

Fl Italy Blog - Sunday press conference

For the attendant tifosi, a post-Italian Grand Prix press conference should be comprised of two men in red race suits and one other, preferably in third place. They got some of what they wanted.

Present were Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), Fernando Alonso (Ferrari), and Mark Webber (r

Q: Sebastian, you won your first grand prix, here at Monza, in an Italian team. So, it's very special coming back for you, isn't it?
Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, definitely. A fantastic race - but you can hear the difference, obviously, when you don't win here in a red suit, you get a lot of that but in the end it's very nice because it means you've done very good and beat the red guys. So we are very proud of that. Great job by the whole team today, very good job by Renault. Usually this is one of the toughest tracks we go to but this year the car's been absolutely fantastic, the race has been incredible. I think for both of us towards the end we were struggling a little bit with the gearbox so we had to pace ourselves but obviously for me it was not that bad because I had a little bit of a cushion but very great to win here, to see all the fans coming, it's the best podium of the season so very proud to be up here.

Q: It's important that they come and the emotion is all about Italy, isn't it?

SV: Yeah, for sure.

Q: ...Fernando did a very good drive and kept you honourable, so that was fantastic.

SV: Yeah, definitely. Most people, you can see are dressed in red - but there's a lot of blue caps as well and I'm sure those guys are very happy. Thank you.

Q: Fernando, you must explain how was the overtaking in the beginning of the race for you.

Fernando ALONSO: It was difficult obviously. The car was OK and we overtook Nico [Hülkenberg] but then we had to overtake Mark and Felipe later on. And then with Sebastian we were not able to close to the gap so we were fighting with Mark until the end. Second place is good, to have this podium ceremony that is the most spectacular podium of the year for sure and hopefully next one, next year, we come back here but in the top place.

Q: And Fernando, when you make the pass, the whole public jump on the grandstand, it was amazing. Inside the car, how it was? It was very close.

FA: It was close. Obviously we have to risk. There is nothing now to lose for us. We are second in the championship and we have to take some risk. We did it and that's OK.

Q: You understand Ferrari love you? You have to love Ferrari, we are all behind you...

FA: Ah, of course. I always said the same thing, big thanks to the team for everything they do for me and huge support from all the fans from all Italy. Some people still try to create some tension between team and driver but here is the better symbol: zero tension and we fight for the championship always.

Q: Mark, you had to fight very hard to be on the podium. From the middle of the race you had... it looked like from outside you had better speed, compared to the beginning. Can you explain how it was at the beginning of the grand prix?

Mark WEBBER: Yeah, I felt a little bit better on the tyre at the end of the race. The hard tyre was not quite as comfortable for me but I felt very, very good at the end. So it was a good battle with Fernando. Great team result. Thank you to Monza, last time here in Formula One, so thank you very much. See you next time.

Q: Well done Sebastian, your third win here but tell us the problems you had with the gearbox - you said between fifteen and ten laps from the end. Was it getting worse or was it just one problem?

SV: In the end we finished the race so it was not a disaster. I think yeah, the heartbeat was a bit higher in the car and also at the pitwall because we didn't know what's going on. Fortunately, as I said, we didn't have any big issues. Just the last ten, fifteen laps, tried to pace myself a little bit more and control the gaps. Obviously it was good to have these ten seconds on hand, so I didn't have to push that much and also I didn't have to squeeze it all out of the tyres even though I stopped a couple of laps earlier than Fernando. So that was positive. But yeah, we didn't know how bad the problem is. We'll probably know better once we strip the car next week and have a look inside the gearbox. We'll probably know for both cars, I think, how close it was.

Q: Fernando, were you happy with that second place? Was that as much as you could have achieved today?

FA: Yes, very happy. I think the weekend we took the maximum from the car. Practice were OK and we learnt some good information Friday. Saturday it was very good, both cars in the top five. I think the last time was Malaysia this year, so very, very long time, so we were very, very happy. Today, being in the podium again, it's a fantastic feeling here in Monza. The fourth year that I drove for Ferrari, the four times that I was in the podium and every year is something amazing, something unique again, to be there in that moment. And we did the maximum and nearly a perfect weekend. We didn't close the gap in the championship, which is obviously the goal every weekend but y'know, when Sebastian and Red Bull dominate Friday, Saturday and Sunday and they win the race we have to congratulate them. They were the best all through the weekend and we need to do hopefully a better job next time but from what we had this weekend I think we did the maximum. So we are extremely happy.

Q: Mark, you've had your best finishing position here and finally experienced a Monza podium - but at the same time, tell us about the start, tell us why you pulled off at the end.

MW: Yeah, very happy to be on the podium here at Monza. It's one of the most famous ones in the world, up there with Monte Carlo and a few other signature events but yeah, brilliant to experience that, even though the atmosphere I was not completely a fan of, to be honest. Sebastian won the race and the atmosphere is not completely correct but anyway... that's their choice. It was good to have a clean weekend from start to finish and then fight for top positions, which was certainly the case today. The start was pretty good but both Sebastian and I, I think, compared to the Ferraris were not as strong off the line. Felipe had a good one so he had to go to the other side. Seb gave me enough room up the inside. I thought he was going to go straight. He was very deep on the brakes but just managed to pull it up, so then we settled into the first part of the race. I was not super-happy on the hard tyre but anyway that's the way it was. Fernando was into the rhythm a little bit quicker, we had a good little battle in the second chicane and then after that really just trying to managed the pace on the rear tyres to when we were going to stop to try to pass Felipe - which I was very, very happy with, the in-lap. And also the whole thing went well in terms of for the line, pitstop, exit, out-lap. We executed that as a team effort: driver, pitcrew, and got the job done against Felipe. And then actually it was a good battle with Fernando on the other tyre. Tried everything but yeah, as Seb touched on, we had to nurse the gearbox a little bit but in the end second was the maximum, we got third but we pushed Fernando all the way. It's always a good battle racing Fernando, you have to be very accurate. We pushed as hard as we could and I'm satisfied with today's result.

Q: (Adrian Huber Rodriguez - Agencia EFE) Fernando, is the only way for you to win this championship is for Sebastian to lose it?

FA: Well, I think we need to be realistic about the championship now there's a very big gap. We don't have enough races and probably we don't have the speed right now to win some consecutive races and hope to reduce the gap just by pace. We need to be lucky and we need to have some DNFs from Sebastian or something to win the championship. With the races left and the points disadvantage, it's hard but in a way, it was exactly the same last year. We could only lose the championship, with 41 points advantage in front of Sebastian after the Monza race. It was difficult for him to catch up and so it was maybe up to us. We didn't complete the job and we had a DNF in Suzuka and some other problems. There's still a long way to go; we will try until the last race to be as good as we can and score as many points as possible and then in Brazil we will see how many points we have compared to him.

Q: (Adrian Huber Rodriguez - Agencia EFE) And yesterday, there was so much talk and so much written as to whether you had said this or said that. Did you feel today that the fans spoke out for you? They cheered you; do you feel much better today than yesterday?

FA: Concerning yesterday, it's the third or fourth consecutive race that some people have tried to create some tension between the team and the drivers. Then we come to the press conference, we explain everything but obviously this doesn't sell so many newspapers - normality. Every time I leave an airport, the hotel, home, everywhere - here in Italy there's huge support, huge love from them and me to them as well and to the team and we keep repeating this and we saw today on the podium maybe not many of them read the newspapers in the morning, luckily.

Q: (Jaime Rodriguez - El Mundo) Fernando, can you explain the overtaking manoeuvre on Mark, maybe the most spectacular in the whole race?

FA: I tried a lap before but I was not close enough in turn four, in the second chicane, and then we were very close in the first chicane on that lap. Mark had a little slower exit in the first chicane so I used all the KERS on that straight hoping that with the KERS plus the slipstream it will be enough to pass, but it was not enough so that we arrived side by side. At one point, I thought 'well, I will miss the second chicane and I will give the place back' but at the last moment I get the grip, we were very close to touching each other but again we come back to the point that it's not the same fighting with an experienced and respectful driver compared to some others with whom you would never try that move, with whom we've had some incidents already.

Q: (Cesare Manucci - Autosprint) Sebastian, in parc ferme you changed gears five, six and seven I think, because you already had a warning of the same problems with the transmission that you had during the race, or was it a completely different problem, or just to be more safe for the race?

SV: We already saw something on Friday, obviously something similar but Friday to Saturday we changed the gearbox and then I think in the race it was a surprise. We were obviously aware of the Friday problem but we didn't see anything before that. There's not much you can do: obviously once you start the car there's nothing you can change so in the end, I think we were lucky or in a comfortable position to have a little bit of a gap especially towards the end. I don't know what they saw on the pit wall in terms of data, if the problem got worse and worse and worse or stabilised, but obviously I tried to save the car, save the engine and gearbox as much as I can. In the end, I still have to go full power on the straights; basically try to short shift and save the car a little bit.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sebastian, does it hurt to see the people against you on the podium?

SV: About the general atmosphere, fortunately I had an experience in 2008 which blew me away completely when we won here in an Italian team with a Ferrari engine so the atmosphere was fantastic. When we won here in 2011 and this year... 2011 was a surprise, this year I think it was kind of expected. I said on the radio on the in lap that the more booing we get, the better we have done today. It's normal. I don't blame the people to be honest, I think their love of Ferrari is in their genes. It's something very special. Obviously Fernando is in a great position on the podium, whereas if you're dressed in any other colour it's not the same, but still, it's a fantastic race, a fantastic podium here.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sebastian, I think the only hard moment was at the start when you locked up the front tyres a bit. How was it after that, please?

SV: Our start was difficult, as I mentioned. I didn't get off the line that well, couldn't see Mark so tried to give him enough room and then tried to brake late, probably a little bit too late, locked the front right and then had lots of vibrations after that because I had a flat spot on the front right tyre. Fortunately we weren't front limited on this circuit, so the front tyre was not a big issue, so I tried to look after the rears after that and we still got far enough to make the one stop work.

Q: (Dan Knutson - Auto Action and National Speedsport News) Mark, can you describe your side of when Alonso passed you and how badly did that damaged wing affect your race?

MW: I think that I braked pretty deep into there, so did Fernando. It was early in the race, we were still to get a feel for where everything is. Obviously as Fernando touched on, it's very easy to go straight there and not make the entry to the chicane. I was also mindful of the fact that I wanted to make the entry to the chicane as well but when Fernando then got pretty much level on the outside of three, the chess match is over, basically, so you then obviously have to concede and look to take the fight to another part of the race. The wing, I think, wasn't too bad. I think we've had quite a few little snags on the front wings this season but that seemed to be OK. It wouldn't have helped; I don't think we had the best balance in the first ten, 15 laps because of that. As the race went on towards the end, it might not have been too bad to help the stint but I couldn't go anywhere against that with Felipe and at the end of the stop the guys might have tweaked it up a little bit, but in general, not a big difference. I was concerned that the wing might

have been more damaged when I saw it go and also on the back straight on the way to the Parabolica I thought I saw Fernando's left rear – just an illusion maybe – but I saw the tyre about to go down but it didn't, it stayed up and in the end we both survived.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Sera) Sebastian, Adrian Newey in Spa said that Monza wouldn't be a positive track for Red Bull, but looking at the dominance here, maybe he was wrong. What happened, how were you able to change the situation?

SV: I think he was as surprised as we were. Just on the way up to the podium, he said 'I thought that it was going to be damage limitation this weekend.' I said to him 'well, if damage limitation is like that, I want to have a lot of damage for the rest of the season.' It was very unexpected. Already the pace on Friday surprised us. From a balance point of view, I was very happy with the car, similar to two years ago. So obviously we've been very competitive in Canada, very competitive in Spa on medium downforce tracks. This one was a little bit unknown. We haven't been the fastest down the straights again, but fast enough, somewhere in the mid-field which is enough to use the strengths that we have through the corners, despite running as little wing as we can afford.

Q: (Carlos Miguel – La Gaceta) Fernando, what do you expect for Singapore, because in theory it is very good for your car. Do you believe Red Bull is now at the level of 2011?

FA: Yeah, we will see. Obviously we were expecting a lot from Monza and it was a very good Monza. It's true that we didn't win the race because Red Bull and Sebastian did an even better job and they were very very good but in our level of competitiveness that we had this year, Monza is one of the best weekends, as we expected before. We came from Silverstone, from Nurburgring, from Hungary where we had Red Bull in front of us, Lotus in front of us, Mercedes in front of us and some other cars sometimes, so here in Monza we were able to beat all those cars and fight for the wins, so if we can repeat this good performance in Singapore, we hope so but this will be the real test for us. We made some changes in the car, they seemed to be positive in Spa, seem to be good and positive in Monza, but when we reach the maximum level of downforce in Singapore, like we had in Hungary, we need to check. If we still have Mercedes in front, Lotus in front and some other teams, we will be more or less the same as in Hungary and we don't want to be. I think we prepare the car and we prepare everything to make a step forward and in Singapore hopefully we can see it. The level of domination? Well, I think as Sebastian touched on before as well, already in Canada, Spa, Monza are very unique tracks in terms of level of downforce. They were quick in Spa so more or less... we saw it in Canada so Spa was not a surprise and here in Monza also they performed really well. I think it's more tight this year than 2011 and also there are more teams in the battle. There is not only Red Bull who can be on pole position etc; there is Mercedes who have done many pole positions this year etc, so many races are coming with many interesting combinations of performance so what we have to do is try to be close to the top in all track characteristics.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Sebastian, you said some minutes ago that the car reminded you of the 2011 car here. It means a very dominant car as we already saw in Spa – Francorchamps, you have 53 points advantage over Alonso. What do you predict for the rest of the season? You are very close to being World Champion for the fourth consecutive time?

SV: I'm trying not to think about it too much. I think that when I spoke about the fact that it was similar to 2011 I was speaking about the experience here in Monza because usually... you know, 2009, 2010, 2012 it was very tricky for us here. Obviously this year was similar to 2011 when the car just seemed to be very well balanced in the corners, I felt very good through all the medium speed and the chicanes. It's not as simple as you think. People say 'at Monza, you just need horsepower, little wing on the car' but in fact if the car doesn't feel right and doesn't allow you to play, you lose a lot of lap time, just because you are not comfortable. The cars are sliding more than the rest of the year because you run less downforce so you need to be happy with that and accept that. We have a car this year that was similar in 2011 in that regard and allowed myself to play and still to feel comfortable, even though the car was loose. Other than that, I think I tend to agree with Fernando. Obviously the last two races have been very good for us but overall this year, I think it's been very close. Yesterday was the first pole position we got in real dry dry conditions, if you don't consider Melbourne because it was a little bit damp and drying up in Q3. So on that front, we seem to have made progress and in the race it has stood out this year that we have had a very very strong race car. Together with Ferrari, I think on average we have been the fastest in the race.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sebastian, during the race we heard a little message radioed by you that you were complaining about the rear light on the Vettel car. I would like to know how disturbing, how annoying it was for you during the race?

SV: Me?

FA: Was the question for me? Well, it was...

SV: Will you listen now? You complained about the red light?

FA: Yeah, yeah. It was disturbing a little bit. Obviously it's a very strong light with no rain.

SV: It's worse in here.

FA: Sebastian is not used to having a car in front so he doesn't know how it feels to have a red light on but when you are behind, a little bit close, it's always flashing and sometimes you just have to touch one button because that's the red light or something that you press by mistake, if he could switch, but he didn't. So the whole race I had it flashing in my eyes.

SV: I was trying to get away so it wasn't disturbing you so much.

FA: You didn't...

F1 Italy Blog – Race report

The fat lady might not be singing yet, but she is certainly warming up her vocal chords. With yet another commanding performance, Sebastian Vettel drew ever nearer to his fourth consecutive drivers' championship after an Italian Grand Prix that was a walk in the (royal) park.

Red Bull dominated Saturday's qualifying session, and were untroubled for the bulk of Sunday's race, although there were a few hairy moments on the pit wall when it emerged that both Vettel and departing teammate Mark Webber had gearbox issues. The Australian was forced to short-shift between second and third for much of the closing stages of the Monza race, while Vettel struggled in the higher gears.

But both men made it to the finish unscathed, with Vettel extending his championship lead while Webber bid farewell to his European F1 career with his first Monza podium.

Vettel made the win look effortless, pulling out an ever-increasing lead over the rest of the pack despite a flat-spotted right front tyre affecting his handling until his sole pit stop. Fernando Alonso briefly led the race once Vettel had dived into the pits, but the German racer pushed hard enough on

his fresh rubber to make it impossible for the Ferrari driver to stop while holding on to the lead.

While it was a faultless performance from the defending world champion, the essentially lights to flag win made for a rather less thrilling race than the Autodromo Nazionale di Monza usually delivers, despite a string of excellent battles taking place behind the leading pack.

After disappointing qualifying performances from both Lewis Hamilton and Kimi Raikkonen the stage was set for the two world champions to inject drama into Sunday afternoon's proceedings as they fought their way up through the pack. But Raikkonen was forced to pit at the end of the first lap following an incident, while Hamilton picked up a slow puncture early on that prevented him from completing the planned one-stop strategy that should have seen the Briton finish higher than ninth place.

Neither Raikkonen nor Hamilton left Monza with the results they had hoped for, but both men delivered a series of spectacular overtaking manoeuvres as they fought their way through the field, occasionally battling each other. The closing laps saw a flurry of passes from the pair as they took advantage of every possible opportunity to fight their way back up and into the points. Hamilton was successful, but Raikkonen was unable to make it past Jenson Button for the final points-paying position before the race came to an end.

Felipe Massa's Ferrari future remains uncertain, but the Brazilian driver delivered an able performance around La Pista Magica on Sunday afternoon, getting a better start off the line than teammate Alonso, and running in second place at the end of the first lap. But by lap six Alonso was gaining on the Paulista, and lap eight saw a clean battle between the two that was won by the Spaniard who was undoubtedly faster.

Shortly after the race reached its mid-point Massa started to gain on Webber immediately ahead, thanks partly to the Australian's gearbox issues, but the opportunity to pass the Red Bull never presented itself, and he crossed the line in fourth place, one of his three best finishes of the season thus far.

On the weekend that saw McLaren celebrate their fiftieth anniversary in Formula One the team suffered a disappointing result, with only one point to call their own. Where gearbox issues were the order of the day for several of the points-scorers, for Button it was gear ratios that caused the problem, with the Woking racers gambling on short gears that failed to pay off in the race.

2013 Italian Grand Prix results

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1h18m33.352s
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) + 5.467s
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) + 6.350s
4. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) + 9.361s
5. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) + 10.355s
6. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) + 10.999s
7. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) + 32.329s
8. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) + 33.130s
9. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) + 33.527s
10. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 38.327s
11. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) + 38.695s
12. Sergio Perez (McLaren) + 39.765s
13. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) + 40.880s
14. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) + 49.085s
15. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) + 56.827s
16. Adrian Sutil (Force India) DNF
17. Charles Pic (Caterham) + 1 laps
18. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) + 1 lap
19. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) + 1 lap
20. Max Chilton (Marussia) + 1 lap

Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) RET

Paul di Resta (Force India) RET

FI Italy Blog - Saturday press conference

There was a not-so-familiar face at the post-qualifying press conference for the Italian Grand Prix, with Sauber delivering their strongest qualifying performance of the season thus far.

Present were Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), Mark Webber (Red Bull), and Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber).

Q: Sebastian, you've got a long history here, how much do you love this place?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, it's a special track for sure. It's always nice to come back here. Obviously the memories of 2008 are great. I had another victory in 2011 but I think the first victory is always special. Today I think, or generally this weekend, the car was fantastic so far. I think better than what we could expect. We had a very strong pace yesterday and we were able to take that into the qualifying today. I had two good runs in the end. In the end I think it's a bit of a surprise to have both cars on the front row at a place where historically we've had bad years. Yeah, this year it seems to work well and hopefully we'll have a good race from where we start tomorrow.

Q: You mentioned historically. How much has the team targeted the performance here?

SV: Well we do target to have the optimum every year. Obviously, some years we were closer and other years we were quite far away. It seems that this year we're obviously in a very strong position. We're able to match other cars down the straight and we know that in corners we have a strong car. It's a nice place, a nice track, very challenging to get the lap right, because you have low downforce on the car, so the car is very light, sliding a

little bit here and there. It doesn't cost us as much probably as in other places but yeah obviously if you try too often to go over the limit there is a big penalty, so, yeah, I think it was a tough session but we managed to get through and get a great result.

Q: Mark, your best qualifying position here and presumably you're looking to follow it up with a good result as well, your best result here?

Mark WEBBER: Yeah, exactly. I said to the boys before the session I was looking for a quali PB. It hasn't been the best track for me, so as you say it's a nice step towards a very, very good result tomorrow. I'm happy with qualifying, to be up there. It took the old boy a little bit of while to be ready for Q1 but I got there in the end, in the sessions where it counted. Actually pretty happy with my laps. Jean-Eric [Vergne] went off in the Parabolica, in the last corner, so I didn't know if he'd dropped a wheel or if he was continuing on the circuit, so I couldn't really see with the dust. Obviously then when I got further round I could see he was in the gravel. So a little bit of a tricky finish to the lap but overall it wouldn't have been enough to get Seb, he did a very good lap. We have a few different people up here as well with us, which is good. It was a bit of a mixed-up session and that can happen at Monza, it's not an easy track to get right. Looking forward to the race tomorrow.

Q: This is your last European Grand Prix. Is that an emotional moment for you?

MW: Not really. I think Brazil will probably be a little bit more emotional of course, but if I've got the tissues out then I've made the wrong decision. It's good that I still enjoy my driving. I'm not too uncompetitive. Just look for a clean weekend and get some very good results in the future in the coming races and that's got to be my goal. I'm not retiring. I'm stopping from Formula One but of course there's a lot of people that can come and watch me in the Porsche next year at Le Mans and some other races.

Q: Thanks very much. Nico, where did that come from?

Nico HULKENBERG: I don't know either. Really a nice surprise to ourselves. I didn't expect it, especially after a very difficult Friday. Yesterday we struggled a lot with the car, we were trying some different bits and bobs, but the guys have done a fantastic job to turn the car around and give me such a competitive car today. It was just that Q1, Q2, Q3 the car just got better and better, I think with the track improvement and with the right decision just to go for one timed lap, fuelled for one timed lap, was the right call. Yeah a burning lap which made this nice surprise happen.

Q: Of course it's a good circuit for Sauber. They finished second here last year, so what are your hopes for tomorrow?

NH: Yeah, last year is a very different year. Obviously Sauber was very competitive very often last year in races. This year we have been struggling more, we've had a more difficult year, let's put it this way. So I hope that the long run pace is good. From what I could see yesterday it should be all right. I don't think we can challenge these guys but definitely points are now the target.

Q: Sebastian, your third pole position here and 40th in your career. Tell us about the importance of pole position here. Is it an important pole?

SV: I think pole is always important. It's the best place to start the race from on Sunday. Especially here, I think it's important to manage to qualify in the top group, we know the first two chicanes are quite tricky. So, I'm looking forward to start the race from pole tomorrow, focus on the start and then we'll see where we get. But it's a long race, we've seen in the past that there's a lot of things that can happen. A good example of how quickly things can change last year, I think Sergio [Pérez] had a fantastic race and coming through with an opposite strategy so yeah, race pace is very important but surely today we did our homework with qualifying, P1 and P2.

Q: Mark, yesterday we saw a margin of six-tenths of a second. We saw a margin of six-tenths again this morning. Do you feel that you've got some of that back?

MW: To Seb? Yeah, the lap time looks like it. It's down to two. It's not quite there but it was still a session which I was pretty happy with because to qualify in second position is good. Seb's strong here, quick in Monza. He's not slow here so it's not... it's a bit of an opposite circuit for me so certainly happy to have a PB in quali and I'll do my best tomorrow. The car's [INAUDIBLE - MIXED IN RADIO CHATTER] but in general looking forward towards the race tomorrow. The big clutch behaving itself in a good fashion, hopefully it should be OK, then we're going to get a good start to the race in terms of the first few laps and settle in for the afternoon.

Q: Nico, possibility of showers tomorrow. What would you like?

NH: I think I'd like it to stay dry to be honest. I think that would be the easier option but we'll take it as it comes. We haven't run in wet or inter conditions so it will be new to everyone. Obviously more challenging but I'm open-minded.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Complimenti Sebastian; are you happy to have the first Ferrari engine in Nico Hulkenberg's car than one of the works cars? How important is it not to have the Ferrari there?

SV: I think today it was obviously all about preparing for the race, getting the best position. As I said, in this regard we got our job done but the main job comes up tomorrow so we will see. The races are long, a lot of things can happen so I don't know. I think Felipe is P4 so I think Ferrari was strong in every race this year in terms of race pace so they will be strong tomorrow as well. I think their long run looked quite competitive; I don't know what they have done exactly in terms of fuel loads but I'm sure they have the pace and the ability to come through. Equally, I wish that Nico stays there, first of all for him and for his team, to have a strong result and secondly, obviously, it would do me no harm in terms of the championship. But first of all, I have to finish in front of him.

Q: (Vincent Marre - Sport Zeitung) To both Red Bull drivers: what is your strategy tomorrow for the start, as Nico is quite close to you?

SV: I think the usual: accelerate as quick as we can, try to get a good start. Partly it's in our hands, literally, with the clutch and then our feet, but also it depends on how well we set up the start, how accurate we are. I think we've worked a lot in the past, we've had some very good starts, we've had some not so good starts. You never know what you get, but we're both, I think, hoping for the best launch.

Q: Mark, have you solved the problem with the clutch, do you feel you're on top of it?

MW: (I'm) The wrong guy to ask. But anyway, there's always a guy third on the grid, it's Nico or whoever. We can't start one and two and then have a fifty meter gap. He's third because he did a good job. Nico or someone else, it doesn't matter. We focus on ourselves really. That's it.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti - Corriere della Serra) Sebastian, there was a strange phrase by Fernando on the radio and it seemed to be against the team. Do you believe he's getting nervous and nervous in the fight against you?

SV: Today? I don't know, I don't know. I don't what they... Maybe they had a problem. Obviously they were quite competitive this morning in the

beginning of qualifying, I think it was very close at the end of qualifying to be fair. Obviously I fortunately had a bit of a gap but I think everyone behind Nico was quite close to each other. I don't know, maybe they had some problem.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Nico, the drivers' market is very sensitive at this moment, especially concerning the teammate of Alonso. You have put in a greater performance than Ferrari; do you think it can influence Ferrari's decision to take you?

NH: I can only influence it by performing very well and obviously today's result is not the worst. For me it's just important to focus on my competitiveness and my performance and that will make the rest easier but probably the timing is not the worst at this moment.

FI Italy Blog - Saturday report

Saturday morning in Monza brought more of the same for spectators, with Sebastian Vettel dominating yet another practice session. But there was some succour for the attending tifosi, who cheered on their red-suited hero as Fernando Alonso reduced the gap to his German rival.

The final practice session of the Italian Grand Prix weekend took place under clear and sunny skies, and was remarkably incident-free barring a crash for Paul di Resta that left the Force India mechanics with a frantic lunchtime rebuild. The Scottish driver lost control of his car at Parabolica half-way through FP3, the rear end twitching out just before he plunged straight into the tyre wall, seemingly without steering control.

The balmy conditions continued into qualifying, with an air temperature of 30 degrees and a track temperature of 43 degrees. Once the first round of Q1 laps was complete it was Jean-Eric Vergne who stood at the top of the timesheets, narrowly ahead of Fernando Alonso and Lewis Hamilton. Vettel – who was the last man out of the pits – crossed the line in P3 on his first run with just over five minutes remaining.

First Hamilton and then Vettel knocked Vergne off the top of the timesheets, with the Red Bull retaining a two-tenths advantage over the Mercedes. Bringing up the rear were the driver pairings from Marussia and Caterham plus Valtteri Bottas and Esteban Gutierrez, while Pastor Maldonado and Paul di Resta hovered on the edge of the dropout zone. A late shuffle in the final minute saw Maldonado and di Resta safely into Q2.

With five minutes remaining of Q2 – and no times set by either Red Bull driver – it was Alonso who topped the timesheets, powered around the circuit by the roar of attendant Ferrari fans. Webber's first timed effort put the Australian 0.04s behind Alonso, while Vettel crossed the line in P1. The marquee name in peril was Hamilton, who destroyed a set of tyres with an off at Parabolica, and found himself 16th of sixteen with just over a minute remaining.

Hamilton crossed the line in ninth, still at risk of dropping out, but with time to complete another lap. It was not to be, however, and improved times from the Briton's rivals left the 2012 Italian Grand Prix winner out of the final qualifying session.

As had been widely expected, the Red Bull driver pairing blew away the competition, securing the front row with ease. Popping up in a surprise P3 was Nico Hulkenberg, outshining the Sauber beneath him as he pushed Felipe Massa down to P4 – still ahead of Alonso, who was unable to get close enough to the Brazilian to benefit from a tow.

Rain is expected on Sunday afternoon, and the much talked about thunderstorms look to be the only serious obstacle to another walkover for Vettel.

Provisional grid

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m23.755s
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m23.968s
3. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m24.065s
4. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m24.132s
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m24.142s
6. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m24.192s
7. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m24.209s
8. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m24.502s
9. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m24.515s
10. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m28.050s

11. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m24.610s
12. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m24.803s
13. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m24.848s
14. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m24.932s
15. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m25.011s
16. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m25.077s

17. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m25.226s
 18. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m25.291s
 19. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m26.406s
 20. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m26.563s
 21. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m27.085s
 22. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m27.480s
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F1 Italy Blog - Friday press conference

With FIA elections around the corner, and cost cutting still high on the agenda, it was a very political team principals' press conference that took place in the Monza paddock on Friday afternoon.

Present were Ross Brawn (Mercedes), Stefano Domenicali (Ferrari), Christian Horner (Red Bull), Monisha Kaltenborn (Sauber), Graeme Lowdon (Marussia), and Martin Whitmarsh (McLaren),

Stefano, as it's your home race, I'll start with you if I might. First of all, we've had two practice sessions today. Have we seen the same sort of upturn here as you had in Spa in terms of your performance and can you maintain that through the rest of the weekend?

Stefano DOMENICALI: From what we have seen today, for sure above all in the second session, Red Bull seems to be very strong. I have to say, we have seen them doing a lap time immediately, so normally this is a good sign. Therefore, I am expecting, for sure, them to be very strong, and I'm sure the other team surrounding me they were a little bit doing some other stuff. I think it will be a tough weekend, for everyone, because with this kind of temperature also the car will be under pressure. At the end of the day we need to understand all the data we have collected and make sure that we have selected the right configuration for the car for tomorrow and this is really the work that the engineers will do tonight. I really hope that we can do a good weekend because in front of our people it will be very important and of course, as we know, if you want to put the pressure on the guys who are in front of us we need to try to be faster and faster and it is not enough to try to be very close to them in case they have an issue and then be ready, otherwise we will lose our opportunities.

Q: Thanks very much, Stefano. Graeme, yesterday Max Chilton told us of his hopes of staying with the team. What chances are there of that? Where are you in terms of drivers for next year and how important is your position in the Constructors' Championship - that 10th place?

Graeme LOWDON: Well, we're all competitive people so every position is important and we want to maintain that 10th place and given half a chance move forward as well. So that's really important. As far as drivers, it's kind of this period onwards when we really start to make some key decisions. Typically it's a lot later in the year that we make any announcements but both drivers have done an extremely good job and at times under quite difficult circumstances. There's a very good harmony in the team and a good team spirit and it would be nice to maintain that but let's wait and see.

Q: Monisha, Sauber have had a very close relationship with Mexico for a few years now, so how important is the Mexican Grand Prix, which is on the draft calendar we have seen this weekend?

Monisha KALTENBORN: It's very important, not only for us a team but for Formula One itself, because we know that Latin America, generally America, is a very important market, so it attracts new partners as well. As far as our partner is concerned, it just shows that the strategy they have with motorsport is being implemented step by step. It was about the drivers coming into Formula One and the next logical step is hosting a race there. So I think it's a great step.

Q: It's important for the team?

MK: It's important for the team because we could see already in Austin last year, we felt like it was a home grand prix there if you could just hear people chant Checo's name. So I'm sure it's going to be a great atmosphere.

Q: Ross, the team has emerged very much as title contenders, but still a big gap to Red Bull Racing. How long can you maintain your challenge before it starts impacting on next year?

Ross BRAUN: I think it depends on what work you're talking about. Obviously work that is unique to the current car would be taking away from next year's programme. If it's work that is still relevant for next year of course we're still keen to develop ideas and continue with developments that would be relevant for next year. Those sort of micro-decisions are going on all the time with what we should or shouldn't do. I think I said we'll have a clearer picture after Singapore about our emphasis going from Singapore until the end of the season. I think Spa, a medium-low downforce circuit, Monza, a very low drag circuit, and Singapore, a high downforce circuit, after that mix we'll see where we are. There's very little variability left now in terms of what we can move from '13 to '14 and vice versa, so our programme is pretty set and we think we've got a programme that is not compromising the '14 car at all.

Q: Christian, historically Monza has been quite difficult for you in the past, for Red Bull Racing. What are you expecting this weekend? How good has it been in FP1 and FP2, certainly FP2 looked amazing today, especially the long runs. How do you feel the team is making an impact here?

Christian HORNER: We've had a strong start to the weekend, particularly in free practice two. We've worked through a programme and obviously the drivers are tuning themselves into the circuit and fine-tuning set-ups as well for the rest of the weekend. Monza traditionally, bar 2011, has been a difficult hunting ground for us and has exposed some of our weaknesses in previous years, but we just have to do the best that we can. For sure we know that Ferrari will be quick here. We know that Mercedes will be certainly quick and McLaren aren't too far away either this weekend. I think it's set to be a very competitive grand prix and we've seen so many times that Friday means very little, so hopefully we can be on the podium here. That would be a strong result for us here.

Q: Martin, great celebrations for the 50th anniversary of McLaren. Where do you see the current team standing in that heritage?

Martin WHITMARSH: I haven't thought about it that way. I think this isn't the way we want to celebrate the 50th year of McLaren but I think we're immensely proud of what's been achieved over that time and it's been quite incredible how we've been able to grow that business. We'd like to be being more competitive - it's a very hard to zero business. So to come out this year, as tough as it's been, we've been able to pull ourselves a little bit back but we're not with the quicker cars, yet. I think over the last couple of months we've had an unusual situation. Certainly for many years, this time of year we've been fighting for wins or championships and we've been devoting probably too much resource to the here and now and not enough to the next year. We're very clear [now] that we're very concentrated on next year. That's made it quite tough on the race team and the drivers. As we're racers we can't come to a race event without parts to try so Fridays have been experimental days, probably been difficult for the drivers then to do the set-up work they'd like to. But we gather data and we've been able to use the experimental day of Friday to make a little bit of progress and we're probably going to keep doing that because we can't afford to detract from next year's programme in the principal development facilities - wind tunnel, CFD and the like. So I think the team has responded to a kick up the pants we've had for ourselves. The team has pulled together, although we don't like going motor racing without the real prospect of winning. I think we are very close as a team. I think we are working

well together under difficult circumstances and we're determined to do a better job in the coming races. But really focused on making sure we come out next year very, very strong.

Q: And would you like a brief word on Mexico as well?

MW: I think Monisha put it very well. It was amazing Texas last year that you felt you were actually in Mexico, not in Texas, although maybe other parts of Texas feel that occasionally as well. It's clear that there's a huge passion there. Some of us, I think Ross at least, remember going to Mexico quite a few years ago. We know it's entertaining, different and certainly passionate, so it's good for the sport. It's a huge and exciting market for Formula One and for some of the teams.

Q: (Kate Walker - GP Week) We now have one official candidate for the FIA Presidency elections happening in December. I know that you guys don't have any input on the vote but I would like your opinions on both the elections and the candidate himself.

SD: I heard today that there was a programme announced by the candidate for the presidency. Of course I haven't had the chance to read it but I will do it in the next days. I think that in Formula One it's important to proceed with stability and continuity - it's one of the things that we are always missing. So, I believe that what is important to keep as a relation with the FIA is this kind of thing and so therefore I would like to see this happening - but of course it is not us that will decide that. That's it really.

Q: Martin?

MW: Well, I don't know David Ward well enough and I haven't had time to look at his manifesto so I really can't comment on him. I think Jean - and clearly I don't know Jean as well as some of the people here - but I have to say taking him as the President, I think he has not used this sport for his own ego, which I think is very tempting. I won't go back into the past but I've seen and survived so far three presidents - only just, one of them - but I think Jean has acted in the interests of motorsport. I think for some people there hasn't been enough commotion, action, controversy around him. Those are good in some people's minds but I think for those of us that participate in the sport, having some consistency, someone who takes decisions that are in the interests of the sport quietly and efficiently is very beneficial. As you say, we don't influence the outcome but I think Jean has done a good job so far and we'll see if he's successful at continuing to be the President.

Q: Graeme?

GL: A general point is that democracy is a good thing, isn't it? So you've got to welcome the process. I had a very quick look at the manifesto that came out from one of the candidates and there's lots of topics that it's good to have healthy debate on those topics and I'm sure that's what the FIA members will do. In terms of the process, anything that's democratic has got to be welcomed and if it provides transparency, provides the opportunity for debate, I think it'll be an interesting process to watch from that point of view. I agree with a lot of the comments Martin said about what Jean has done. I haven't been in the sport as long as Martin so I haven't had the same number of presidents to live through but I think we're looking forward to a healthy debate.

Q: Monisha?

MK: Well, like Stefano said, most important is the stability and the continuity in the sport. I think we all know there are many challenging issues we are facing and in any case I hope that whoever comes up with the presidency will take up these issues and continue what has started and take it to the next level. Because we're clearly reaching a point where certain decisions have to be taken ahead. And that's what I hope will be done.

Q: Ross?

RB: Obviously I know Jean very well, having worked together for ten years. I think stability and consistency are very important. I think Jean has taken a quiet line, particularly in terms of Formula One and that - as Martin said, those of us who have experienced the other end of the scale - is welcome. And I think the opportunity to do another period as a president of the FIA is important, that we have that continuity. I think Jean has stabilised the situation and now wants to move on to progress things and I know the huge commitment he makes to the sport overall. We are part of motorsport but there's a huge amount of other things going on that he's active in. And I think the continuity is very important.

Q: Christian?

CH: I guess to have an election you've got to have more than one candidate. It now relies on Jean to become a candidate and declare that he's prepared to continue as well. I think as the others have summarised, he's done a very good job in his presidency so far. It really has very little to do with us, it really is an FIA issue and between the different ASNs - and who knows, there may even be another candidate. Maybe Martin's going to throw his hat into the ring as well... No. As I say, I think Jean's done a very good job and everything's already been said.

Q: (Ian Parkes - Press Association) Monisha, with the arrival of the Mexican Grand Prix next year, does that put any pressure on you to retain Esteban Gutierrez for next season, and if so, what does the future hold for Nico Hulkenberg, bearing in mind you're seemingly committed to employing Sergey Sirotkin?

MK: Actually one thing really does not have anything to do with the idea to look at... We started our relationship with Esteban much before we actually got into contact with Telmex, because he came into the Formula BMW programme and from there he progressed with the team. So there are two different issues. As far as generally our driver line-up is concerned, we know that we would like to have Sergey next year as our driver but he still needs a super-licence and that's something which you should take seriously. People shouldn't think that we just feel that he's just going to get it like that. We are convinced he can do it, we will do our best to prepare him and there still is a big step. If that all works out we will see what options we have and announce that in due course.

Q: (Dieter Rencken - The Citizen) To all team principals and Graeme - I believe you're sporting director, is that your official title?

GL: President and sporting director.

Q: (Dieter Rencken - The Citizen) To all six, the resource restriction agreement (RRA) would have expired at the end of 2012. It was then extended by the so-called Singapore agreement which I believe extended it by another five years to the end of 2017. What are your individual views on this document? Is it legally enforceable, are you going to be providing all the documentation required at the end of the season to the correct authorities?

GL: Well, yes to all of the above. My understanding is that the Singapore agreement extended the RRA and modified some of the terms and extended it to 2017. I think that's well documented and we're certainly operating our business in accordance with that agreement. It was an agreement that everybody signed and we'll report accordingly. Whether there is a different mechanism that all the teams agree prior to 2017, which has mutual agreement, then I guess that's a different question but as far as we're concerned we're adhering to it and will continue to do so.

MK: Well, we are working to that as well and as far as I know, everybody is. More important is to see that in all this time we could identify the flaws it had which was natural, because you just realise with the experience you have with this kind of agreement and we all know we should take steps into cost-cutting directions so more important for me is: what can we make of this experience and how can we improve that to maybe have something which is then really again supported by everyone and we end all these discussions about it?

RB: We're operating to the RRA. I think we're part of the group - as I think most of the teams are, if not all the teams - part of the group to see how we can go forward with an improved RRA, how we can operate more effectively in the future. This is a very competitive business, so interpretations are very important. We see it in all the sporting regs, we see it in all the technical regs and we need to have an improved system to make sure the interpretations of the RRA are also debated and discussed and we have a proper forum for resolving those issues, because that appears to be where some of the disagreements come between the teams. But we do need to have a system, we need to have a system in the future, that controls the costs, that controls the amount the teams can spend. We as Mercedes, are supportive of any correct initiatives to achieve that.

CH: What was the question again?

Q: (Dieter Rencken - The Citizen) The Singapore agreement, in your opinion, is it a legally enforceable document, will you be submitting all your documents at the end of the season?

CH: Is it legally enforceable? Probably not in reality. There are things in that agreement that committed things like KERS for one and a half million and so on that didn't actually happen. Will we work to it, in accordance with it? Yes. Will we submit our figures? I would have thought so. Is it effective? Not really. Have there been other things introduced into sporting and technical regulations that will have a genuine effect on costs next year? Yes they have. I think the reduction in wind tunnel usage, in getting rid of aerodynamic testing and so on will again have a significant impact on costs for next year. Of course, it depends where your cost drivers are but I think we still have a responsibility as a group to not ignore costs and certainly 2014 looks to be a very very expensive year.

SD: As everyone has said, I would say we are sticking to these figures but I think that the most important thing is to look ahead because for sure this is an element of a lot of discussion, debate that we all had together in different ways, in a very competitive world. Everyone is trying to maximise his situation because it's part of the game. It is true that we need to find a solution that has to be clear to avoid any strange interpretation but so far, that is in terms of numbers, in terms of presenting the data, nothing has changed.

MW: Yes to all the questions but I think that as someone has said, I think it's very clear we will probably do more than we've already done. I think some of the things that have now gone into the technical regulations, sporting regulations have effectively migrated there from the original RRA and that's positive, I think. As Christian's observed, I think the control of aerodynamic resources - this is track testing, this is CFD, wind tunnel time - has been effective, I think and I think as Christian also mentioned, despite our best efforts, the costs next year are very stiff, I think, particularly for the smaller teams. I think those teams who have a strong association with an OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) have a good degree of financial stability but I think it's very clear that we need to work hard to ensure... we should be fighting for all eleven teams that we've got on the grid now, we should be fighting for their survival and making sure that they've got sustainable business models because if we don't, at some point there will be a crisis, there will be the domino effect and we've got to... we act sometimes better under crisis, but generally it's better to avert the crisis and work together beforehand.

Q: (Alan Baldwin - Reuters) We've seen the draft calendar for next year: 21 races. We all know you've got views on expanding the calendar. I just wondered if you could say how likely it will be that you think there will actually be 21 races next year and if you think there's any chance of New Jersey making it even though it's not on the draft calendar at the present?

MW: I think 21 is tough. I've got no personal knowledge of New Jersey so I can't comment on that. Will those 21 all happen? There's lots of rumours and speculation in the paddock about whether they'll all make it. Ultimately I think Bernie's job is to go out there and put the calendar together. I think he sometimes has to speculate as to the viability or how realistic some of them are. It's easy for us to jump and complain about the calendar. I think he's got to put it together and I think we should be grateful that in the last few years, from pretty difficult and challenging times, not only has he maintained a calendar but he's been able to bring some new venues into the sport. New Jersey, of course, would be fantastic in my opinion, it would be great for the sport. If you then say who would you lose? We've all got our personal favourites and our personal least favourites, but I think it would be very disrespectful to use this platform to voice those personal opinions. I think Bernie's just got to work hard to make sure we've got a good calendar. He generally succeeds one way or another and I suspect he will next year.

SD: I would wait. I would say that as you know there will be a discussion, the World Motor Sport Council at the end of the September, so I would wait for that date to see exactly what will be the situation because you are old enough in this world to know that things may change quickly, so let's wait and see.

Q: Graeme, just a comment from you: do you welcome 21 races from a smaller team's point of view?

GL: We've always made it very very clear that we're here, in Formula One, to compete and that means a level playing field, then that means that if there's 21 races, then we race at 21 races. If it's 20 then of course the cost goes down but that's not really how we have to look at it. We can't pick and chose what we would like about this sport. We can't ask for a level playing field and then try and look at something like that. As Martin has quite rightly pointed out, Bernie puts the races on, the negotiations with the promoters from the outside seem to be tortuous, to say the least. In some cases, they are difficult to predict, some of the twists and turns, there are announcements that that race is happening and sometimes they don't. Certain venues are more attractive. Sochi is a venue that is of particular interest to us because we obviously have a large following in the Russian market place, but I think in general it's important for us to be consistent in what we ask for as a level playing field. If that's 21 races, that's 21 races.

Q: (Ian Parkes - Press Association) Towards the end of Max Mosley's reign (as FIA president), he was committed towards cutting costs at a time when the sport was imploding, manufacturers were leaving. Under Jean Todt, he has implemented a regulation change for next season which is costing every single team multi-millions of pounds and seemingly put a number in jeopardy. Do you genuinely believe Jean Todt has done a good job for Formula One?

CH: I think you're referring to the engines, Ian, when you're talking about the increase in costs and in fairness to Jean, the engine discussion was in place before his presidency. Where collectively we all made mistake was not to say no. Some of us did but at the end of the day there's a process that these regulations have to go through and the teams, through the old Concorde Agreement, had the opportunity, through the Formula One Commission etc etc to stop it and we didn't so we can only, in many respects, blame ourselves.

Q: (Sam Collins - RaceCar Engineering) We've been told earlier this weekend by Pirelli that the deadline for them to supply you guys with the tyre information that they need has been put back by a month, so I would like to ask all of you how that has affected your 2014 car development?

CH: Not at all, because we don't know what to expect from Pirelli. So it seems to vary from weekend to weekend. I think they're finalising their plans etc. It's the same for everybody.

SD: One thing that I would say in all fairness I think that it will important also to give to them the possibility to test, when the new cars are there. For example, in wet conditions, we need to make sure that we will be able to do it before arriving to some weekend where we will find wet and suddenly we may discover something that was not expected, so I think we need to also consider that.

Q: (Silvia Renee Arias – Revista Parabras) Domenicali, talking about his future Felipe Massa said yesterday ‘ask Domenicali.’ I would like to ask you...

SD: I think that he did a good answer.

MW: He’s a very nice man.

SD: No, but I think that in that respect nothing has changed in our position. I know that everyone is waiting for information, waiting for news, as they have for all the summer, I have to say, because if you look back, all the summers were like that. Nothing to add on what we said a couple of weeks ago. We will take our time, there’s no rush to make a decision. We want to make sure that we make the right decision. We will support Felipe because this is absolutely clear: he’s a great guy, he’s very much a team player and this is something that we will discuss at the appropriate time and of course, I will tell you, not only to you but to everyone.

Q: (Craig Scarborough – ScarbsFl.com) Having looked at all your aero packages this weekend, you have obviously spent quite a lot of money developing packages just for Monza. Would you like to see a return of other high speed tracks – seeing as it’s the only track now that demands these packages – like Hockenheim or Paul Ricard?

RB: Yes. I would personally, yes, I think that when we had Hockenheim and Monza as the two low drag circuits it was always interesting to have some variety. I think the type of racing you get at these circuits is a little bit different and I would welcome more circuits of the type we have in Monza. Not sure how we achieve that, unfortunately. Monza is now an outsider in terms of the wings we have to make, it’s a special aero package for here, made for only one race but that’s the case for Spa as well. Spa’s in the middle; all the other circuits I can think of we race maximum downforce. May be different next year with the engines we have; may be different with some of the rule changes next year because the lower wing disappears and the rear wing is a little bit smaller, so there are some changes coming which may narrow the gaps between high downforce and low drag circuits. But I do enjoy racing in Monza: apart from the atmosphere which is always great, it’s a very interesting technical challenge for both the team and the drivers, so it’s a great race.

CH: I think that Spa and Monza now... Spa... the cars have improved and the circuit’s been changed slightly there. In many respects the Spa package is very very similar to here. We’re able to use an awful lot of elements here in Monza that we’ve used two weeks ago at Spa. It’s unique, it’s different, it’s got heritage, it’s obviously a very quick race. Strategically it’s a different race, the degradation tends to be pretty low here. The fuel effect is obviously one of the lowest of the year as well and I think it adds that variance to the calendar. That’s the great thing about Formula One. You go from Monaco to Monza, they’re two poles apart and it’s part of the technical challenge that is Formula One.

MW: I think it’s been said. Variety is good. I think this is a great circuit, the place is full of history, the fans are fantastic. I wouldn’t necessarily want to come to Monza twice but I think circuits like this are great but probably, as Ross reflected, we’re not likely to see new ones built like this.

GL: I think it’s probably fair to say we spent a little bit less on our Monza package than the other teams that are here, but as I mentioned before, from our point of view that’s not really the point, the challenge is the same for everybody. From a personal point of view, I think Monza has a special magic from the minute you come through the walls of the park, it’s just got an atmosphere that is really something special and provides the teams with an environment for racing that’s really quite unique so from that point of view it’s a great place, and as I say, in terms of the financial return and Craig, you’re quite right, this is a very very different circuit to others so it’s difficult to make a business case, if you like, around it when you’re keeping a very strong eye on the finances. But I think that’s really not the point when it comes to Monza.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – The Citizen) Graeme, you’ve spoken about the level playing field and it’s the same for everyone and you spoke about the finances. Is the level playing for your team in particular really that level? Is it the same for you as for the others, given that you don’t have a commercial agreement with the commercial rights holder and you’re unique in that respect?

GL: You’re right, it’s not level at the moment, but it’s my job and the management team that I’m working with, it’s our job to get it level and I think we are making some progress there. We’ve been very consistent. I think we’ve got a very very good racing team. It’s not for me to judge, but I do believe we deserve our place in Formula One, this is not an easy sport and it’s not meant to be easy. I think the fact that it’s difficult is one of the good things about Formula One, but we are the only one of the new teams that gained an entry in June 2009 to still be here and I think that’s all credit to the people working in the team. I would love to take all the credit myself but I can’t. I think we’ll just continue and hopefully discussions with the commercial rights holder with a view to reaching a position where we are on a level playing field.

Fl Italy Blog – Friday report

Lewis Hamilton topped the timesheets at the opening practice session of the Italian Grand Prix weekend, chased by tifosi favourite Fernando Alonso.

Friday morning dawned bright and warm, and as the pit lane opened for business there were three substitute drivers readying themselves for a practice run. Heikki Kovalainen was a familiar face in the Caterham, Rodolfo Gonzalez delivered another of his occasional FPI performances for Marussia, and new Force India reserve James Calado made his Formula One debut.

Calado put in an able performance, finishing the morning a scant half-second behind the vastly more experienced Paul di Resta, and ahead of Nico Hulkenberg, who had struggled with gearbox issues.

Mercedes ran a revised low downforce configuration on Friday morning, after their Spa package failed to deliver as hoped, while Kimi Raikkonen tested Lotus’ new longer-wheelbase chassis. To provide the team with a baseline for comparison, teammate Romain Grosjean spent FPI behind the wheel of the older model E21.

Despite the sporadic chicane-cutting that is a defining feature of Monza practice sessions, FPI was essentially incident-free. Pastor Maldonado had a brief moment of drama as he took his Williams through the gravel at Ascari, but returned to the track unscathed.

Friday afternoon saw a continuation of the balmy weather and ideal track conditions, although FP2 ended with a rather different running order. In the top ten, the ants were marching two by two, with the driver pairings from Red Bull, Lotus, Ferrari, Mercedes, and McLaren taking up what would be the points-paying positions on Sunday.

Sebastian Vettel led Mark Webber by six-tenths of a second, with Raikkonen giving close chase in his longer Lotus. Grosjean in P4 led Alonso, Hamilton, Nico Rosberg, and Felipe Massa – much improved since the morning – while Jenson Button and Sergio Perez brought up the rear. The split between Vettel in P1 and Rosberg in P7 was nine-tenths of a second.

Interestingly, Massa suffered the same gearbox issues in FP2 that had plagued Hulkenberg in F1, with both drivers stuck in third gear before coasting back to the pits. As Ferrari engine customers, Sauber use the same gearbox as their suppliers, hinting at a potentially widespread fault.

FP1 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m25.565s [24 laps]
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m25.600s [25 laps]
3. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m25.704s [25 laps]
4. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m25.753s [26 laps]
5. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m25.941s [22 laps]
6. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m26.007s [24 laps]
7. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m26.035s [23 laps]
8. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m26.103s [27 laps]
9. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m26.149s [21 laps]
10. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m26.155s [25 laps]
11. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m26.194s [25 laps]
12. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m26.295s [23 laps]
13. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m26.387s [21 laps]
14. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m26.449s [16 laps]
15. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m26.594s [13 laps]
16. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m26.802s [21 laps]
17. James Calado (Force India) 1m27.041s [24 laps]
18. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m27.224s [16 laps]
19. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m27.818s [24 laps]
20. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m27.869s [20 laps]
21. Heikki Kovalainen (Caterham) 1m28.192s [21 laps]
22. Rodolfo Gonzalez (Marussia) 1m29.526s [26 laps]

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m24.453 s [39 laps]
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m25.076s [39 laps]
3. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m25.116s [36 laps]
4. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m25.116s [40 laps]
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m25.330s [38 laps]
6. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m25.340s [39 laps]
7. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m25.367s [42 laps]
8. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m25.519s [29 laps]
9. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m25.532s [42 laps]
10. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m25.627s [39 laps]
11. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m25.830s [40 laps]
12. Esteban Gutiérrez (Sauber) 1m25.888s [40 laps]
13. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m26.028s [37 laps]
14. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m26.138s [36 laps]
15. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m26.224s [32 laps]
16. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m26.385s [43 laps]
17. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m26.599s [39 laps]
18. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m27.198s [44 laps]
19. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m27.548s [30 laps]
20. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m27.696s [37 laps]
21. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m27.771s [38 laps]
22. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m28.057s [32 laps]

F1 Italy Blog - Thursday press conference

As is traditional, the Italian Grand Prix weekend kicked off with the Thursday press conference starring the two Ferrari drivers and two men representing the biggest news story of the past fortnight.

Present were Fernando Alonso (Ferrari), Jenson Button (McLaren), Max Chilton (Marussia), Felipe Massa (Ferrari), Daniel Ricciardo (Toro

Q: Let's start with the man of the moment, who I don't expect has stopped smiling since the announcement was made a few days ago that he is going to be joining Red Bull Racing next year. A fantastic moment for you Daniel, but how easy is it going to be for you to concentrate for the remainder of the season? How will you keep that focus?

Daniel RICCIARDO: Good afternoon everyone, how're you going? I think it's a bit of a relief now that there's no more speculation and no more dodging questions and all the rest of it. Everyone knows what's happening, including me. It's nice. It's something to look forward to and obviously I'm

very pleased with the news but I have eight more races this year and looking forward to giving Toro Rosso a nice farewell I hope and I'll put all my energy into that. I think this weekend will of course be a bit hectic because the news is fresh but I think from this point on it should start to settle down and get back to normal stuff.

Q: Mark, I guess you're very pleased it's gone to your compatriot, but also it must be quite difficult for you with these remaining races. This one for example hasn't always been kind to you. Talk about your end of season in some ways.

Mark WEBBER: The writing was on the wall for me. I knew once I made the decision that the season was going to come to a close eventually. The clock doesn't stop in Formula One and I'm actually happy about that, otherwise I wouldn't have made the decision. Looking forward to getting as much silverware and the best results I can before the year's out and Brazil Sunday night, the next chapter. Yeah, it's all good.

Q: Pleased for Dan?

MW: Of course, yeah. It's very, very rare to have any Australians in Formula One but to have us I suppose handing the baton over in a very, very successful team... it's great for Dan obviously, he thoroughly deserves it. The junior categories for him in Europe initially is a great test. Not easy for us to come from that part of the world, which he's done brilliantly with. It's the perfect scenario I think for the team, it all fits very, very well. After DC and myself they've finally got another driver from the junior programme, which is what it's all about. So that fits in very, very well. Perfect age. It's all in his corner. So he can do a tremendous job and yeah, it works out well for him.

Q: Jenson, what's your situation contract wise?

Jenson BUTTON: Good afternoon everyone. As all contracts are, confidential.

Q: Have you signed?

JB: Not yet.

Q: Are you happy to stay with McLaren?

JB: Yes, I'm very happy to stay where I am. I think it's very easy, when times are difficult, to look elsewhere but when you're in a team like McLaren that has been fighting at the front for so many years it's definitely the wrong move to move elsewhere. I feel I have a very good family in the team and at the end of last year we had the quickest car on the grid. We don't now but it could easily come our way again next season. I feel we are making good progress so this is the right place to be.

Q: Max, similar question to you. You just had your best qualifying and best result as well, what's your situation with the team at this stage?

Max CHILTON: Good afternoon everyone, I hope you're having a good day. My situation is the same as it's been all year. I've got a one-year contract. Obviously I'm a rookie and so is Jules and we're here to learn as much as we can. You learn a lot before you get to Formula One but there's an awful lot when you do get to Formula One as well. So the main thing I'm trying to do is focus on my skills, get the most out of the car and do the best job for the team. I think for the last couple of races it has been difficult for us but we still have got that 10th place in the championship, so it's key for us to get the most out of the car when we have the opportunity to get a good race result and if we can get another 12th or 13th that would really help us in the overall championship.

Q: And is there a deadline?

MC: For contract?

Q: Yes.

MC: Not that I know. All I know is the team are happy to keep both of us and I'll just keep trying to do the best job I can.

Q: Felipe, I guess a similar question to you: what have you got to do to continue with Ferrari?

Felipe MASSA: Good results are always important, so I'll just concentrate on that. There is a big opportunity to carry on with Ferrari, so I just need to concentrate, trying to do the best we can over the car and that's what I'm looking for.

Q: We'll move on to Fernando. This is the next step in your fight-back for the championship. Is the car getting better? Are you optimistic? What's the feeling as you come to this Italian Grand Prix? You're a two-time winner here?

Fernando ALONSO: I'm optimistic. For sure I think in Spa we saw some step forward from us and we hope to continue that direction and keep improving here in Monza. The characteristics of the track should help our performance as well. We have everything in place to do a good weekend. We need to deliver when comes the time in Sunday in the race but we arrive with some good confidence and ready to fight. I think for us it will be a stronger test at the Singapore race when we come back to the maximum level of downforce etc and there we will see how much of a step forward we did but let's concentrate on this weekend. Let's try to do the maximum and let's try to finish in front of our main rivals.

Q: (Dan Knutson - Auto Action and National Speed Sport News) A question for Daniel. At Spa the team told us they had not officially signed anybody. Between Spa and now when did you learn you had the seat?

DR: To be honest, in Spa, as I said, I still didn't know - that was the truth. I found out, I think it was Wednesday that following week, so a few days before the announcement took place. I can confirm I still didn't know at Spa, so no lies being told there. Yeah, that's it.

Q: (Miguel Angel Sainz Bernardino - Marca) Question for Fernando. What result do you need here and in Singapore to avoid Ferrari stopping the development of the car this year? Two wins?

FA: I don't think two wins is something that we can put up like a target, y'know? We've won two grand prix until now in the championship so we will be a little bit too optimistic if we really think that we can win the next two races. We will try to do so and we will hope for the best but more realistic targets are to finish in front of Sebastian. I think it is a target that we want to do in the last couple of grands prix, we didn't arrive to a situation to close the gap, we only close the gap in Silverstone when he retired. So, we need to change this situation. We will be happy finishing in front of him, I think, here in Monza and in Singapore. Finishing in front of Sebastian means being on the podium. Minimum. Because we know how strong he is and how competitive Red Bull will be. So, two podiums and finishing in front of Sebastian is, I think, the target for these next two grands prix. If we cannot do so, if we keep losing points, obviously we need to start thinking about the 2014 project because we'll be only six or seven races remaining with massive points [deficit] so important weeks coming for sure.

Q: (Anne Giuntini - L'Equipe) Fernando, you just bought a cycling team. Considering the amount of work you have to do as a racing driver, how can you imagine to commit yourself into this team?

FA: Well, it was one week with a lot of work, to be honest. Two or three batteries, telephone every day and it was some things to do. Now, more or less, that's everything complete. All the decisions and all the work that we need to do for the cycling team will be passed to other people, some managers and some sportive directors that we need to find. We need to find sponsors, we need to do a lot of things in the next month, let's say, because the first race is in the middle of January in Australia. It's not something that we can delay much more. It's a very ambitious project with a lot of hopes on it. I will not, as I said, put too much percentage of my days on the bicycle team, especially now that we are fighting for the championship. But when I arrive in wintertime, or something like that, hopefully we can create a solid project. Not so much for 2014 because I don't think there are many riders now with possibilities to sign but for 2015 onwards we need to create something big. So we will work a little bit.

MW: I think Adrian will design the bikes...

FA: ...he's too busy

Q: (Pablo Grau - FIAlDia.com) Jenson, you did a good job in Spa, what do you expect in Monza, a very fast track?

JB: Yeah, Spa was alright. It's quite difficult to get excited about sixth place but in terms of the pace of the car it was pretty good. Fourth after turn one and finishing sixth isn't so bad. So yeah, we're hoping for a bit more of an improvement. I think we've unlocked a little bit of performance with the car and we're pretty close to challenging the cars in front. Whether we can do that here or not I don't know. It's a very low downforce circuit here and I think we have a pretty good low downforce package, so we will see. I think after three or four laps tomorrow we'll know where we stand in terms of how the downforce is working and the efficiency of it.

Q: (Adrian Huber Rodriguez - Agencia EFE) Fernando, it's certainly not match-point right now but how would you describe the situation? Could it be like a set-point? How do you feel yourself, psychologically? Are you worried, are you anxious, are you angry, are you optimistic, how are you?

FA: For what?

Q: The situation in the World Championship

FA: I'm relaxed. I think when you do the maximum and you maximise normally the potential of the car and of yourself, finding the limits every time you are behind the wheel, you feel relaxed yourself and happy with the work. Of course we want to fight for the championship like we did last year until the last race, and this year we see that slowly the gap in the championship is increasing every weekend, so we want to stop that. We need to change that situation and hopefully this weekend is the starting point. It's still plenty of races, plenty of opportunities, plenty of points to play. We believe that we can do it. So let's start from this weekend.

Q: (Silvia Renée Arias - Revista Parabrisas) Felipe, this is a very, very important race for you, you said before, that these two races were important for you, Spa and Monza. How do you feel in terms of the performance of your car? Is it important to have a car good enough to prove and do something well?

FM: I feel that the car was more competitive in Spa than in Hungary. I think it was important for us. I believe we can have a good car here. In the last years, even last year maybe, the car was not so competitive in the season but we had a good race in Monza. We find a good direction for this race, so I hope we can have a good car here so that we can fight and have a great race. Not just here but the second part of the season much better than the first part.

Q: (Michael Neudecker - Süddeutsche Zeitung) Fernando, again a cycling question, can you talk about your new team, if you have a name already? And can you talk about your passion for cycling and your relationship to Alberto Contador?

FA: Not name yet. As I said, we are waiting for sponsors - you want to write that - what we want is to have a team that can fight for the best things. My passion for cycling has been from a very young age and I do cycling as part of my training and also as part of my life. I'm always in front of the TV or checking the results. Very good friends in the cycling world. We talk of relationship with riders. Alberto is a good friend of mine. This project tried to best things of the two sports. I want to bring to Formula One the best things that cycling can teach me in terms of sacrifice, determination, discipline, training. And I want to bring to my cycling team the best things of Formula One. There are many and hopefully in the team next year, in the cycling, we can see some of the great things of Formula One, in terms of organization, image marketing, professionalism. Let's try to put the best for the best.

Q: (Livio Oricchio - O Estado de Sao Paulo) Daniel, what can one realistically expect from you at the beginning of next year? Do you expect to start the season very close to Sebastian or do you have any plan to be there in the second part of the season?

DR: Obviously, I would love to be as competitive as I can as quickly as possible, so for me, I'll obviously finish the season as strongly as possible with Toro Rosso, but as soon as it's finished, switch my focus to 2014, try and put in a really good off-season, at least do as much as I can to prepare myself to be there for the first race. I know it's obviously not going to be as easy as it seems but the best thing I can do is push myself as much as I can. I have one of the best teammates in the world now to measure myself against so no better man to have but him and push myself as hard as I can.

Q: (Jaime Rodriguez - El Mundo) Fernando, next Saturday in Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Tokyo, Madrid fight for the Olympic Games in 2020. What are your feelings about Madrid, a city that you know very well and why do you think Madrid deserves the Olympic Games?

FA: Well, let's hope so. I think Madrid deserves finally to host the Olympic Games. This is the third time that they try to host it and this time, hopefully, it will be the good one. I think the effort that the city and the country is making is quite good, there is a lot of success in Spanish sport in the last eight or ten years, that hopefully can convince the people. There is the enthusiasm from the whole country to host it, maximum support and we really want it. I know that it will be close. In Spain, we think that the Spanish possibilities are very high. I know that outside of Spain they are relatively less and maybe the favourite is Tokyo but we keep our fingers crossed until Saturday.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos - Formula Press) Felipe, last year you struggled in the first part of the season but you could identify what was wrong and after the summer break you were very competitive. This year you started very well, but after Monaco, your results haven't been up to the same standard as before. Can you pinpoint what's gone wrong in this second part of the season?

FM: I think that what is important to say is that this year the performance was good at every race. We couldn't put together the results at the end of the race. I was not very lucky in so many things. I had two races where I had problems with the tyres. I spun at the Nurburgring, problem with the suspension in Monaco. For sure so many things happened that I couldn't finish where I was supposed to but the performance was there. I think that's important. I just need to put everything together and finish races where I'm supposed to and then I think the performance will be there and the results

will be there as well.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Felipe, how long do you want to wait for Ferrari's decision about your future?

FM: I think you need to ask this question of Stefano (Domenicali).

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Fernando, you've bought this 'bike team: I would like to know if there is any possibility that you might take a year off, concentrate on the bicycle team and then maybe take the opportunity for the future when the turbo era builds up and we know how the situation is between teams? Is this crazy or is there a realistic chance of this?

FA: Never an option. I'm in the best moment of my career, I'm with the best experience and performing at the best time. I will not miss any opportunity now. I know that I'm still in very good shape for maybe four, five more years so for sure I will give 100 percent of my passion that is motor sport and my career. After these four or five years, I will see what condition I am in and if I'm performing well. If I'm not feeling good any more, maybe I will think but as I said, I will be 100 percent committed for the next four or five years.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Daniel, changing teams always involves a bit of transition and adjustment. Moving to a team like Red Bull involves that transition under an awful lot of pressure. Are there any steps you can take this year to ease the transition, given the relationship between the two teams, working more with the engineers, learning more about how to operate inside the big Red Bull team?

DR: I think I'm pretty fortunate to spend some time with Red Bull Racing in the past as a reserve driver. At Toro Rosso, we still go to Milton Keynes to use the simulator so I see a fair chunk of the team, also away from race weekends. Obviously, now that the news is out I will try and if I get some extra time to start to mould a relationship with the crew for next year, yeah, so I'll ease into it and by December when we really start, I will already try and establish a good relationship with the guys and understand the way they work. As I say, I'm quite fortunate, I already understand a little bit about it, so a little bit of a head start.

Q: (Mineoki Yoneya – La Vie Creative) Question to both of the Ferrari drivers: talking about Suzuka, how can you make the difference from the other drivers in terms of driving, and do you have any plans to visit somewhere in Japan?

FA: Well, Suzuka is probably the most enjoyable race track of the year so it's always very special to go there but as I said, for the fantastic layout of the track, also for the fans, also for the passion that we always live when we are in Suzuka. We race after Korea so we will spend from Monday to Thursday probably in Tokyo, relaxing a little bit and preparing for the race and then in Suzuka, just concentrating on the weekend. No special plans to do crazy things but every thing there is a little bit special so we will try to enjoy it as always.

FM: Yeah, I think it's the same. Suzuka is a fantastic place, fantastic track to race on, one of the best, so it's very nice to be in Japan. I love to go to Japan. As Fernando said, we're going to spend a few days during the week after the Korean race in Tokyo, a great place to be as well, so really looking forward to racing in Suzuka and having a great race there for the fans as they are some of the best fans in Formula One.

Q: (Giorgio Pasini – Tuttosport) Mark, do you have any suggestions for Daniel in order to manage the relationship with Sebastian: maybe the knife from Crocodile Dundee?

MW: Daniel will handle it fine. He knows how to handle himself so he'll be OK.

DR: I think that's obviously for me to figure out. As Mark said, I'll be right.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Fernando, what do you think about teams with two top drivers? Also looking at the past, what is your opinion? What are the positive things and negative things in this kind of situation?

FA: I think it's a good thing. There is always, in the top teams, the need to have two very good drivers because they fight for World Championships, they fight for Constructors points and they fight for winning every race they go to, so you cannot have only one driver. This has always been the case in the top teams, always the case in Ferrari, in McLaren, Red Bull now. At the end, or in the middle of the year, there is always one driver who has scored more points than the others and maybe a year later it's the opposite, the other driver has scored more points. This is the way it is and you need to start or reset to zero every winter and start in the same conditions again and try to build up the points a little bit. So I think this is quite normal in our sport.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Felipe, what kind of result do you need here in Monza to hope to stay with Ferrari next season?

FM: Well, I think I definitely need a good race. That's always important. I think it's important to try to use the car in the maximum way it is possible. I think that's what gives you pleasure, even if you don't win the race but you did the best you could. I think that's always the most important thing. The team can see that, race by race, all the time. You cannot forget that Ferrari knows me very well. It's the team that knows me most. About experience, we know how important next year is as well. Everything starts from zero: different car, different rules, everything, so the driver's experience is important as well. Sometimes you just look at the results of this race: that's not what counts the most. I think it's everything together. But anyway, it's always important to do the maximum we can in this race and try to use the best of the car that we're going to have this weekend.

Q: (Bob McKenzie – Daily Express) Fernando, your name was mentioned a few times in the Red Bull situation. Were you at all interested in the Red Bull seat? Would you have gone up against Vettel or do you think you'll finish at Ferrari? Would you be interested in going to Red Bull at any time in the future?

FA: It was only rumours, a lot of rumours. There were rumours about Red Bull, there were rumours in Italy about a sabbatical year, there were so many rumours. I still have three and a half more years with Ferrari which I intend to respect and hopefully to increase a little bit, and as I said, finish my career in the best team in the world which is Ferrari. We are not at the moment achieving the results that we want but we are working very hard and next year will be completely new rules which obviously open the door for many teams to stop the domination that Red Bull seems to have had in the last couple of years so we have high hopes also for next year's challenge. About the news that now Red Bull have two drivers, it's very good news that Daniel has signed, also for our country because it has opened up a good possibility for Carlos Sainz to join Toro Rosso, so that was the best news for us.

Q: (Sergio Lillio Martinez – Revista Scratch) Max, it's a hard season for you because it's your first in F1: where do you think you deserve to be in 2014 and how do you face the next races?

MC: The next few races are going to be pretty challenging. I think we've got seven after here and I think I've only driven one of them, and that was Singapore so it's going to be a little bit challenging. Actually, sorry, we've got Abu Dhabi as well so there's five I haven't driven of the final seven so it will be challenging but it is my first year. As I said earlier, I'm still learning but I've done half a year in Formula One, you can't expect much longer to up

your pace and learn and for the last few races the pace has been a lot better, especially qualifying. We did a great team effort in Spa so my focus is just to keep doing what I'm doing and learning and I think for the second half of the year my speed will come through more and hopefully we can keep that tenth place (in the Constructors).
