improve. It's not great. What the answer is I don't know. Wimbledon have got a roof; maybe Silverstone needs to invest in a roof. It might be a good way forward.

Q: (Mike Casey – Associated Press) We heard from Martin on the rule changes; maybe we could hear from some of the other teams about the penalty system and in-season testing.

RB: I think the good thing about a penalty system is hopefully we will know exactly what we're dealing with. It will take away, to some degree some of the subjectivity that's crept into some of the penalties in the past. Obviously being given the reprimand of a penalty in the first place is still going to be a judgement call so I think that's something which will be helpful. Other rule changes are really mostly about tidying up the regulations on the technical side and the sporting side for next year. It's quite a different technical package next year, so there's been some tidying up of that. In terms of testing itself, I think it's quite an overhead for the teams to undertake that testing on a regular basis and we have to find a way of making it as cost-effective as we can, because what we don't want to go back to is having test cars and test teams and all the things that we got rid of a few years ago, because it does then bring a step change in costs. Obviously if we can carry out those tests with the crews that we have already and the cars we have already then it helps a great deal but we're already hearing of 21 races next year and 21 races along with four tests is going to be quite a strain on the system. I think the teams have to sit down and work out how to organise those tests to have the minimum financial impact.

EB: To be honest, I haven't got much to say because both Martin and Ross clearly... I have the same position more or less.

CH: By and large I think they're good. I think that the aero restrictions make sense. I think the testing changes make sense. We've gone to eight days or four two day tests so we've got rid of promotional days and straight line running and so on to now create proper testing, arguably maybe slightly more expensive but it gives the opportunity for young drivers and test drivers to actually run at those events as well as your race drivers. I must admit I'm not a massive fan of the points system, I don't like the thought of points carrying from one season into the next and that sort of lingering over the driver. In our position, we would have preferred penalties within a season to be dealt with within a year but that's the way it is. But I think by and large the changes are good and positive. Certainly on the technical side and from a sporting side with the testing, they do make sense.

Q: (Mike Doodson – Auto Action) Gentlemen, the sport is in a state of limbo at the moment because there's no Concorde Agreement as Graeme mentioned earlier. And it must be quite embarrassing that this situation is continuing. In any large commercial organisation, when a senior official manager was under threat of legal action, it would be normal for him to step down until that was settled, if only to allow the normal commercial conditions to continue. I wonder if you could comment on whether our commercial leader should step down from his position to allow you to have the serenity you need to continue your business?

MW: Thank you! I think there's a certain degree of uncertainty created by not having Concorde Agreements but I think if at the moment the sport does rely upon Bernie to bring these things together, I think we probably have quite a lot of greater levels of uncertainty if Bernie were to step down so I think at the moment, if we're told again today that the FIA and the commercial rights holder are close – I think the word is imminent that they will sign a Concorde Agreement, it's an odd arrangement because at the moment, clearly, as Graeme has reflected, there are ten sets of bi-lateral agreements out there and they've got to be stitched together with a broader Concorde Agreement into which the teams haven't had that much input and that's probably going to be some uncomfortable pushing together, but hopefully we can do that but I strongly suspect that if we didn't have Bernie in the mix, that that would take a much longer time and it would be a more difficult process.

CH: To be quite frank, Formula One is what it is because of Bernie Ecclestone, the way he's built the sport over the last 35 years, everything we see here is based on what he's done and achieved and I think that without him we'd be in a lot of trouble. I think that the deals he's still doing, the circuits

and countries that he's still taking Formula One to is quite outstanding, and while he has the passion and enthusiasm to keep doing his job, I think it's in our interests he does it for as long as absolutely possible, because I think the day after he isn't there the sport is going to be a lot worse off. So whatever his situation is, I think it's entirely right that he does continue because I can't see there being a better person to do the role - that none of us fully understand what that role fully constitutes - than Bernie.

RB: I agree with what a lot of what Christian said, it is a fairly unique situation and the way the sport has evolved. We do have the bi-lateral agreements, commercial agreements with all teams apart from Graeme's which gives us the financial stability that we need. I think that the grey area is that with no Concorde Agreement there's no well-defined structure for agreeing new regulations and what's happening at the moment is the FIA is defaulting to the old system, but given it's not defined properly and it's not part of an agreement, it could be challenged. The World Motor Sport Council decisions have gone ahead today based on good faith and good spirit within the teams and I hope that continues, but of course we really do need a firmer and stronger structure around future regulations and how they are decided upon. There is a framework which has been broadly agreed but it's not strictly in place at the moment and I think that's something that we do need to work towards as soon as we can.

Q: (Gary Meenaghan - The National) Christian, going back to the vacant seat you will soon have, if you chose to go for a driver that isn't currently racing with Toro Rosso, what does that say about your sister team and the success of your sister team, given its purpose is to blood stars of the future?

CH: Well, the whole purpose of that team is obviously to give young drivers within the Red Bull Junior programme the opportunity, but there's no prerequisite that they have to end up in a Red Bull Racing seat. They have to earn that on merit. They have the opportunity, they're both there in the Toro Rosso on merit, through what they've achieved in the lower categories. They've both had excellent junior careers and they're both in a learning phase, as they've come into Formula One and both are exciting prospects for the future. The fundamental question is one of them ready? That's something that we will have to look at and contemplate quite carefully but they certainly both merit their place in Formula One and Toro Rosso does an excellent job in developing those young drivers. Sebastian Vettel is obviously the most successful graduate from Toro Rosso and the current two drivers are both exciting prospects.

Q: Final thought on that: what's your time frame?

CH: Some time before Melbourne, I would have thought. No, I would have thought later in the summer. We're not going to let it drag on forever but we can take a bit of time to make sure we make the most informed decision that we can.

FI Silverstone Blog - Friday report

Friday morning in Silverstone was wet. Not so wet that Saturday ticket holders need fear being asked to stay away so that the car parks could be saved for race day, but wet enough that fans were treated timed laps from only half the grid.

The first hour and twenty minutes of the session saw a handful of installation laps and little else, with the sound of raindrops falling in puddles far louder than the total silence emanating from the 22 cars that were - theoretically - warmed up and ready to go.

Daniel Ricciardo spent the most time out on track, and it was the Toro Rosso driver who set the first timed lap of the session, a two-minute effort set with around ten minutes remaining before the flag fell. The Australian's timed lap brought his rivals out of the pits, and the dying minutes of the morning saw the track get busy.

Wet track conditions meant that the drivers were treated to slipping and sliding, with Esteban Gutierrez aquaplaning around Turn 1 before righting himself in the run-off, while Charles Pic suffered the ignominy of spinning into the barriers at the end of his timed effort, smashing his front wing in the process.

Luckily for the gathered fans, the skies began to clear over the lunch break, and FP2 brought out the cars in full force.

Given the lost running time in the morning, there was no time to waste on Friday afternoon, with the pits virtually empty within seconds of the session beginning. Cramming two practice sessions into a single afternoon meant that the low-fuel short runs were compressed into the early phase of FP2, with the larger part of the ninety minutes given over to longer runs.

Nico Rosberg was the fastest man on Silverstone Circuit this afternoon, setting a 1m3.248s lap that proved to be unbeatable as the afternoon progressed, with the bulk of the grid running on heavier fuel.

Despite the improved track conditions, FP2 still saw a moment of drama courtesy of Felipe Massa, who seems to be dead set on colliding with the barriers in free practice as often as he can this year. The Ferrari driver's slide into Stowe - caused by running over a wet painted line - was very similar to the shunts we saw from the Paulista in Monaco and Montreal, with a sideways impact leading to front end damage. Fortunately, he was unhurt, although his session ended early.

FP1 times (unofficial)

1. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m54.249s [10 laps]
2. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m55.033s [7 laps]
3. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m55.354s [7 laps]
4. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m55.458s [5 laps]
5. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m55.825s [9 laps]
6. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m56.361s [7 laps]
7. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m57.891s [4 laps]
8. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m58.859s [6 laps]
9. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m59.719s + 5.470s [7 laps]
10. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m59.876s [8 laps]

11. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 2m06.534s [6 laps]
12. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) NO TIME SET [3 laps]
13. Paul di Resta (Force India) NO TIME SET [4 laps]
14. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) NO TIME SET [1 lap]
15. Jenson Button (McLaren) NO TIME SET [1 lap]
16. Adrian Sutil (Force India) NO TIME SET [4 laps]
17. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) NO TIME SET [4 laps]
18. Mark Webber (Red Bull) NO TIME SET [1 lap]
19. Sergio Perez (McLaren) NO TIME SET [1 lap]
20. Charles Pic (Caterham) NO TIME SET [3 laps]
21. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) NO TIME SET [4 laps]
22. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) NO TIME SET [0 laps]

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m32.248s [33 laps]
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m32.547s [26 laps]
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m32.680s [31 laps]
4. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m32.832s [34 laps]
5. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m32.911s [28 laps]
6. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m33.171s [34 laps]
7. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m33.290s [38 laps]
8. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m33.313s [34 laps]
9. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m33.322s [38 laps]
10. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m33.494s [32 laps]
11. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m33.740s [29 laps]
12. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m33.896s [36 laps]
13. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m34.120s [30 laps]
14. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m34.130s [29 laps]
15. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m34.998s [32 laps]
16. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m35.070s [29 laps]
17. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m35.127s [35 laps]
18. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m35.802s [27 laps]
19. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m35.984s [32 laps]
20. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m36.079s [35 laps]
21. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m37.329s [33 laps]
22. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m43.466s [7 laps]

F1 Silverstone Blog - Thursday press conference

Given that the Webber to Porsche rumours were finally confirmed this morning, it was something of a one-track press conference once questions were opened to the floor.

Present were Fernando Alonso (Ferrari), Jenson Button (McLaren) Max Chilton (Marussia), Paul di Resta (Force India), Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), and Mark Webber (Red Bull).

Q: Max, your first home grand prix, what are your thoughts coming up to this?

Max CHILTON: It's an extremely exciting moment. To be racing in Formula One is amazing. In Australia, that grand prix was very special but this is the one I've been waiting for. To be in front of the home crowd, all the Union Jacks around the circuit. It's going to be a moment not to forget. The main thing is to keep doing what you always do, not do anything different and just try to do the best that you can do.

Q: How do you think your progress has been so far this year? We're at round eight, you seem to be making quiet progress back there.

MC: Yeah, I'm confident of how we've done. I'm finished all seven races and had a great race in Monaco finishing 14th. You've got to learn as much as you can in your first year of Formula One. I've felt like I've learnt everything that I can and I've learnt everything from every race and taken it into the next race. I'll be doing that for all of the year and maybe next year - I don't know what the plan is. You've got to take in as much as you can and try to take that into the next race and get a better result.

Q: Mark, a two-time winner here. What are the chances of another?

Mark WEBBER: It's been a happy hunting ground around here, in Formula One and also, years before that in the junior categories. I think it's one of the best circuits on the calendar. All the drivers love driving here. A Formula One car on the limit, all the quick corners. And yeah, the Red Bull car in the last few years has also been pretty strong here, so we're looking forward to certainly challenging for another victory. Qualifying also, the last five years I've been in the top three here, so yeah, that's been a good platform to launch a good result off. So, we need to have a smooth weekend and yeah, challenge for the last part of the grand prix. I think again tyres will be playing a very big role - as they always have done the last few years around here. Fernando was strong in Shanghai and in Barcelona - similar types of layout - so we need to be mindful of that, not that we can do much about it but we know we're going to have some opposition this weekend, and looking forward to it.

Q: And a momentous announcement from you today. Tell us the thinking behind the announcement of your retirement from Formula One. And how significant is the year, 2013 to 2014?

MW: Well, the timing is perfect for me. Very, very excited about my new chapter and the new challenge ahead. One of the most famous and most

well-respected brands in automotive and motor racing in Porsche, so that's something which personally I'm very satisfied about taking on. The decision has been there for quite a long time for me actually. So, I've known for quite a while, I've had a plan and I've stuck to it. But still, in the meantime, respecting the profession that I have now at this level and focusing on achieving very, very strong results in my last season in Formula One.

Q: Was it the new engine regs? Did that have anything to do with it?

MW: There's lots of reasons that come into the pot, I think, when any sportsman or woman comes to that time in their career where they want to call it a day. That's another small ingredient: there's going to be big, big changes in this sport next year, so I may as well go and do those big, big changes where my future is going to be. Let's see how the category is next year in Formula One – I'll be interested to watch every now and then and go from there. Watch these guys do their stuff.

Q: Jenson, Fernando, you've raced against Mark for many, many years. What are your thoughts about the announcement today?
Jenson BUTTON: It leaves the seat free for someone else, doesn't it? It's not really a surprise. I think Mark's career's been a little bit similar to mine in a way in terms of struggling in the first few years to find a seat and a drive that you think you deserve and then being with a team that can give you victories. It's obviously the right time so fair play to him.

Q: Fernando?

Fernando ALONSO: Yeah, I think it's a good time for him, good opportunity. As Mark said, he's moving to a very prestigious car brand and probably the most famous race in the world – together with Formula One. I think he'll have a lot of fun behind the wheel, as he's doing now, with a little bit of less problems outside the wheel that we have now in Formula One. We enjoy 19 Sundays a year and the rest of the time is a little bit of a stressful time. With the new series I think he will have a little bit more fun and I wish him the best of luck for the rest of the championship and for the future.

Q: Coming to your own thoughts about these two races, this race and a week's time in Germany, how important are these two races for your championship hopes, given the deficit that exists at the moment?

FA: All races are important from now on, especially in the position we are in. 36 points behind the leader, we don't have much more room to do mistakes or lose many more points. But, on the other side, we need to remain calm, we need to do our job, the maximum we can every weekend. If we can win the race, if we can finish in front of Sebastian, will be great. If we cannot do it, we will try to lose the minimum points. Last year after Monza I think I have an advantage of around 40 points [39] over Sebastian and it was not enough – and that was Monza time. So now being in the race for the championship 36 points behind. It's not the ideal position but it's not the end of the world.

Q: The car was on pole position here last year, you finished second. How well is this car suited to Silverstone?

FA: We'll see. I think it should be a good circuit for us. We've been more or less competitive here for the last three or four years. As Mark said before also, it is the first circuit that is a little bit similar to China and Barcelona – the best circuits so far for this year's car and we have some high hopes for this weekend. On the other hand, Red Bull has been quite strong, and dominant here from 2009 so it will be an extremely close and challenging weekend with Mercedes I'm sure very, very strong as well, as they proved in China and in Barcelona with the first row in qualifying etcetera. So, y'know, interesting weekend ahead of us but we approach it with confidence, knowing that we have a good opportunity.

Q: Jenson, it's an unfortunate statistic that you haven't been on the podium here since 1999. Is it just an unfortunate statistic? Are you just unlucky here? What is it about Silverstone?

JB: I'm sure there's more to it than just being unlucky, I'm sure it is. I've still had some really good races here. My first year in Formula One, my British Grand Prix I finished fifth, overtaking Michael at turn one and finished with nine cylinders and still finished fifth, so it was a great weekend, with DC winning. Very passionate fans here so it was a great celebration. But yeah, I agree, being on the podium here is something I would love to achieve. It's going to be very difficult this year but we'll see. We'll fight as hard as we can and get the best out of the car hopefully. And that's all we can do this weekend: we know we're not quick enough but you want to repay the fans for all their support. They're not just fans in the good times, they're fans in the tough times as well. That's really nice to see. Hopefully we'll have a full house of Union Jacks here and I promise we'll do the best we can.

Q: We know you've got a difficult car this year. What can you do to help its progress?

JB: I think everyone knows, when you watch on TV, our car does certain things a Formula One car shouldn't really be doing. I think our ride is an area we need to improve and an area we are improving. So, with a circuit like Silverstone, it is reasonably bumpy. It's not quite like Canada, and I think our car does suit circuits like Barcelona, like China, Malaysia. So, hopefully the flow of this circuit will help us – but still that's not enough. We need to improve in the areas where we are weak. We're not thinking about 2014 already, we want to get good results this year so we're pushing flat out to make sure we do improve – but it's an area of the car that's also very difficult to improve. But we're trying very hard.

Q: Paul, you've had two really good races – the last two races in Monaco and Canada – from low on the grid. So what are your feelings about those two grands prix?

Paul DI RESTA: Obviously coming away with good results, I think, fighting back. Canada was obviously an excellent result. I think everybody raised their game for Sunday and what we achieved was quite remarkable. This weekend, three more straightforward days I think will definitely be on the cards. To build upon that, to move forward really and to finish in the points. We've managed to score on six occasions this year, the other one, where we didn't score was a DNF. If we can keep that up, and equally try and battle with McLaren, hopefully be in front of them, it makes a big difference to a team like us that's battling in the midfield most of the year.

Q: You've had two good qualifying in your two grands prix here. As you say, it's a matter of three days going correctly is it? Getting everything in place?

DIR: Canada was very difficult. I think the whole team felt the pain of that but I think here we'll look to gather some data, starting on the tyres tomorrow. Our car seems to be working well in all circumstances this year. It seems very consistent. I think this is a track where tyres are going to be a question. We're normally on the healthier side of tyre wear and really the focus should be on qualifying because that's the big result of the weekend, and then transfer that into the race where we know we've got a strong package to gain some positions from. But it's a long way away and a lot of work to do in front of hopefully some great British support.

Q: Lewis, are you a bit surprised that you come here at the British driver with the best chance of winning and best placed in the Championship?

Lewis HAMILTON: I guess so, yeah. I was definitely not expecting that when we started the season. But it's I guess a positive.

Q: What are your thoughts on the progress Mercedes have made this year?

LH: I think it's incredible what they've been able to do, it's very difficult. Watching my previous car evolve over time, over the last few years just to see how much improvement you can make over a winter. To see what they've done is pretty impressive. They've done an incredible job but it's because they've got a great group of guys. They've got some very intelligent people coming up with great ideas and new innovations. It's a team to be reckoned with.

Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) Mark, you will be missed and I don't think I'm alone in thinking this. How much will your approach change for the remaining races?

MW: I think going forward, for the rest of the season, it doesn't change a huge amount to be honest, because I've known the decision... nothing changes for my approach now because obviously it's now out for everybody, but in terms of the last few races, obviously challenging for the top steps and when you get everything right, obviously we want to get wins as well. I don't see that being a huge huge difference. It's in my interest to keep the motivation up until Brazil and work hard with the guys. That's important. At this level, I'm fully respectful of the effort that goes in to get the car out there, so I need to keep pushing, for myself and for the team because they put in a lot of work, obviously, at the factory at Milton Keynes, Renault, everyone.

Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) Mark, during your first career at Le Mans, we remember a couple of crashes.

MW: Le Mans, yeah, in 1999, that era, those cars were very very... I think the regulations were quite dangerous. We had a lot of cars having some big shunts in that era. I think all manufacturers had issues with keeping the cars on the ground, just because of the way the regs were written and they were quite quick. Look, motor racing is dangerous, I accept that, we all know that. Motor racing is dangerous. Le Mans is a classic race. The cars are not slow there now but I'm not a guy who wants to wrap myself in cotton wool either. I'm looking forward to the challenge and yeah, it's something which was in my thinking in terms of the safety factors, all those things which have improved since we were there last and they will continue to improve as well, not just the circuit but the cars. We've gone forward since 13 years ago.

Q: (Bob McKenzie – Daily Express) Mark, why did you chose to go that route of announcing it this morning on Twitter before you told the team?

MW: Well, it was a Porsche announcement. I informed Christian before the announcement which contractually I should do, so that's what we did.

Q: (Bob McKenzie – Daily Express) It was just the guys in the factory didn't know.

MW: Well, it wouldn't have been an announcement then, would it? So you've got to get the balance right. Obviously I will talk to the factory of course at some stage. They've been superb for me on the floor there but Porsche were very keen to make the announcement. It was about Porsche and Mark Webber today.

Q: (Bob McKenzie – Daily Express) It wasn't about scoring a point back at Red Bull over things that had happened over the years?

MW: No. I think I helped the team today. They know they've got to make some decisions in the future. Dietrich (Mateschitz) has been completely up to speed with my thinking in the last six to eight months, so Dietrich has been absolutely on board and on message with where I've been at. He's certainly encouraged me not to rush my decision when I approached him earlier in the season. I think basically all of the right channels and avenues that we went through to get the message across as subtly as we could in terms of the announcement was done in the right way.

Q: (Jens Wolters – ARD Radio) Mark, do you actually care about the next guy who succeeds you in your position at Red Bull and maybe what should he bring into the team?

MW: I'll watch with interest, mate. Yeah.

Q: (Rosie Baillie – FIPlus.com) You've spent many years in Formula One, Mark, what will you miss most about Formula One when you leave?

MW: Probably being with some of these guys to be honest. We all strive to get to the pinnacle, and I've been with JB, Lewis, Fernando, these guys for a long time, racing. We all know where we've come from. I'm very proud of where I've come from. I don't forget the street that I grew up in in Australia. Formula One is seen as the pinnacle. Working with people like Adrian Newey, there's things like that which of course won't go un-noticed but as any sportsman or woman will know, you're not 25 for ever so you've got to get the decision right and the timing right and stopping when you're still performing well. I believe that's absolutely correct for yourself and that's part of the course that I will miss. The drug on the grid when the guys walk away from the car, that's the best legal drug you can get. I'm ready to go racing so that's brilliant. Like I say, you've got to be real with yourself and know there's a day where you need to roll on to the next chapter and that's what I'm very excited by. You can't kid yourself and say it's going to go on for ever. Yeah, and your performance is important so... yeah.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Lewis, in Monaco you didn't have great tyre degradation and also in Montreal. OK, they are circuits that are not demanding in terms of tyre wear. Here it is. If you don't face this kind of problem, do you think people will relate that to the test that your team did after the Spanish Grand Prix?

LH: Probably. That's something we will have to face up to but I'm not really expecting us to have an easy weekend. I don't think we've really made a huge step since Barcelona. The last couple of races have been a little bit easier on the tyres so we've definitely made a small improvement but I don't know whether it's going to be good enough this weekend to come out ahead of the Red Bulls and the Ferraris but time will tell. We definitely have some components that we've developed since Barcelona to help with the tyres, so I'm hoping that they will help this weekend.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) A question for everyone except Mark: if and when the time comes for you guys to move on and to retire, are there any series that you find particularly appealing? Anyone want to try their hand at NASCAR, motocross? What gets you guys excited as future possibilities?

LH: I don't know. I haven't any plans for leaving for a while. I've not really thought about it. I love quite a lot of the different sports that are out there but I don't know whether I would consider doing any other sports after Formula One. This is the pinnacle of motor racing and I think that for me personally, anything after this would be a little bit boring for me.

FA: I don't know. I will think when I arrive at the time.

JB: Yeah, I haven't thought about it a lot to be fair. Categories that I would like would be... I think Le Mans is a very special race, a very big team race, big team effort. I also like Super GT in Japan. I think that's a good category with the new regs that they have it looks pretty exciting.

Q: Paul, you've been in DTM, would you go back?

DIR: Yeah, I had some great memories there. I don't know. Hopefully my journey has only just started here. It's a few years away. There might be new series by that point.

MC: I've planned to get success in Formula One first. I've done a Le Mans race before and loved every moment of it so I might go down that route and maybe go on to touring cars after that because I started - after karts - in a thing called a T-car so I'm used to the weight transfer. It was quite nice to drift a car without doing stupid speeds but I'll think of that when I've gone through my twenties.

Q: (Graham Keilloh - F1Plus.com) Fernando, do you have any thoughts on this being the first race weekend after the sad passing of Jose Froilan Gonzales?

FA: Well, obviously it's sad week and a sad news for all the Ferrari family and for the motor sport family. I remember two years ago when we won the race here, I spoke with him on the telephone after the podium ceremony because it was a very special day for Ferrari and we dedicated the victory that day to he who is a legend at Ferrari. Obviously this weekend it's important if we could do a good job to dedicate again to all his family and all the passion and the fans that he brought into Formula One from his country and we would like to do a good job for him and for all the Ferrari fans.

Q: (Michelle Foster - PlanetF1.com) Mark, will you be walking away with any regrets?

MW: No, no I don't think so. At this level, you're always open to some adversity here and there and challenges, that's how this sport is, any top flight sport is going to be snapshots of different things which you could probably have done better here and there, but there's no career which is like this. You're going to have ups and downs and getting off the canvas is part of the rules, so I've been very fortunate to have some very very special memories for sure. How long is a piece of string? You could have more in terms of championships or whatever, but 2010 was a very very big battle with lots of quality drivers and it went to the last race so of course I remember that, I led the championship at the wrong race but it was... I'm looking back with very fond memories and I've still got races to go obviously this year so still looking to add to those great memories and helping Red Bull still achieve very very good results.

Q: (Jens Wolters - ARD Radio) Lewis, for me it's seem like since the decision in Paris that you and your team are the new bad guys in Formula One. Do you feel that? Do the other drivers still talk to you, how do you feel after this decision?

LH: So far, everyone still seems to be speaking to us. I feel that it's one of those experiences that we've gone through that if anything it's made us stronger. It's been quite encouraging to see how the team has pulled together and how they've turned a negative into a positive and now moving forward and hungrier than ever to win, so that's encouraging for me, that brings me great energy to come here with and hoping that we can get some good results moving forward.

Q: (Michael Casey - Associated Press) Lewis, talking more about this weekend, you had a good race in Canada. You're obviously still in the hunt. How are you feeling about the prospects for a title this season, even with the tyre issues?

LH: Yeah, like Fernando was saying, we're even further behind Sebastian and it's quite a big deficit so to catch that up, it's going to be very difficult, especially with the pace that they have, but we're not giving up, we're going to keep pushing and we'll just push as hard as we can until the last race and the last opportunity we have. But I feel positive, we're there or thereabouts and we're trying to make improvements. Those guys are extremely quick, Ferrari and Red Bull but it's not impossible to catch them, at least that's what we believe so we are going to keep pushing.

Q: (Gary Meenaghan - The National) Jenson and Mark, Williams are celebrating their 600th race this weekend, I was just hoping you could talk about how impressive a feat that actually is.

JB: Why, because I've done so many races as well, you mean? Yeah, Frank and Patrick are both legends. I raced for them in 2000, they gave me the opportunity to race in Formula One. I've got great memories with them and with the whole team as I'm sure Mark does as well. It's an amazing achievement, it's not a manufacturer, it's a true racing team and that's what I love about it, how difficult it was for them to find the money in the first place, to go racing, but with belief and determination, he's achieved or the team has achieved so much in their career. 600 Grands Prix, wow, it really is phenomenal. Fair play and hopefully they will be here for many many more years.

MW: Yeah, I agree with JB. I think it's an incredible achievement, under the sensational beacon that Frank has been. Obviously the adversity he has personally been through to still be in the factory week in week out are pretty much known. When I was there he was doing six days a week, he was very excited when he saw you arrive at the factory on a Saturday for whatever reason, even if it was for nothing, just to say hello, he was excited to have you there. An amazing guy for the sport so under him, as Jenson said, the team has been a real force, mainly remembered for being towards the front of the grid obviously in those Canon Honda days and they were obviously the eras when I was watching the racing as well, but I think moving forward, obviously Frank's slowly handing the reins over a little bit now and of course I wish Claire (Williams) all the best and the rest of the team. Claire is a super operator, really down to earth and a bit of a tough cookie as well, so she's got some of the traits of Dad. I hope they have good success in the future.

Q: (Luigi Perna - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Fernando, last year, during the summer, Ferrari made a big improvement in its performance. Are you confident you can do the same this year in order to close the gap, or is it more difficult?

FA: I think we will see. This year we are a little bit dominated by the tyres' performance and the tyre issues that we face every weekend. Some weekends are hit by some tyres against the others but it seems that if you have a weekend where you make the tyre work properly and last properly throughout the race you have a better chance to win, so despite the performance of the car in the high speed corners or low speed corners, I think it will be a weekend over the next couple of races to make the tyres work in the maximum performance in qualifying and in the race, because sometimes you hit one of the two and it's not enough so we need to improve in that aspect. I think the team performance needs to be a little bit better in the tyre preparation on Saturday and Sunday

Q: (Michael Casey - Associated Press) Fernando and Lewis, in terms of Sebastian after the race he had in Canada, is there a little bit of a sense that he's starting to pull away, that a fourth title could be his at some point?

FA: I think he's doing a fantastic job. I think he's been nearly perfect in all the races with no negative races, always performing well in qualifying and doing very good races. Obviously I had two unlucky situations, one in Malaysia, one in Bahrain. Kimi was leading the championship or very close until he had two unlucky situations, one in Monaco and in Canada was a little bit of a mixed race for him. So we need to keep fighting, we need to keep pushing and we need to recover from these bad races that we had now. As Lewis said before, I think Red Bull is performing really well, it's improving compared to the first part of the championship, so we really need to raise our game if we want to catch Sebastian because he's doing a fantastic job.

LH: Yeah, same as what Fernando said: Sebastian's doing an incredible job. He's performing as the World Champion that he is and they will be difficult to catch but I don't think it's impossible to close the gap. From our side, we've already closed quite a huge deficit already so we're happy where we are but of course we want to do better. Fernando's a lot closer. I think once they sort out their qualifying they'll be able to match the Red

Bulls if not beat them so we need to do a lot more work.
