

F1 Canadian Grand Prix – Thursday press conference

It's one of the most popular events on the calendar, and with good reason. As a result, the drivers were beaming as they lined up to face the media in Montreal.

Present were Jenson Button (McLaren) Paul di Resta (Force India), Felipe Massa (Ferrari), Sergio Perez (Sauber), Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso), and Mark WEBBER (Red Bull).

Paul, if I might start with you, a good weekend with both cars getting into the top ten in Monaco. How good is the dynamic between you and Nico [Hulkenberg]? Is there a fair amount of pushing one another and a good partnership?

Paul DI RESTA: Yeah, Monaco was a good weekend for the team. Obviously where we qualified... we went forward and were lucky with some cars not finishing. But, I think to achieve what we did there was a massive result for the team. I think me and Nico have a good relationship, we're obviously pushing each other along but also trying to develop the car because we feel that we're a little bit behind the likes of Sauber and Williams at the moment. And to overcome that we need to be doing a good job in the race. Over the weekend you've got to maximise what you have, and that's what we're going to try to achieve again this weekend.

Do you feel that you just need to hit the Pirelli sweetspot, or is it more than that? Is it, as you say, the development, and even do you look at the results of Maldonado, Sergio for example in Malaysia, and say 'hey, that should be us.'

DIR: I think the tyres are difficult, we're not going to deny that but I think we've achieved that at some tracks and that's where we saw some good results for us. Certainly Bahrain, we got the car in an operating window but I think it's a bit more and we need to understand the car a bit more in terms of what we're bringing in terms of upgrades. That's what we're trying to achieve. But I have every confidence the team will achieve that because last year our development rate went very high from mid-season, so we're certainly hoping we can do that this year. I don't believe we're getting the maximum out of the car yet but we'll try to achieve that this weekend again. It's a different philosophy, obviously, being a bit lower downforce here. So hopefully that will suit us slightly better.

And are you expecting to go up a gear in terms of development in the middle third of the season?

DIR: I think so. It wasn't a secret that we struggled at the beginning of the year, to what we initially first thought. Since then we've rapidly moved on. If we can do that... I think we brought a good upgrade to Barcelona. We obviously developed that forward over that weekend. Monaco was difficult to understand how much so I think here will probably be a truer reflection on what we can expect for the up and coming races.

Jean-Eric, first of all I understand you are nearly a Canadian, you have been here so long.

JEAN-ERIC VERGNE: Yeah, I can fake the accent.

Tell us what you've been doing, because you've been here a few days

JEV: I got invited to a nice hotel at Sacacomie to the north of Montreal. I was in the middle of nowhere and had a few days relaxing, doing some sport, it was quite nice.

And the Cirque du Soleil?

JEV: Yeah, I was there yesterday with Daniel Ricciardo. In the morning we were training, learning a couple of tricks with the guys in their factory, and then at night we get invited to the show. It was quite amazing to see.

And how much have you learnt?

JEV: I learnt to go high, and there was a circle thing [German Wheel], you had to go inside, upside down. Motorcycles as well. It was OK.

In terms of racing, obviously you had a good race at Monaco, overtaking Michael Schumacher. That must have been a pleasant moment. Looking at your qualifying. You've been out-qualified by Daniel 5-1 but you've out-raced him 4-1. Is that a fair assessment?

JEV: I have to say qualifying is quite hard, compared to what I was expecting. I guess it's going to come: I have the speed, I can show it in the racing. Monaco, unfortunately I hit the wall before I could make a good lap, so, yeah, I wouldn't say unlucky but I pushed a bit too hard and didn't get a proper time. It's just a question of time, I have to take it easy, I know I have the speed and I know I have a car to be able to be in the points sometimes. So yeah, I think that will come.

I read that you say this is your favourite circuit – but you've never raced here...

JEV: On the Playstation! It's a track I like: I've been driving on it as well in the simulator and I quite enjoy driving on it. I hope it's going to be the same in reality tomorrow.

Sergio, you only did three laps last year. Do you remember much about the circuit?

Sergio PÉREZ: Not really, it is not a circuit that I know well, not really from the few laps I did in F1 last year, because after the accident I could not race here. So, I had to go back home after F1. Hopefully this weekend can be a lot better. I think we have a very competitive car and we can fight for a podium here.

Have you done a lot of laps on Ferrari's simulator?

SP: I've done some laps in the simulator as well. I think it's a circuit where it will not be a problem to get up to speed because I've done enough laps already in F1 last year.

Since Malaysia, things don't really seem to have slotted into place. Malaysia was such a high point but it doesn't seem to have continued. What's required to get back to that situation?

SP: I think it's just a matter of putting everything together. We have enough speed, we have had very unlucky races since Malaysia. Like China, for example. The only weekend we didn't have the speed was in Bahrain. We had a lot of degradation. All the other weekends, Barcelona I was in fourth place but then I had a puncture; Monaco in qualifying we had the speed to fight for a win, I think, but then we had a problem with the steering wheel and I just went straight. I think the speed is there and everything is there and it's just a matter of luck. We have been very unlucky in the last few races.

Felipe, things seem to have come together for you at the last race. Can you carry that on and also take what you learned in Monaco to other circuits?

Felipe MASSA: Yes, sure. I think it was a better race, a clean race where nothing wrong happened. It was good pace from the first session. So, hope we can use that to do things even better here and all these races until the end of the year. I think it was a positive weekend even if we cannot be so happy to finish sixth, y'know? I think it was a good start.

Monaco is so much of a specific circuit, is it possible... did you really discover something there.

FM: Yes. We discovered things that for sure can be the direction for the other tracks as well. Definitely Monaco is different than many other tracks but I think it helped a lot to understand things that we didn't understand before and I'm really looking forward to understand that direction and be stronger and stronger all the time.

Do you regard this as a good circuit anyway for Ferrari?

FM: I think it's very difficult to say. Here is a track that you have a lot of slow corners, chicanes, hairpins and a very long straight. Looking at what's going on this season, every track is very difficult to say if this is the right track for us or not. So we need good speed as well. It's something we have been working since the beginning of the year to improve, our speed on the straight. Here we know how important is that. So, we wait and see. It's difficult to say before.

Mark, obviously a winner of the last grand prix and you've been playing Action Man since then, how was the sky diving?

Mark WEBBER: Oh yeah that was good yesterday, the first time I've done it. It was in a wind tunnel, so it obviously wasn't real sky-diving but it was great to catch up with Jon [DeVore] who is a phenomenal Red Bull athlete from California. He does a lot of... he was in the Transformers film with the wing suits, so those guys are incredible, what they did. We did a few tricks yesterday with a car and a parachute and it was really good, I enjoyed it. I don't know if I've got the bug to jump out of planes to be honest but I enjoyed it. But the highlight for me between races was going to the Isle of Man TT. It's an absolutely amazing sporting event if you love motorsport, it's a must to go to. And to see John McGuinness, a friend of mine, win again, all of the riders are obviously heroes but John's had such a great record around there it was really good to see all that come together again for him. Took some mates and we had just an absolutely great time. It was really good, last Saturday.

And some Action for Road Safety work this morning, I believe.

MW: Yeah. I've been doing some work for the Action for Road Safety campaign. That went well.

You were a winner obviously in Monaco, you've done nine Canadian Grands Prix, just in case you've forgotten, you qualified second in 2010, finished third in 2011 and you've had only one retirement here. So what are your thoughts about this race? Is it a good one for you?

MW: Yeah, I like driving here. It's a good mixture, in terms of the street circuit sort of feel of it, but also with low-ish downforce. Obviously the cars won't be in the Monaco configurations, so we'll have to look for the top speeds. Yeah, you still need a pretty good car here, there's no question about that. There's quite a bit of time to be gained and lost here if you get it together [or not]. I enjoy it here. It always throws up a bit of an oddball race. I think that we need to see how the marbles go, the brake wear, incidents, safety cars. It's always been like that the Canadian Grand Prix. Even 'the Nige' - I think he turned the car off at the last corner, so there's always drama at this event. So looking forward to it.

Jenson, talking of drama, you had it all here last year: qualified seventh, went back to last and came back to win. And yet apparently you're concentrating on qualifying. But qualifying seems to go out the window here.

Jenson BUTTON: Yeah, it did last year. It's something you obviously still want to do - get as far up the grid and make your life as easy as possible on Sunday. As Mark said, a lot happens around here. Last year we obviously didn't have the marbles but we had everything else we could throw into the mix but we if we have a dry, hot race that's something we'll have to watch out for - we'll have a lot of marbles on the circuit, as we've found in previous years. It's a tough race, a tough race to get the car spot on but last year it definitely went our way.

Let's hope it goes your way this time because you are getting a little bit left behind in the championship. Is that something that you're feeling?

JB: To be fair I purposefully haven't looked at the points for the past few races but I don't think anyone is streaking ahead in the championship. As we have seen it's been a very mixed bag over the first six races. But yeah, the last few races, I've retired twice and I've scored two points in the other race. They haven't been my finest weekends. So, yes, I need to score some good points this weekend to get it back on track. I think we all come here hoping for a victory, aiming for a victory, but as we've seen for most of the season just being consistently in the double figures in terms of points is key really to fighting at the front this year. Looking forward to the weekend. I have some very special memories here, especially last year, but also 2010 and back when I qualified in pole here before. So looking forward to getting out there and seeing what we've got to play with.

The McLaren GT car is also performing pretty well, I think it won both races in Navarra last weekend. Is that something that rubs off a little bit on the grand prix team as well?

JB: We hope so! It's very different obviously to Formula One, but those guys have been working very, very hard for the whole season to get it competitive, so yeah, it's great that McLaren have had two back-to-back victories in Navarra last weekend.

A question for Felipe. Last week, Fernando said in Madrid, at the opening of the Ferrari store, that he was very much confident that you are from now on going to be scoring tons of points, fighting for podiums, even for victories maybe. Does this give you

further impulse and are you aiming for better goals this season?

FM: Yeah, for sure. I feel much better in the car. I think you know improving helps a lot the way of driving, especially for my driving style. I'm really looking forward to carry on like that, improving, getting stronger race by race, and fighting for many good points and even looking for victory and podium. This is the really the target, the direction and I feel much stronger in the car now compared to the beginning of the season.

Due to the high competitiveness this season, Jenson recently said he's worried that anyone can win a race. Do the other drivers share that concern?

JB: I think I said that the worry is that fans think we could all win, we could all lose.

SP: I think anyone can win a race. You never what will happen in any race, so there is always the chance for every driver to have a nice surprise. I think especially this year, most of the top teams and also the middle teams are really close together, so it can be a surprise like it has happened this year with Pastor winning, so some others might come during the year.

J-EV: I don't really have much to say. I think he [Pérez] has said everything. I think maybe he forgot his second place as well! I think everything is possible. We just have to be at the right moment, in the right place, with a good car. So, yeah, maybe.

DIR: There's not much to say. I think it's unfair to say that anybody could win but I think if you get the car in a sweet spot over the weekend, you need to be prepared and you can make a massive step forward.

FM: The same.

A pair of questions for Felipe : first question is about the exhaust system. You will compare, both of you Ferrari drivers, the exhaust systems and I would like to know what is the target for that: if it is to find more downforce, traction and so on? And the second question is if you can clarify your answer in an interview that you gave during the week about the future? You were quoted as saying 'if I can't drive for Ferrari any more, I would prefer to do something else.' Would it possible to see you, in the future, like Barrichello in IndyCar for example?

FM: Well, the exhaust - we have some pieces to try here. The important thing is to find out some things. How much better, it's difficult to say, we just need to try it, on the track, to see if it makes the car stronger, so we will see.

(With reference to the second question) I didn't really say what you said. I said for sure, in the future, the most important thing is to think about the present, thinking about race by race, the results. Try to carry on in the direction that we took in the last race, making good points and for sure, after August, we start to see (look at) what will happen in the future. I didn't say 'if I'm not at Ferrari any more, I will stop.' I didn't say that. I said 'if I need to go to a small team, maybe I will think about doing something else.' I'm here, always want to race, to fight for victory and that's what I did for many years, and I'm looking forward to getting back to fighting for victories and the championship. I trust myself, as I said, it's important to... the season didn't start as I expected, but I think things are getting better so it's important to carry on like this and I think if we do, it will be much easier and we will find a good direction for the future, to stay in Ferrari or find a good direction in which to race.

Jenson, you started the season with McLaren as a favourite, you won the first Grand Prix and since then, you seemed to have struggled to score big points. Do you have an explanation?

JB: We could go through every single race. The second race was a mistake on my part and then in China we had a good chance of challenging for victory and we finished second, which, this season, getting consistent second places we would be leading the championship. That was a very good result but then the last three races have been a little bit more difficult. Some of it has been (because of) Saturday afternoon, but not all of it. When you put yourself in a difficult position in qualifying, you can either get unlucky or lucky at turn one, especially around a place like Monaco, and obviously we got very unlucky. Yeah, it just hasn't really fallen into place. It's a very competitive season in F1 and I think if you do have a mistake or something goes wrong where you don't have luck on your side, you can be outside the points, or you can be scoring small points which in previous years would be a shock really, to be scoring two or three points in a Grand Prix when you're driving for McLaren, but this season is very different. There are, if you look at the history in the sport, there are big teams, you would say, but this season you wouldn't pick out McLaren, Ferrari and Red Bull as being the big teams in the sport. It's massively competitive. It just hasn't gone my way and the team's way over the last few races but that will turn round, and we will be back scoring good points.

Jenson, can you just go back to last year: an incredible race, you said it was one of the best of your career if not the best. How long did it take you to decompress after that and really take in everything that happened that Sunday?

JB: I can't really remember much from that night and I lost a bit of memory as well. As soon as I got back to the hotel really, after any win, as we know, it's a very special feeling crossing the finishing line and seeing the chequered flag first, celebrating with all your friends and family and the team. But that one was very different. I wouldn't say it was a shock victory but it was unexpected at many points during the race, so it really did mean a lot and the adrenalin was still pumping through my veins for many hours afterwards. But yeah, I've watched it back, even this season I watched it back. With ten laps to go, you think it's impossible that I could have won that Grand Prix, so a special weekend. Hopefully we can have some more like that over the next few years, but that doesn't happen very often. I cherish that memory very much.

Mark, as one of the six winners so far this year, can you speak of the competitive aspect of it, how we have more teams involved, more drivers, like never before?

MW: Yeah, I don't think there are many top teams at the moment. Obviously it's very tight between everyone's performances. It looks quite sensitive to venue, quite sensitive to temperatures, quite sensitive to drivers, even. It's quite open, and that's why we've seen some different results, different podiums, different winners, like we haven't seen before. I think that the teams which were not very good with the regulations last year, like Ferrari, Williams, Sauber - they were not very quick with the blown floor - they had a good step this year, coming back to the people that made the blown floor very strong, like McLaren and Red Bull. That's the way it is.

Mark, you are actually level with your teammate in the championship. Are you afraid that the situation could create some tensions in your team, as in 2010, or do you think that your team has known how to learn from the past?

MW: It's a good problem to have.

This question is for any of you who have had good experiences here in Montreal, at this venue. Open House Thursday has been one of the traditions at this track but at the pits today, due to forces outside of the track, just wondering how you feel that fans have not had the opportunity to interact with you this week, like they would have in years past?

MW: I think in some cases it's disappointing. We come here, it's a sensational event for the whole season as one of the top few Grands Prix of the year: fans-wise, drivers, mechanics, photographers, journalists, everyone loves coming here. The city really embraces the event, the restaurants go for it, the driver parade lap here is one of the best parade laps we do in the season. So there's a huge amount of positive aspects which we've had here.

For a long long time, the Canadian Grand Prix has been held here in a very very positive fashion. Obviously I'm not completely up to speed with what's going on with... like you say, some of the students are not happy with certain things. I'm not saying it's a minority, but sometimes when there's a little bit of tension then some other people can lose out. Like you say, some fans wanted to come and see the track today, so that's really unfortunate. I'm sure that the weekend will go well. We want to put on a very very good weekend for everyone in Montreal and Canada and that's the focus for everyone in Formula One.

FM: We want to see all the fans, all the young people, students, everybody, we want to see them here with us, enjoying the sport, enjoying Formula One and I hope everything becomes normal with this situation. For sure, for us we feel sad for this situation. We just want to see them here, enjoying themselves and enjoying the sport, nothing else but that.

JB: I think it's just a precautionary thing. It's the start of the weekend, and we hope for a very exciting weekend and this is a big weekend for Formula One but also for Montreal. If you listen to the radio here, it's non-stop talking about the Grand Prix. Hopefully this can be put behind us and we can concentrate on having a great weekend and putting on a great show for all of the fans who want to come and see us and enjoy this great sport. I'm sure the fans have good memories of last year especially, but also previous years. The city of Montreal really comes alive over a Grand Prix weekend, they really embrace it and hopefully that won't be any different this year.

Mark, the FIA has declared illegal the pierced floor that Red Bull has been using in the last few races. Will it be a disadvantage for you in the coming races, and what do you say when people say that you and Sebastian won races using an illegal car?

MW: Well, to answer the first part of your question, I would not know if the floor is changed or unchanged, so on the driving side, we're very optimistic that the change won't make much difference at all. You won't believe us but we had some changes for Valencia anyway which included no hole, irrespective of the rule change, so that's what we were doing. In relation to winning races with an illegal car, I'm happy to be called lots of things and I'm happy to have criticism about my driving and lots of stuff, but I will not take criticism in that respect. It completely pisses me off to be honest, because the car has passed every single, every single technical regulation after the race. All of the teams that were against it did not make any protest after Monaco, the car passed the test after Bahrain, the car passed the test after Monaco and now there has been a clarification on the rule, and the rule now is different and we had a car that was legal for the first part of the season and now the rule has been changed and we will start again, so looking forward to it.

Mark, Red Bull has never won the race here, even in the season when you won almost everything. Are the circumstances very particular in this Grand Prix or does it just not suit your car?

MW: It just looks like in '09, '10, we probably didn't have the best car in low downforce or lower downforce. The team has been competitive for two or three, four seasons now and as you say, the Montreal win has not been there for us. Obviously Seb was very close last year but lost the concentration at the end and Jenson was there to capitalise. I think that judging by how the start of the season has gone, there is every chance that we can still do well here. If you look at Spa and Monza last year, we were very very very strong in those low downforce configuration track, actually stronger than we were on the other tracks but I don't think that will carry over to this weekend. I think that there's no real form card. We come here confident but not crazy on confidence. We know we have a lot of tough competition but I think Fernando was the last guy to win here with a Renault engine, so that's something that they would like to win here again. They've had a lot of amazing success together with us at Red Bull, so as you say, it's a bit of a scalp which would be nice to get. But again, it's a nice problem to have when you've won so many races around the world in the last few years, but we would like to get Canada on track for Red Bull. When you're aiming high, sometimes you don't always get the goals.

To all of you, a World Champion, Jacques Villeneuve, said this generation of drivers are all Daddy's boys.

JB: I'll make a comment. Jacques has a very unusual way of answering questions but you've also just picked out one piece of his interview. Basically, the more important part of his interview is him talking about safety and the way that back in the seventies the drivers were more aware of there being a lot more risk and the possibilities of fatality. I think he was stating that these days racing has got safer, and the circuits have got safer, and he was talking about the manoeuvre with Nico and Lewis in Bahrain and he was stating that he didn't think it was correct. That's what he was saying. But that's quite normal for you to pick out that sentence.

Can I ask you about your helmets: how and where did you decide the colour schemes of your helmet and do you have any favourite points on it?

MW: I designed my helmet in school classroom. It was a science lesson but I was very bored in the lesson so I was designing my helmet. I even remember the teacher's name. She wasn't very happy but I got some ideas and eventually I wanted to run with the Australian flag colours and then have the green and gold on top which are the sporting colours of Australia. Obviously I've lost a little bit of the green now at Red Bull because they don't like green so much but it hasn't changed. I want to keep it like that. It's not super-exciting, but it's close to me, I've had it for my whole career, so yeah, it was my design and I will start and finish with it.

JB: Mine was back in '94. I didn't actually design it, someone else did but it's changed over the years but it's kept the same idea with the Union Jack - the Union Flag - on the back. It's got JB on the side, it's obviously personal to me. I've changed the colours now and again over the years but it's back to being pretty standard now which is nice.

FM: Well, my helmet's design was from my father. My father used to race for fun but the colour was different. His colour was blue and orange and I changed it to blue, yellow and green, my country's colours. I've used the same design since I started. For sure it gets a little bit more and more daring with the ears but it's similar to how it was before. I think the helmet is like the face of the driver, I don't really like to change it so much because it should be similar to when you started, you know. So I just changed the colours and the design was from my father, so I really enjoy it.

F1 Canadian Grand Prix – FPI report

Foxes and squirrels and marmots, oh my! Or was that last animal a groundhog?

The opening practice session of the Canadian Grand Prix weekend was notable more for the wildlife on track than the actual action. For while we might have seen red flags and a dramatic shunt, the F1 world goes crazy for cute critters.

The morning's red flag came about thanks to Caterham's Heikki Kovalainen, who lost control of his car on a wet kerb, hit the wall, and proceeded to discard half of his car along the track. The Finnish driver emerged from the crash unscathed, although the team mechanics have a lot of work to do if they want to run in FP2.

Kovalainen's shunt was the most dramatic event of the morning; the rest of the action was confined to the odd spin, missed apex, and trip across the grass.

While the morning's big winner was McLaren's Lewis Hamilton, the loser of the session was teammate Jenson Button. The Briton managed 12 laps before an oil leak brought him back into the garage for a gearbox seal change. But the work took the team longer than anticipated, and the 2009 world champion was unable to return to the track before the chequered flag fell.

It wasn't all bad news for Button, however – while he would have benefitted from additional track time to nail down the ideal set-up for the weekend, his best effort after 12 short laps was still good enough for P10. It may be a small victory, but it's better than languishing in P24.

Hamilton was comfortably fastest for much of the session, although Sebastian Vettel put up a decent challenge in the closing stages.

But perhaps the most interesting running of the morning could be found much further down the timesheets, where HRT's Pedro de la Rosa and Narain Karthikeyan comfortably out-paced both Marussias.

HRT arrived in Montreal with a raft of upgrades they were confident would bring added pace, and based on their F1 results it looks as though they've done the trick. Of course, there are few judgements to be made from a single session, and it is worth waiting until the end of the weekend to determine whether or not the fight at the back of the pack is about to get very interesting indeed.

F1 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1:15.564s [30 laps]
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1:15.682s [29 laps]
3. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1:15.782s [30 laps]
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1:15.842s [34 laps]
5. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1:15.897s [28 laps]
6. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1:15.986s [29 laps]
7. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1:16.000s [31 laps]
8. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1:16.249s [32 laps]
9. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1:16.264s [28 laps]
10. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1:16.347s [12 laps]
11. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1:16.460s [32 laps]
12. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1:16.619s [17 laps]
13. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1:16.859s [26 laps]
14. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1:16.890s [36 laps]
15. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1:17.014s [42 laps]
16. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1:17.352s [28 laps]
17. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1:17.580s [31 laps]
18. Vitaly Petrov (Caterham) 1:17.935s [23 laps]
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Caterham) 1:18.177s [16 laps]
20. Pedro de la Rosa (HRT) 1:18.182s [26 laps]
21. Bruno Senna (Williams) 1:18.762s [36 laps]
22. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1:19.354s [23 laps]
23. Timo Glock (Marussia) 1:20.004s [21 laps]
24. Charles Pic (Marussia) 1:20.067s [23 laps]

F1 Canadian Grand Prix – FP2 report

In sport, as in life, timing is everything. And the timing of FP2 in Montreal was about as perfect as it's possible to be – within minutes of the chequered flag falling, the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve was treated to a thunderstorm the likes of which made last year's rain delay look like a light shower.

Lewis Hamilton once again topped the timesheets here in Canada, while teammate Jenson Button suffered another session of reduced running thanks to a hangover from the morning's oil leak and gearbox seal change. When the McLaren was fired up to go out at the start of FP2 it became clear that while the oil leak had been fixed, it had been disguising a second – as yet unnamed – issue.

As a consequence, Button was stuck in the garage until 20 minutes before the session was due to end, and Hamilton was left to do the team's long-run development work in the closing stages of FP2.

Button was granted a stay of execution thanks to the red flags brought out by Bruno Senna's crash into the Wall of Champions – the 18-minute delay gave the McLaren mechanics added time to fix the MP4-27 and get the 2009 world champion out on the track.

Senna slid round the final chicane before backing into the Wall of Champions at high speed. The Brazilian driver emerged from the accident unscathed, but the same could not be said for the experimental and aggressive rear wing that he was trialling on the FW34.

Senna's accident was the only noteworthy incident in a session that saw a number of drivers spinning like tops around Turn 9, and in which seemingly everyone cut across the grass at least once.

And much like in the morning, the interesting running happened much further down the grid than is usual in Formula One. Caterham had a sterling session, despite it taking the team until 35 minutes into FP2 before they were able to finish rebuilding Heikki Kovalainen's car after his F1 crash.

Kovalainen out-paced Senna, while both he and teammate Vitaly Petrov were faster around the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve than either Toro Rosso. The team were confident that their latest raft of upgrades would help them crack the mid-field, and while one session does not a season make there are definite signs of progress from the Norfolk racers.

The unexpected burst of speed shown by HRT this morning continued to an extent this afternoon, with Pedro de la Rosa lapping one-tenth faster than Marussia's Timo Glock, and only a second down on the slower Toro Rosso of Daniel Ricciardo, something we would have considered impossible only two short weeks ago.

Watch that back of the grid space – HRT and Caterham might be about to make the fight at the back just as exciting as the fight at the front has been thus far.

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.15.259s [43 laps]
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.15.313s [36 laps]
3. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.15.410s [39 laps]
4. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.15.53s [44 laps]
5. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1.15.544s [32 laps]
6. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.15.651s [37 laps]
7. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.15.697s [32 laps]
8. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1.15.799s [39 laps]
9. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.15.812s [14 laps]
10. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.15.878s [40 laps]
11. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1.15.898s [38 laps]
12. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.15.907s [41 laps]
13. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.15.987s [39 laps]
14. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1.16.360s [29 laps]
15. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1.16.562s [33 laps]
16. Heikki Kovalainen (Caterham) 1.16.981s [24 laps]
17. Bruno Senna (Williams) 1.17.022s [22 laps]
18. Vitaly Petrov (Caterham) 1.17.075s [41 laps]
19. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1.17.124s [41 laps]
20. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1.17.716s [34 laps]
21. Pedro de la Rosa (HRT) 1.18.908s [27 laps]
22. Timo Glock (Marussia) 1.19.084s [40 laps]
23. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1.19.378s [21 laps]
24. Charles Pic (Marussia) 1.19.902s [18 laps]

F1 Canadian Grand Prix – Friday press conference

The Friday press conference in Montreal was short and sweet, as it took place in the middle of a thunderstorm that saw the majority of journalists trapped in the media centre and unable to reach the press conference tent.

Present were Toni Cuquerella (HRT), Mark Gillan (Williams), Andrew Green (Force India), Graham Lowdon (Marussia), and Jonathan Neale (McLaren).

Antonio, today there was an incident in the pitlane with one of your mechanics and Pedro De la Rosa. Just to clear up any misconceptions or any misunderstandings, can you tell us how your mechanic is?

Antonio CUQUERELLA: The mechanic I think, happily, is OK. He just got some bruises and a swollen knee. So, it looked worse when it happened but luckily he's going to be back with us tonight from hospital. Some checks have been done but nothing important. He's going to have some pain but in a few days he's going to be back to work.

No broken bones?

AC: No, no.

Andrew, your drivers are expecting updates, at least Paul Di Resta told us so yesterday. What's the situation? Are you going to be able to deliver those updates?

Andrew GREEN: We're going to follow the same plan as last year, which is we'll continually bring new part to the track every race, as a strategy that we've followed before, as most teams do. Yeah, we will deliver what we can, that's our target. There are updates here, there will be updates in Valencia, there will be a bigger one at Silverstone. That's the idea. We'll keep pushing. It's incredibly tight and fractions of a second can mean multiple places on the grid. It's harder than ever. There's a big push back at the factory – more than ever.

Both drivers very well placed in Monaco, and today as well. How well are those two working together and how good is it to have two competitive drivers, perhaps pushing one another as well?

AG: Very important. It's also important that they're both team players. They know that they want to push the team forward, they're not just individuals, and they work as a team. We all work as a team pushing the team forward and they get pulled along with that. They both work together very well. It's good that they both push each other. They're both very talented, extremely talented. We're very very happy with the way they work. It's a nice place to be.

Antonio, you've been in our new premises now for over a month. Are you beginning to see the benefits of that?

AC: Absolutely. Now we are all together under the same roof and that has been a massive step forward for us. The factory is a much better place. It's a place we can work together and communication-wise it's of course much better. Assembling the cars, engineering, marketing, finance, all departments are together. It's normal for everybody but it wasn't for us, so it's a big step forward.

I guess it's not working at 100% of what you hoped, so what sort of percentage is it?

AC: Well, we still have two big departments that are recruiting people, you probably have seen a lot of advertisements, but I would say we are probably at 60 per cent. I hope that at the end of the year we should be at 90%.

Graeme, same thing with you really. You've moved into new premises. How much of a difference has that made?

Graeme LOWDON: It has made quite a big difference. Three years in Formula One and we're on to our second factory already. I think the main thing, that has already been said, is that it improves communication and that's been a big help. So, we're quite happy with the location we're in now.

I believe you're going to the Fan Forum in New York on Monday. What are the thoughts behind that?

GL: I think all the teams are pretty much the same. Effectively, we're racing teams but we're manufacturing businesses working in a global market and you can't ignore North America. No company with global aspirations if you like can ignore such a big market. Formula One has been out of North America for a few years now and I think it is a very important marketplace. One thing we do know is that there is a huge response from the fans. They want to get close to the teams, they want to understand what's happening and it's a really good thing that we can take our drivers, talk to the fans, interact with them and really understand what it is that they enjoy about Formula One and try to give a little bit back. And, as I say, it's such an important marketplace with its heritage and its history, and you look at the car manufacturing base in North America as well, I think we have to make a really big effort and try to put on a great show for all the fans.

Jonathan, today we saw Jenson in the pits for rather a long time. What actually happened there?

Jonathan NEALE: We had a mixed day today. Jenson this morning in P1 had an oil leak, which was leaking onto the clutch, and we thought we'd fixed it. The oil leak was in the gearbox. The mechanics did a great job in rebuilding, repairing the seal but as soon as we fired the car up we could see there was a secondary problem that hadn't revealed itself before that time. And unfortunately we had to change the gearbox and the whole rear end of Jenson's car. So, disappointing that we didn't get the mileage in that we were looking for. But I have to say, hats off to the mechanics, anybody who was pointing a camera in the garage... and on Lewis's side as well, the moment that Lewis's car left the garage, all of the mechanics came across to help Jenson get running and that was terrific. But on the other hand a great day for Lewis. We know that the pace is in the car here, it looks strong today - today is today, and listening to what's going on around us, who knows what tomorrow brings? But yeah, I think we're here to race hard this weekend, and getting Jenson out was really important. You could see him setting green sector after green sector. This is a circuit where you have to build: build confidence and feel that the car is underneath you. We saw a few people visit the wall this afternoon, and to be quick around here you've got to get close.

How much of a worry are two little deficiencies within the drivers: we're used to seeing Lewis winning, for example, but he hasn't yet won this year, and Jenson seems to have just had a few races of... I don't know if you call it bad luck or what it is. How much can you build those performances back up?

JN: I think we can build them up well, actually. You're right, we've had a couple of ups and downs in the last few races, some operational issues which hopefully we've put behind us now. We've got two strong drivers. Lewis put the car on pole by over half a second in Spain - which is a pretty demanding circuit as colleagues here will attest - so we know that the package is good but it's very tight this year. Six races, six different winners, five different constructors at this time. As I said during the week, great if you're a fan of Formula One, stressful if you're trying to be consistent. But consistency is what it's about.

Mark, looking back at Monaco, particularly after the victory in Spain, where do you think you could - or should - have been in Monaco? Could you have been better off in Monaco?

Mark GILLAN: Yes, obviously after the Barcelona win we were very much on a high. Going into Monaco we had high expectations and I think the car certainly was... we should have been good enough for P4-P5. Obviously it was disappointing; there were a range of issues that hit us through the weekend and I think that as a team collectively we could have done a better job. We look to make amends this weekend.

What sort of effect has Renault's return had on the team?

MG: It's had a massive impact. They're very impressive as an engine manufacturer and they've slotted in seamlessly with the team. A very very good relationship has built up very quickly and things are going very well with them.

Mark Gillan, you tested a new rear wing today, I guess. So what difference did it make? Did it improve the car today?

MG: We have a new rear wing here this weekend for Montreal. It was tested with Pastor this morning and run by both drivers this afternoon and it's working well.

For all teams, just about the tyres... we've all been talking about the tyres so much this year already, but how much data have you now been able to gather from the first six races and now, with that data, can you really now begin to get an idea of what to do with these tyres in lots of different conditions? Presumably there are some pretty serious computers trying to work on this at the same time as people intuitively are trying to get the settings right.

JN: Have we got enough data? Yes, as you can imagine we have a huge amount of data as everybody else has. In terms of making sense of it, it's not a trivial question. The interaction between track temperature, the vehicle dynamics of the car, the driving style, the ability of cars... we've seen at different circuits different people have been able to switch the tyres on very quickly and others taking much longer to warm up. We're all chasing the same thing, which is the first team to become consistent and get them in the sweet spot. I think we've seen it on a couple of occasions ourselves where we've had - particularly with Jenson - a car in the right place on a Friday and then not on a Saturday, because that elusive thing has slipped away from us. So they're definitely more peaky than they have been. I wouldn't like to claim for a minute that we've cracked it. We're working harder, we think we understand more about it but it's hard work.

MG: I would agree with Jonathan. It is a very difficult problem and it's interlinked with the whole car/vehicle dynamics, the aerodynamics of the package, the drivers' styles and the driver is obviously an incredibly important part of the tyre management. So tyre management this year is key, and it's not just about the long runs, it's also about qualifying position because it has become more difficult and managing the tyres through the weekend, so the link between the driver, the car and understanding of the tyres is really crucial this year, and a lot of effort from all the teams will be going into that.

AG: I agree with the front row. I would just add that just when you think you're beginning to understand them they go and do something differently.

AC: I think this is not just technical but it is good for the show that different teams can sometimes strike the maximum in some conditions and in other conditions, completely different, other teams can strike better. That, I think has been proved to be good for the show. Technically we all like to understand everything but the proof is that all the teams didn't manage to understand things at the same time.

GL: The tyres have really created a fascinating problem and that's what Formula One is all about. This is the ultimately team game. The drivers are the heroes but you can't run the team with just two drivers, it takes an awful lot of technical knowledge and as you said as well, intuition, as well as all of that data. You can be swamped with data and go down blind alleys and that kind of thing. I think what we're seeing now is all the teams are presented with exactly the same problem, and this is what this team sport is all about: who can solve it with the resources that they have and come out on top on Sunday, on race day.

To follow up on that, I'm just wondering if there's going to be a point in this season where you figure out the tyres and there's going to be a definite pecking order like there has been in previous seasons, or do you think this is going to continue all year?

JL: Well that's the plan. Of course, every one of us – Mark, Graeme, the guys here – we'd love to be the first to figure it out and get some kind of advantage. I don't think it is going to quite solve itself like that. It's still a meritocracy. All the wins so far have been well-earned. The guys at Williams did a fantastic job getting a win there and other teams as well, but I don't think it's just suddenly going to snap and come good, because it's not as if we're trying to solve something that's inherently an issue with the tyre, it's tyre/car/package/circuit/ambient temperature and driver, so it puts us in a different position. I think that's what makes it exciting so I think it will keep things lively all year. As much as I would love to get it sorted out tomorrow, I don't think we will.

MG: I would just say that it's an incredibly complex problem. The tyres are very non-linear and something that we're all chasing so you go from track to track, even with the same compounds and you have to be very careful not to assume anything and collect all the data, so the Friday running becomes a very important part of the data analysis.

AG: I think we're all trying to solve the same problem, but I think every team will probably end up with the same solution.

Jonathan, you discussed Jenson's problems with the car in some detail earlier on. However, Gary Anderson who, I'm sure you know well, is the BBC's technical analyst, has had a right pop at the team saying that you're a World Championship-winning team with World Championship-winning drivers taking four hours to fix a gearbox issue; that's not just good enough, to use his words. What would you say back to him?

JN: Well, he's entitled to his opinion. I think it helps if you're standing a bit nearer the problem. He's right, though. In terms of these things we don't want to happen, they're not designed to happen, but Formula One cars are designed to be right on the edge. We're all pushing very hard which is why the grid is very close. From time to time there will be a technical problem. It certainly wasn't trivial, and having been back over it this afternoon, I don't think that we missed anything in our first diagnosis that would have led us to believe that we were going to have the problem that we did after lunch. He's entitled to his view.

F1 Canadian Grand Prix – FP3 report

Sixteen cars, one second. Yes, you did read that right: the first sixteen cars were covered by a single second at the end of FP3 in Montreal.

We're going to be in for an absolutely cracking qualifying session this afternoon, of that you can be sure.

The pitlane had barely opened for business this morning when Nico Rosberg parked up with an as-yet-unnamed mechanical failure at Turn 7. The Mercedes driver brought out some local yellow flags, but the car was quickly moved off track by the marshals.

Rosberg was unable to set a time in this session, but based on his teammate's performance and the fact that the Mercedes – shockingly – runs a Mercedes engine, it is to be assumed that the Chinese Grand Prix winner will be in the fight for pole this afternoon. A Mercedes engine has proved to be something of an advantage around the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve in recent years, and that should hold true this afternoon.

The second (and final) casualty of FP3 was Toro Rosso's Jean-Eric Vergne. The Frenchman crashed into the tyre wall at Turn 2 after losing control of the back end of his car in one of those 'wheel touches a wet kerb and it all goes wrong' moments we're used to seeing round these parts.

HRT have continued to out-perform Marussia, and to do so convincingly, which has been one of the biggest surprises of the weekend thus far. Yesterday's excuse from the Banbury Ferraris was that they'd been doing a spot of development work and so hadn't been keeping an eye on the lap times, but for HRT to outpace Marussia at all three practice sessions? It's more than just development work.

The Spanish team have been running a new low downforce package this weekend, and it looks to be working. It's taken time for the new investment and management structure to filter through into results, but team principal Luis Perez-Sala's tactic of setting small but achievable goals at each race weekend appears to be doing the trick. The mood inside the team is much better than it was in 2010 or 2011, and there's a real sense that (incremental) progress is being made.

One man who hasn't been making progress this weekend is McLaren's Jenson Button. The British racer hasn't been able to match his teammate for pace all weekend, thanks mainly to a Friday lost to repeated problems with gearbox seals. But while Button's car was working for the duration of this morning's session, the same couldn't be said for his relationship with the track or tyres. Button was on the radio bemoaning his lap of grip very early on in the session, and it only went from bad to worse as the clock ticked on.

Finally, it was announced at the end of the session that Kimi Raikkonen was under investigation by the stewards following a late swerve into the pits. At the time of writing, no penalty had been announced, but the Lotus driver is almost certain to be issued with either a fine or a reprimand.

FP3 times (unofficial)

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1:14.442s [22 laps]
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1:14.448s [17 laps]

3. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.14.712s [19 laps]
 4. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.14.724s [21 laps]
 5. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.14.755s [22 laps]
 6. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.14.767s [21 laps]
 7. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.14.796s [19 laps]
 8. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1.14.873s [20 laps]
 9. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1.14.977s [21 laps]
 10. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1.14.992s [22 laps]
 11. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1.15.067s [19 laps]
 12. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1.15.112s [21 laps]
 13. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.15.126s [24 laps]
 14. Bruno Senna (Williams) 1.15.237s [22 laps]
 15. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.15.327s [22 laps]
 16. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1.15.498s [19 laps]
 17. Vitaly Petrov (Caterham) 1.16.268s [24 laps]
 18. Heikki Kovalainen (Caterham) 1.16.545s [20 laps]
 19. Pedro de la Rosa (HRT) 1.17.705s [21 laps]
 20. Timo Glock (Marussia) 1.17.974s [23 laps]
 21. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1.18.189s [21 laps]
 22. Charles Pic (Marussia) 1.18.684s [23 laps]
 23. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) NO TIME SET [3 laps]
 24. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) NO TIME SET [1 lap]
-

F1 Canadian Grand Prix – Q1 report

As the pitlane opened for the beginning of qualifying at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, the paddock was filled with the deafening roar of 20 cars pouring out onto the track, seemingly as one.

The first round of installation laps were complete and timed laps underway when Kamui Kobayashi ran wide at Turn 1, the result of more than a little bit of understeer. The Sauber driver was the first of many to struggle going into the first corner – within moments both Bruno Senna and Felipe Massa had repeated the feat, although with slightly less drama.

Given that the top sixteen drivers were split by a mere second at the end of FP3, this should be a very exciting session at the top of the timesheets. But at this point in proceedings it's the men at the bottom who are of real interest.

Pedro de la Rosa and Sebastian Vettel are on track with no times yet set, and the rest of the dropout zone is comprised of Jean-Eric Vergne, Heikki Kovalainen, Timo Glock, Charles Pic, and Narain Karthikeyan.

Vettel's first timed lap was a surprising 1.24.022s, five seconds slower than Karthikeyan in provisional P23, but his second attempt saw the Red Bull driver one second up on pace-setting Michael Schumacher in the first sector alone. The defending world champion crossed the line in 1.15.106s, good enough for a provisional P4.

And with that, the dropout zone becomes a more realistic grouping comprised of the six usual suspects from 2010's new teams, plus Vergne. All seven are in the pits with six minutes remaining.

There are few surprises at the top of the timesheets, in that the provisional points-scoring places are filled by those drivers from the sport's bigger teams plus the Mercedes-powered Nico Hulkenberg. Never underestimate the Mercedes engine in Montreal.

What is surprising is the performance of the Lotus pair, neither of whom have yet been able to string together the sort of lap that should see them challenging for a spot at the front this weekend. As was the case in Monaco, the Enstone racers were expected to do well in Montreal but have so far failed to live up to expectations.

With less than two minutes to go and the bulk of drivers out on track there is no change in the dropout zone and little indication that Vergne will be able to claw his way out into the Q2 challengers. Should the Frenchman manage it, however, it will be Pastor Maldonado who pays the price, sitting as he is in P17.

And with that, the chequered flag has fallen. Gone are Kovalainen, Petrov, Vergne, de la Rosa, Glock, Pic, and Karthikeyan.

Dropout zone

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

F1 Canadian Grand Prix – Q2 report

We predicted a tight qualifying session, and we've had one so far – the 17 drivers who made it through to Q2 were covered by a single second.

Sebastian Vettel's pace-setting time in Q1 was set without using the supersoft tyre, a fact that will be leaving many of their opponents quaking in their race boots. Keep an eye on qualies today, racefans – it should be even more exciting than usual.

The first strong laps of the session were driven by Mercedes-powered drivers, with Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton putting the first realistic laps at the top of the timesheets. But Red Bull want to win in Montreal for the first time in the team's history, and Sebastian Vettel and Mark Webber went a very convincing provisional 1-2 in their first timed laps.

It was thought that the combination of technical clarifications regarding the RB8's floor and front brake cooling system might slow the Milton Keynes racers down, but based on their current performance they seem to have picked up pace, not lost it.

Hamilton was able to split the two Red Bulls with a 1:14.371s lap, but it would take a brave man not to wager that at least one RB8 will be on the front row tomorrow...

Fernando Alonso seems to be struggling somewhat this session: the Ferrari driver came off at Turn 1 early on in Q2, and has spent the rest of the session languishing in the dropout zone.

With five minutes remaining – and Alonso on what looks to be a very respectable flyer – the dropout zone is comprised of Paul di Resta, Pastor Maldonado, Bruno Senna, Kamui Kobayashi, Sergio Perez, Daniel Ricciardo, and Alonso.

But as I type, Alonso crosses the line in a provisional P2, pushing Kimi Raikkonen into the dropout zone.

We're at that point in the session where times are falling like a house of cards, and it's hard to keep up. Sauber and Williams both look to be struggling with grip this afternoon, while Lotus is continuing to perform below expectations.

Kobayashi saves himself with a wall-grazing lap good enough for provisional P7 before di Resta pushed the Sauber into P8 with his own flyer. As a result, Felipe Massa and Romain Grosjean enter the dropout zone.

Massa crosses the line in P10 and has one more chance to ensure he's through into Q3, but with ten cars out on track it will be a fight to the wire to see who makes it through.

Hulkenberg knocks Massa back down, but is in turn pushed out by Raikkonen. Massa then saves himself with a provisional P8 that sees the Finnish driver in the dropout zone and leaves Jenson Button at risk of dropping out if the remaining drivers on track manage decent times.

Maldonado spins on the main straight after the chequered flag falls; both Williams are in the dropout zone and Button makes it thought by the skin of his teeth. Out are Kobayashi, Raikkonen, Hulkenberg, Ricciardo, Perez, Senna, and Maldonado.

Dropout zone

11. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber)
12. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus)
13. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India)
14. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso)
15. Sergio Perez (Sauber)
16. Bruno Senna (Williams)
17. Pastor Maldonado (Williams)

F1 Canadian Grand Prix – Q3 report

The last ten cars are readying themselves to go out on track for what promises to be the tightest qualifying session of the season thus far.

And unlike recent Q3 sessions that have seen teams take the tactical decision to stay in the pits and conserve rubber, it looks as though we'll see running from at least nine of the ten men left standing. Force India are notorious for sitting out Q3, and it's likely Paul di Resta will either spend the next ten minutes in the garage, or begin and abort a flying lap.

With the session three minutes old, nine of the ten drivers are out on track. Missing? Di Resta, as predicted.

The first two timed laps were set by the McLaren pair, but at 1:18s and 1:19s they're hardly representative of the pace we expect to see in this session. Nico Rosberg posts a far more realistic 1:14.664s on his first timed lap, but it's all change as the challengers pour across the finish line, seemingly as one.

Sebastian Vettel is the first man to break into the 1m13s this afternoon, taking provisional pole with a 1:13.905s. Two-tenths behind the Red Bull is the Ferrari of Fernando Alonso, with Hamilton three-tenths slower in provisional P3.

Button, who has been struggling for most of the weekend, and is currently sitting in P9, has aborted his latest flying lap.

With two minutes to go, di Resta finally emerges from the pits. Whether he will complete a timed lap remains to be seen...

Button is currently getting out of his car in the garage; the Briton's session is over early and the best result he can hope for this afternoon is P9.

Vettel is staking his claim to pole with purple sectors on his current flying lap; the Red Bull driver shaves another two-tenths off his time to cross the line in 1.13.784s. Behind him Hamilton crosses the line in 1.14.087s for provisional P2, and crosses the line with enough time to spare to squeeze in one last lap.

Alonso's final effort sees the Spanish driver cross the line in provisional P3 just after the chequered flag fell, and the session is now over with a few drivers still out on track, possibly doing final attempts at a flyer.

All return to the pits, and Vettel sits on pole for the Canadian Grand Prix, with Hamilton alongside on the front row.

Provisional grid

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

F1 Canadian Grand Prix – Saturday press conference

Looking at the three best drivers of the current generation lining up at the post-qualifying press conference in Montreal you'd be forgiven for thinking the 2012 Formula One season had finally stabilised. Keep dreaming...

Present were Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), Lewis Hamilton (McLaren), and Fernando Alonso (Ferrari).

Sebastian, we've seen pole decided all year being decided by mere hundredths of a second, but today it was almost a quarter of a second. What made the difference?

Sebastian VETTEL: Well, it's difficult to say. I think we've had a fantastic weekend so far to be honest. Yesterday was very smooth, we didn't have any problems with the car. I think we have learned a couple of lessons, especially in the last two races where arguably we were quick on Sunday in the race but we didn't get [the best] out of the car on Saturday in qualifying. So, we learned quite a bit and, as I said, it was important to have a clean run, yesterday was a good day and this morning. We trusted the car that we had, we were able to go with the circuit and tried to read the conditions, so I was very happy in qualifying – throughout qualifying really, Q1, Q2 and Q3 – so yeah I was able to always get a little bit quicker. It looked very tight in the beginning to be honest. I knew it would be within a tenth, but in the end it seemed that we could make a bit more of a difference, which obviously is good. But still the advantage we have over Lewis is eight metres on the grid. Looking forward to the race, I think we have a great car. This time we got it right in qualifying and I'm looking forward to the race tomorrow. It should be an interesting one I guess.

Lewis, moving to you, so fast all day yesterday, how much has the change in climactic conditions affected car balance for you today?

Lewis HAMILTON: It was definitely a bit harder for us today. We definitely struggled with working with the tyres in FP3 and in qualifying, having to push extremely hard to try to get the temperature, to get the tyres to switch on, but very, very fortunately we had still a new set in Q3 and just managed to get through. I'm very, very happy with the performance. I'm very surprised to see us on the front row but nonetheless we'll definitely take it and work as hard as we can tomorrow.

Fernando, some big upgrades this weekend, paying dividends almost immediately.

Fernando ALONSO: Yeah, the car felt quite good yesterday when we tested some new parts and we feel much more happy with the balance of the car and the grip of the car, Felipe and me, straight away. It's a first step. Obviously, the world will never stop, for us or for the competitors, but at the moment we are extremely happy and thankful to the guys in the factory.

Sebastian, in recent weeks they've banned your floor, they banned your wheels this weekend and you guys are still on top, in

pole position. How do you keep doing it?

SV: I think it's not just a hole in the floor that makes all the difference. Obviously reading the papers you get that impression. It was a bit of a shame that it went one way and then the other, being declared illegal, then legal and then illegal, but in the end we never feared a big impact on the performance of the car. I think generally, the car works as a whole – not the hole in the floor but a combination of all the parts together! We were not afraid that it would have a big impact on performance. This track is very special. As Lewis said it's very tricky to switch the tyres on, there are not so many corners, as in there are no long duration tyres so it's difficult to work the tyres properly. But as I said, I think for us it was crucial that we learned from the experience especially of the last two grands prix. It was good fun today and even without the hole I enjoyed qualifying a lot.

Sebastian after the win in Monaco for the team was there a certain amount of confidence coming here. Was this, if not expected, did you feel you'd taken a step forward?

SV: Well, we changed the car. We had to close the hole or slot or whatever you call it. It seemed to work pretty well without the hole. No, I think there wasn't a lot of time to react. It depends on what kind of schedule you follow. We've seen some teams bringing a big step here, Ferrari did. For us it was nothing big. We are always pushing very hard to improve the car but I think, as I mentioned in the [unilateral] press conference earlier, it was important that we really had a clean preparation, a clean Friday. We were focusing on ourselves, so that was important. Then in qualifying, we just tried to get the maximum out of every run, and we seemed to improve on every run and even we seemed to chip away a little bit from the guys behind, which was a bit of a surprise because I thought going into qualifying that it would be extremely tight. On this track it's very difficult to make a difference, so I'm very happy.

The first nine on the grid are going to be on the supersoft tyres tomorrow. One guy, last year's winner, will be on the soft tyres. How crucial is that going to be, on the supersoft?

SV: I think we've seen in Monaco that the tyre works pretty well. I think we've seen that yesterday. I don't know where Jenson is... tenth, so it depends. It can work, but it depends also on how the race unfolds, where the other guys are, what other guys do with their strategy and when they pit etc. We started in a very good position here two years ago on the harder compound and it didn't work. It can work both ways. In qualifying what you try to do is get on pole, which we did today, so I'm very happy with that. Looking forward to the race tomorrow, it's going to be interesting. Making the tyres last around here is going to be tricky. We've seen it, not so much last year because it was, but especially the year before, so it should be a good race and I'm looking forward to it.

Is there a little bit of unfinished business about getting on pole tomorrow?

SV: Not really. Obviously you're talking about last year's race and last year's last lap of the race. Obviously in that moment it hurt a little bit because the victory was so close, but in the end it was a tough race, easy to do mistakes. We didn't except for me in the last half a lap, which cost us the victory. But it's 2012 now and I think we had a quite decent 2011, so it's not too bad. Of course, it would be nice. It's a nice track, a nice atmosphere, always a lot of people here. It would be a great place to win for sure.

Lewis, you have an extraordinary record at this circuit and again on the front row. Interesting that there are two different tyre choices, two different strategies at McLaren. We saw you go out on the supersoft as well in Q1 which is rare as well. Is there a big question mark over the tyre wear for you tomorrow?

LH: No, we don't have a different strategy, we were struggling throughout qualifying. Yesterday we had very good pace in the cooler conditions but as it got hotter today we really, really struggled. So, I for one didn't expect to be so far up. For Jenson, he just didn't have more tyres in Q3. I was fortunate enough just to make sure I got a good lap in Q2, which meant I still had one set [of supersofts] left. Otherwise, I probably would be a little bit further back as well.

So how do you approach tomorrow if you feel you have been struggling today?

LH: I don't know. I've fortunately got myself into a reasonably decent position and I think yesterday when we did the long runs they seemed to be OK, but now that it has got hotter it's going to change things and it's going to be tough. But we just have to do the best job we can and try to maximise on everything we do. We can still have a really good race and get some really good points from where we are and I'm looking forward to it.

Obviously you're one of the very few driver who hasn't yet won but are you just happy to stack up the points?

LH: I am for now, yeah. Of course I want to win, but these guys are phenomenally quick at the moment and I'm not sure whether we have exact pace but we'll wait and see tomorrow.

Fernando, your equal best qualifying position so far this year, with Spain, and a lot of new parts on the car. Looking so good but you didn't improve on the final run, what happened on that final run?

FA: Nothing special. It's not easy here to improve laps. There are only five or six corners on the circuits so you are gaining or losing milliseconds corner by corner. We repeat more or less the same timed lap, in the second I gained a little bit from the first sector and I lost a little bit in the last. But overall the limit was more or less there – the 1.4.1. So, happy with the performance of the car, it has been a very smooth weekend for us. All the new parts work as expected. Felipe and me felt straightaway a good grid and a step in performance in the car, so a very good weekend so far. As you said, best position so far. We repeat what we did in Barcelona. In Barcelona we got one important podium. In Monaco on a completely different circuit we had a competitive car again and a good podium once more. And here on completely different circuit, with long straights and chicanes, we are also competitive, so this is a very good sign for us. Very good teamwork, because all the improvements we have been making on the car are really paying off now.

So, potential winners tomorrow?

FA: You never know. Races this year are very difficult to predict. What we think on Saturday is normally not anywhere near what happens on Sunday. So we'll see. A similar comment to Lewis: it would be nice to win here, it's a good circuit for Ferrari historically, a lot of fans here. Also, it's Gilles Villeneuve's anniversary, 30 years. So, it would be nice to offer all the Ferrari tifosi here in Canada a good result. But we know there are, at the moment, two guys quicker than us, as they proved today, doing a very good job and tomorrow we need to do better if we want to win.

Sebastian, you said that now you are understanding the car better, you are putting everything together and you are surprised by the advantage. Does that mean that now you're feeling more confident, that you're reaching the level that you were at last year or is it still unpredictable?

SV: It's not as if we have major changes and it's not as if we've had a completely different approach. I think we're able to learn from the mistakes we made in the past, we did it in the last two races, where qualifying was arguably not fantastic for us and I think – just looking at the whole grid – I think

this year is very different. It seems that a little bit of a mistake here or there, maybe not getting the tyres to work 100 percent, you are quite far away. That's because 1), it makes a big difference to yourself, so you lose a lot of time and 2), there's not one car that might fill the gap, there are ten, so then you end up... instead of third you are not fourth but 13th, and then the race weekend is completely different. I think that's the reason for that.

Fernando, how happy are you with Felipe Massa's sixth place? And secondly, you three guys are in the top three, does that mean that the championship is becoming a little bit more normal?

FA: For Felipe, of course, I'm very happy. I think he has all the support from the team, all the support from me, he's had some difficult races at the beginning of the year, the car was not the easiest car to drive and he hasn't been so lucky in some of the races at the beginning of the season, as I said, so now, from Barcelona, he's done quite a good job. In Monaco he was very quick all weekend and here as well so I expect this is the normality and it will be like this from now until the rest of the championship. The first four races were a strange case, not normal races. We will see. As we said on Thursday, the championship looks a little bit crazy, a little bit unpredictable, some different winners and some different car performances every Grand Prix, but when you look at the championship table, it's Red Bull, McLaren, Ferrari, Lotus. One thing is one single race, and then overall for the six races that we've done, the order is more or less not very different compared with what we saw in the last two or three years.

Lewis mentioned earlier that as it's getting warmer, he's having a little bit more trouble and struggling. It's going to be warmer tomorrow and obviously you're learning a lot from Friday and today, but how much of that gets thrown out of the window for raceday and how much do you have to readjust your strategy and what you're doing in the car in order to remain quick?

SV: As I said, it will be difficult for the tyres to survive a certain amount of laps, but I think from yesterday to today, for us it was a bit easier, a step forward. Tomorrow is going to be a little bit hotter... it seems so far this year, for us at least, the cooler it is, the more we were in trouble; the warmer it is, the better it is. I hope if it's warmer tomorrow, we can keep continuing that trend. We have seen that on Sundays a lot of things can happen so we have to be aware of whatever comes up and that explains the strategy and so on. Of course, if you have a plan in your head... but as we've seen many times this year, it can change quickly, so you have to react on the fly.

Sebastian, you are starting on pole position, you said that the gap has surprised you a little and yesterday you did 18 laps as far as I remember on the supersoft tyres on 'green' asphalt. It seems to be a very good package to start on pole position, a fast car, and even knowing that you have a very good car for the supersoft tyres.

SV: We will see. Obviously it will be very important to have a good start. I think life is always a little bit easier when you are at the front so it will be crucial to defend that position and then we will see what happens. As I said, it's a long race, the track will be more or less green when we start. It has always been difficult here at the beginning of the race. This place is a crazy place, it has delivered some crazy races in the past and safety cars are likely etc, so you have to be aware of all that and take it into account for your strategy. Sometimes it can help you, sometimes it may work against you. You don't know these things. As I said, we have to look after ourselves and try to do the best we can, have clean pit stops and have the fastest race that we can.

Lewis, I believe that when you won here in 2010 you were on a two stop strategy. Given the conditions and the tyres and all the other factors, do you see tomorrow's race being a multiple stop – three or four stops – during the course of the race?

LH: I think it's definitely possible we will have slightly more stops than we did in the last race so maybe a two or three stop, but we did see long runs yesterday that could lead into a one stop but here the likelihood of a safety car is usually quite high so with that in mind, people might prefer to do a one or two stopper, who knows? But it is dependent on the temperatures and how long the tyres will last. Yesterday they lasted quite long but today may be different and tomorrow may be different. I hope we don't have any problems with it, but we will wait and see tomorrow.

Question for all three: can I ask about your helmet? How did you decide on the colour scheme of your helmet and what does it mean to you?

SV: I've changed the design many times. It might take too long... there's a football match starting in 15 minutes, German is playing, so if I answer that question now full length we will still be sitting here tonight. I've had so many helmets so far. I like to swap the design. The one I have currently I like, that's why I wear it.

LH: I think that's the best and shortest answer I've ever heard him give! I'm going to say the same. I've commented loads of times on my helmet and try to keep it the same. It's who I am, that's how I use it.

FA: As Seb, I think, wants to go, I will give you a very long answer now, starting from go-kart helmet... no, I'm... I change my helmet every year, little differences but always remaining with the blue from my region's flag, Asturias, and then the Spanish flag always somewhere on the helmet and then all the rest of the details, because he's on pole, we will save.

Sebastian, you have shown us, very effectively, that whatever the FIA might say about the technical regulations concerning your car, it doesn't affect your performance-wise. But psychologically, does it motivate you to prove that you can do it whatever the FIA says, or do you find it frustrating?

SV: First of all, you have to understand that we have the hole because we were believing in a combination with all the other parts we have on the car and how the car looks it makes sense. Now it was declared illegal, then it was declared legal and now declared illegal again, so maybe next week it's legal again. We have the parts in the garage! There's no real extra motivation. I think we still have to make sure we get the best out of the car that we can. We see that this year is very tight so it's up to us to make sure we use our package as well as we can and sometimes it might be good enough for the front row like here, sometimes maybe not good enough, but then we still have to make sure that we are very close.

Fernando, I would just like to know if some jokes have already start between you and the mechanics in the team about tomorrow's match?

FA: No, not yet but if Spain wins, I think there may not be many people at the pit stop!

F1 Canadian Grand Prix – Race report

For the second race weekend in a row, Formula One has made history. Lewis Hamilton's commanding Montreal win has given the sport its seventh winner in the first seven races of the season for the first time since the sport's inception in 1950.

In the early stages of the Canadian Grand Prix it looked as though we might have been in for a processional race the likes of which we're not used to

seeing around the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve.

There was no first corner carnage, and Sebastian Vettel made it look like it was 2011 all over again when the Red Bull driver peeled off the start and was 0.3s ahead of his competitors by the end of the first sector of the first lap. By the time race control activated the DRS, the defending world champion was well out of reach.

It wasn't just at the front that there was no discernible change in the early stages of Sunday's race. While there was the odd shift of position in the first dozen laps, it took the first round of pitstops to make the difference to the running order.

By lap 11, Hamilton was reducing the gap to Vettel. But it was on lap 16, when the McLaren driver was within 0.7s of the Red Bull and closing fast, that Vettel ducked into the pits, handing the lead over to the eventual race winner.

Hamilton pitted a lap later, and had a reasonable stop with a poor getaway when the clutch slipped. He and Vettel were running thick as thieves, and it looked as though the eventual win would belong to one of the two.

But when Fernando Alonso came out of the pits ahead of Hamilton following the Ferrari driver's first stop on lap 19, the race was once again wide open. For a solitary lap, which was all it took for the McLaren driver to slip past his former teammate in a DRS-enabled pass.

By lap 23, Hamilton was 2.1s clear at the front, and the emerging battle between Vettel and Alonso was slowing both drivers down, giving the Briton the space he needed to extend his lead with every passing lap.

Despite occasional time losses in lapped traffic, Hamilton was able to command the race from the front until lap 48, when he started complaining of rear tyre degradation. On lap 50, the team called him in to the pits for a final time, and the Briton went from race leader to P3.

From that moment onwards it was a tense fight to the finish at the front until it became clear that Ferrari and Red Bull were going to try and one-stop Alonso and Vettel with a view to beating Hamilton. Neither team seemed to remember Kimi Raikkonen losing ten places in a single lap during the Chinese Grand Prix as the result of a similar strategic attempt.

Alonso gamely struggled on until the chequered flag, becoming a sitting duck in the process, while Red Bull took the decision to pit Vettel on lap 63 when Hamilton managed to slip past effortlessly for P2, before taking Alonso down a lap later.

Red Bull's decision enabled Vettel to claim P4 at the chequered flag; the German racer took Alonso's scalp on the penultimate lap thanks to his much fresher tyres. But by that point Ferrari and Red Bull were both ruining their strategies – Hamilton's pass was but the beginning, and both Romain Grosjean and Sergio Perez were able to take advantage of the failing rubber ahead to claim the lower two steps on the podium.

While Hamilton's was the drive of the day, both Perez and Grosjean were strong candidates for man of the match with their one-stop strategies that enabled the Mexican to finish on the podium despite having started in P15, while the Frenchman climbed from P7 to P2 having led the race during lap 20.

This report has concentrated on the action at the head of the pack, where the race was determined by the combination of balls and strategy that makes for a classic grand prix, but there was action aplenty throughout the grid.

One of the comedy highlights immediately preceded Michael Schumacher's lap 43 retirement; the German driver pitted with his DRS stuck open, and despite the best efforts of the team – which included a mechanic's forearm in the depths of the car's internals – Mercedes were unable to get the wing working and were forced to retire the seven-time champion for the fifth time this season.

Another man to have a terrible race – although he, at least, made it to the finish – was McLaren's Jenson Button. The 2009 world champion is having his most difficult season in years, thanks in no small part to the changes in technical regulations that have affected his ability to get heat into the tyres.

One of the benefits of last year's blown floor was that gases were funnelled over the rear tyres, getting the rubber up to temperature at high speed. That, combined with Button's traditionally smooth style, gave the Briton an advantage he has been unable to replicate this year. Instead, his lighter touch means the tyres never really switch on in qualifying, and take too long to come up to temperature during the race, leading to an overall lack of grip that was only exacerbated by Montreal's famously slippery track surface.

Canadian Grand Prix results (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren)
2. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) + 2.513s
3. Sergio Perez (Sauber) + 5.260s
4. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) + 7.295s
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) + 13.411s
6. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) + 13.842s
7. Mark Webber (Red Bull) + 15.085s
8. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) + 15.567s
9. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) + 24.432s
10. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) + 25.272s
11. Paul di Resta (Force India) + 37.693s
12. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) + 46.236s
13. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) + 47.052s
14. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) + 1m4.475s
15. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) + 1 lap

16. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 1 lap
17. Bruno Senna (Williams) + 1 lap
18. Heikki Kovalainen (Caterham) + 1 lap
19. Vitaly Petrov (Caterham) + 1 lap
20. Charles Pic (Marussia) + 3 laps

Timo Glock (Marussia) RET
Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) RET
Pedro de la Rosa (HRT) RET
Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) RET

F1 Canadian Grand Prix – Sunday press conference

Seven races, seven winners, and seventy thrilling laps. Well, after the first round of pitstops was out of the way, anyway. The post-race press conference was a joy to behold, as were the grins on the faces of the three men on the podium.

Present were Lewis Hamilton (McLaren), Romain Grosjean (Lotus), and Sergio Perez (Sauber).

Lewis, one word: wow. What a race. That must feel incredible?

Lewis HAMILTON: It does, it does. Firstly, I want to say congratulations to these two guys [Grosjean and Pérez], who have done an incredible job, but also just to the team, who never seem to give up. Also, the race, I want to dedicate this one to all the fans out there, who are constantly sending letters and messages and always being so positive and supportive throughout the year. What a great feeling this is where I won my first grand prix. I knew today would be a tough, tough race but I loved every single minute of it and I'm really grateful.

You say you loved every single minute of it but two delays on your pit stops and then you get out and the team tell you, 'actually the guys ahead are one-stopping'. Did you ever think for a moment that it wasn't going to happen today?

LH: I never had a doubt in my mind that there wasn't a possibility to win but I was thinking that these guys are falling quite far behind so I assumed they are doing a one-stop but I don't think I'm going to be able to do a one-stop so I'm going to keep on pushing, increase the gap... Yeah, I had a couple of problems pulling away. It might have been my fault, I don't know. But otherwise the pit stops were great and finally we've got some good pit stops and of course we can keep on improving in every area.

Romain, an amazing result for you and the team. Was the plan always to go for a one-stopper or was that something that developed as the race went on?

Romain GROSJEAN: Well, we thought about going for a one-stop and see what was going on later on. The question mark was can we go with the option tyres at the beginning especially that they are already two runs [old] from Q1 and Q3, that was the one I set my fastest lap time with. But then the car felt pretty good. When I put on the prime tyre, I didn't know what Nico Rosberg was doing in front of me or Mark Webber so it was difficult. I was fighting with them, pushing quite hard but I knew that I was trying to go for one stop and finally when I saw Mark coming in my tyres were quite fresh and then I didn't realise I was third and I then I saw Fernando slowing down and I was second. It was a crazy end to the race because I was thinking P5 or P4 but the pace stayed there and the team did a fantastic job with the car, which was good on tyres. We knew with the heat we would be better today, so hopefully the sun came and it was good for us and it is fantastic to be on my second podium this season.

Sergio, again an incredible drive, an incredible race. At what point did you know that a podium was on the cards?

Sergio PÉREZ: Well, to be honest, until I passed Fernando, because starting 15th the last thing you would think about is ending up on the podium. We went quite aggressive, the first stint was quite good. Then the stop was very good. The second stint was really, really good. I managed to overtake some cars in difficult manoeuvres. I saw that degradation was not so high for me. I could manage my pace well. Then I managed to get some other drivers. It's a great result for the team after such a bad day we had yesterday. We had a lot of trouble with the brakes. Today, it's just great to finish here on the podium. It's a great boost for the team. After Malaysia it's our second time to get in the [major] points and the second podium, so hopefully we can keep this way. Obviously we have been very unlucky: what happened in Monaco for example. We were very quick there and in Barcelona as well. It's great to come back and do a podium for the whole team and with this here being so close to home with a lot of Mexicans around, it's great.

Lewis, back to you. As you said, this is the place you won your first grand prix five years ago and we can see how much this meant to you today. Can you just sum up your emotions at the end of an incredible race and a wonderful weekend?

LH: It's still sinking in. It's been five years since I won here for the first time but it feels just as good. Again, just massively proud of the team for continuing to push and it feels great to finally be here on the top step. Definitely, as always, we'll never take it for granted and this for me feels like one of the best races that I've had for a very, very long time, so thank you to everyone.

Lewis, obviously you really enjoyed that. As you said, a huge amount of satisfaction from that.

LH: Absolutely. Absolutely. One of the most enjoyable races that I've had 'til now. I was just thinking today to finish at the front, as I did in my first win here in 2007, would be very, very special for me – which it has been. I couldn't believe it when I was coming across the line. That feeling inside, it's like an explosion. It's really just incredible. And that's what I love about racing and if I continue to have this feeling for many, many years, then hopefully I'll be here for a long, long time.

The tactics on the pitwall worked absolutely perfectly. You must have thought, 'perfect', every time you overtook somebody 'yes, that's the way it was meant to work out.'

LH: I think the team did a really great job with the pitstops and the strategy. I was very, very surprised that I was able to look after my tyres and then push at the times that I needed to push. I was very, very surprised in the first stint, that I was able to close up on Sebastian. I never thought they would have such degradation. And so to catch them, and see them go in, and then still be able to push, was a real pleasure to see, because it's very, very rare. But I knew that Fernando was going to be the one to beat. When he was behind me I thought he was going to be the one to beat today, as he generally has great pace on long runs. But we did it. I wasn't able to do a one-stop. I don't think I would have been able to do it – I think I would have fallen back as they did: perhaps even further. I think a two-stop was just right.

Was that a result of knowing that you had trouble with the hotter temperatures?

LH: No... well... of course we were aware of that. Of course we went into the race knowing that we'd be doing a two-stop. And when the guys were behind me I kinda had a feeling that Fernando would be doing a one-stop, so I knew I had to make a gap while looking after the tyres. I was able to make a gap and then hold it, even though Fernando started to pick his pace up. It was one of the best stints that I've had for a long, long time. And then at the end I had a serious gap to catch up but I was able to be 1.5-1.7 seconds faster than Fernando each lap, which was fantastic. And the greatest thing here is that at this circuit you can overtake. Even if it's not the back straight, you still have opportunities to overtake, which always gives us good races.

Romain, you were in traffic early on. That must have been very interesting. What did you think?

RG: It wasn't easy at the start because basically I was fighting in the traffic and I didn't know whether the guys were going to do one-stop, two-stops. And then I tried to jump Rosberg on a pitstop but it didn't work, so I was behind him again. And when you follow a car it's not easy to save your tyres and protect a little bit. I know that we were trying to go for one-stop and I didn't really know what to think about. And then I saw Nico coming to the pit and thought 'good news.' And then I caught Mark. Mark was quite the same pace as I was, so it wasn't easy, and then he went to the pit as well. Then I was more safe and I couldn't realize from P9 - I think - on my pit board to P2 in a few laps. I didn't really understand what was going on but I knew that we had to carry good pace. Again, the team did an incredible job to give me a good car in the race. We knew with the sun it would be better today. I really want to dedicate this result to them, to friends and to, today, Guillaume Moreau, which was on my helmet, who had a crash at the Le Mans test day last week. I wish him a good recovery. And I'm very happy that he was on my helmet for this race.

You've been a rookie here and obviously learnt the circuit. You've enjoyed taking on the Montreal accent - you're feelings about your podium here.

RG: It's good. I'm feeling more at home. People speak French, the city is quite nice and the people are really welcoming, so it's good to be here. The track is interesting; not an easy one to learn but as we say most of the time: if you have a good result then you like the track - so I think now I like Canada and I'm looking forward to coming back next year. But before that we have 13 more races until the end of the season and I hope we can keep our pace, our results and keep up the team.

Sergio, you were almost a rookie, apart from three laps, and from 15th on the grid, one-stop, once again showing that you can keep the tyres alive.

SP: Yeah. It was a great race for the whole team because after such a disappointing qualifying that we had yesterday, with so little pace as well - we didn't have the pace we wanted to - so we had to fight in a different way with the strategy and try to make it work and make it happen with the strategy. We didn't have any reference on the long runs. The long runs we did with the tyres, it was 10-15°C less track temperature. So, it was a lottery, basically, but I think the team has done a great job with the stop and the strategy, myself too, keeping the tyres alive and being so consistent. It's been a great result for the whole team. We have been so unlucky since Malaysia. We had the pace but for some reason or another we don't manage to get the result in the end. I think it's great to come back into the points with another podium.

You mentioned you had brake problems yesterday, was there any trace of that today?

SP: No, when I mentioned we had a brake problem it was nothing like a failure. It was just that the balance was really bad for me and I could not manage to stop the car, I flat-spot my tyres, so I have a lot of vibration in qualifying. In the race it was different. We worked a lot during the night - yesterday - to fix the problems and today we did a great job.

And after these two podiums that you've had, as you say a little bit of frustration that since Malaysia you haven't had better luck. What do you feel you can do in the rest of the Championship?

SP: The thing is we long to fight for a podium every race. Today was a very crazy race, as we have had many of this year. But I think we have the potential to do it. This has to be the target, to get the first win this season for our team.

Romain, earlier this weekend, you said that this was your favourite circuit because you learned it on the PlayStation. Do you think PlayStation was a contributing factor to your strong performance today?

RG: I think I should say X-Box or Microsoft. It's true that on a video game it's my favourite track and looking at it, it's quite interesting. It's more bumpy than on X-Box sitting on a sofa, but it's pretty interesting and when you have a good result in a race, normally you quite like it and so I'm pretty happy about today.

Romain, what does this podium mean to you compared to Bahrain, because the start of the weekend wasn't easy for you, so what does it mean?

RG: It means quite a lot. It means that we're in good shape for working with the team who are improving every time. We had a bad Friday with quite different conditions compared to today and having to learn the track and the set-up of the car wasn't easy and I'm sure we could have achieved better but we know it for the rest of the season. We are working quite well, so I'm pretty pleased with this podium. It means that we are still here after seven races and it was not one shot that we could get in Bahrain. We are still fighting at the front with good performance and the team is doing well with the Lotus E20.

Checo [Sergio], how do you feel now compared to the podium in Malaysia, and now you've got a second and a third place, there's just one spot still missing on the podium: when do you think you might get that?

SP: Well, I think every podium is special, especially when it's only your second podium in Formula One, it's a very special feeling. In the position that I am with my team, we are still fighting to get to the top, to be a top driver one day. It's great, every opportunity I have to show my potential, because you don't know how many opportunities you will have. I have been very unlucky in the last races so I think it feels great but I think the first podium feels a bit better.

Lewis, when did you think about victory: when you passed Vettel, when you passed Alonso or when you crossed the line? Were you afraid of these two guys?

LH: When I crossed the line. Of course when I saw them, and I saw that I was catching them and there was a possibility, and I knew how many laps that I would have to get past so I was not desperate to get past them in a real rush. I had a lot left in me, in the tyres so I was generally driving a little bit off the pace. There was no need to push because the guys had fallen behind and when I heard that these guys were catching a little bit, I knew that I had plenty in me if I needed to match the same times, and there were only a couple of laps left, but perhaps if circumstances were different and they

were much quicker, then we would have had even more of a race.

Lewis, were you surprised when you saw that neither Fernando nor Sebastian stopped immediately after you? And now you're also leading the championship, so is that a big bonus in this season which is completely crazy?

LH: No, it definitely is... as I said going into the race, if I was to finish where I started, I would be very very happy with it, but anything above that would be a bonus, so it's definitely a bonus for us today. I knew, when I had done the stop where Fernando came out in front and I had to overtake him and I was pulling the gap, I had a feeling that they were dropping back so quickly that they would definitely be doing a one stop and I did mention that to my team and they said they thought so, so I had to make sure that I got the gap that I had and tried to maintain it. I did think in my mind that at some stage Fernando would start putting in some very very quick times but then again he didn't as he was doing such a long stint. I think I got absolutely everything out of the car today. I wouldn't have been able to do a one stop, I don't think. Again, the team did a great job in the strategy department.

Lewis, you're only the third driver to win this race three times after Michael and Piquet. I just wonder, is there something particular about this track that suits you?

LH: It's like a go-kart track, isn't it? It's great fun, you're bumping over the kerbs, with the low grip it's very much mechanical grip like a go-kart. It's the weather, it's the city, the fans here are incredible, absolutely incredible, and there's very few places that we go to throughout the year like this. I always say that Monaco is real special because of the amount of people there. I think this race here is perhaps even more special for me. Obviously my home Grand Prix, Silverstone, is very special. Today, with so many British flags and Grenadian flags, which was fantastic to see, and so many people wearing the caps and shirts, support has been phenomenal this weekend, so that's why I wanted to dedicate this win to them.

Romain, how close to your first victory do you think you are, and do you think that the gap is still big or not?

RG: The gap is not that big. We need to qualify better, that is not our strength this season but we are working on it. I think Friday and Saturday were quite difficult for us but we have been learning a lot about the car so it's good that we now have that in our pocket for the next races. Then you never know. Lewis was maybe cruising a little bit at the end. We were not cruising that much but not trying to make any mistakes either. To be honest, when I was P5 or P4 I thought that would be a good result, having started in P7 but then Fernando was struggling and I could catch him up and then tried a little bit to catch Lewis but you never know what's going on. It's not an easy race, we were asking a lot of the car and the tyres and so on. When you pit on lap twenty-something and you know there are seventy laps and you have to stay on one set of tyres, you never know when they're going to drop so you are a bit cautious about that.

Lewis, when you passed Alonso in the DRS, you looked like you made a couple of tenths before that: can you just give us an indication as to how bad his tyres were at that particular point?

LH: Those guys, Fernando and Sebastian, they looked like they were having oversteer moments and definitely struggling. I had so much traction with fresh tyres that there was almost a two second difference in pace between us. He must have been close to the limit already, the end of the tyres.

What changed from yesterday, Lewis, because yesterday after qualifying you were worried, you were happy to be second but looking at Sebastian and probably also Fernando, you were not so sure you could have such a race? And this is also a track where McLaren is doing very well: five victories in the last seven years.

LH: Yeah, I think I was just very cautious. I think the Red Bull and the Ferraris seemed to... you know, we've not come here with any upgrades, we didn't in the last race whereas Red Bull and particularly Ferrari have been upgrading their car consistently. They were just as quick as us in qualifying but then in the race, generally, they can look after their tyres a little bit better than us and maybe that was a little bit the case today. Obviously they were able to do a one-stop. I would have fallen even further behind maybe if I had done a one stop, so that's just an area I know that we need to get stronger and we need to improve on as the season is probably going to be a lot like this, where you are having one or two stops throughout the season. If we can improve on that, then I think we are in a really good strong position but then again, when I was out there, when I was able to keep up with Sebastian and maintain the gap to me and Fernando, then I started to think, OK, we're in a good fight here, we're in with a good chance for winning.

Lewis, yesterday you were sitting here with Alonso and Vettel and you guys were asked about normality in Formula One, because, well, we had a McLaren, a Ferrari and a Red Bull driver, but now the race is finished, we have a Lotus and a Sauber driver on the podium. To all three of you, will there be a point when Formula One will reach this so-called normality this year, and what is normal for you and Formula One 2012?

LH: I think this mix-up is normal, this is what is going to be normal for the season. It's just my feeling, but then again my guess is as good as yours. I think it will continue to be like this throughout the year. We're still trying to fully understand these tyres. Sometimes you're overheating them, sometimes you're not heating them up enough. We don't understand why sometimes a Lotus is quicker than us, or a Mercedes is quicker than us and then we're quicker than them another time. But I think it's great for Formula One, it's great for the fans to see. I'm guessing there was a lot of overtaking today and a real mix-up and as I said, seven different winners in seven races - I can't remember hearing of anything like that. I hope there's no more, I hope there's not eight winners in...

SP: I hope so.

LH: I hope not! I hope we're able to keep it at seven and no more!

RG: I think it's pretty interesting for everybody. Who will complain about seeing different drivers and different cars fighting throughout the races?

Lewis, the Drivers' championship is very close now. There are seven points between you and Mark Webber in fourth. Does it mean that you plan your next victories now that you are leading. Do you think: maybe if I finish second or third... is it better in a season like this to be more consistent than to take a risk? Are you going to change your approach to the races now that you're leading the championship?

LH: I'm definitely not going to change my approach, but I think it's working reasonably well so far. I probably definitely had to be more on the limit today to catch the two guys ahead, perhaps a little bit more risky than in the past but it is about consistency this year. I think it will be about consistency. It's unbelievable to see just how close it is. We got a win and 25 points and I only have a two point lead, so it's incredible how close it is and I think it will stay that close throughout the year. Again, it just highlights how important consistency is.
