

## Fl Monaco Blog - Sunday press conference

After an action-packed Monaco Grand Prix with the spectre of a protest hanging over the winning team, the Sunday press conference was remarkably free from controversy.

Present were Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), and Mark Webber (Red Bull).

Q: Nico, you controlled the race from pole position but you had to deal with two safety cars, a red flag, a lot of mental resets no doubt, but describe your feelings right now, you're a Monaco Grand Prix winner?

Nico ROSBERG: Yeah, amazing! This is my home, I've grown up here lived all my life here, I've gone to school here. So now to win at home is very special: a very special day for me. The whole weekend really went perfectly, qualifying [everything]. The start was very close. I had a terrible start! I was close to Sebastian and then with Lewis also, but then that worked out well. After that I could control the pace. The car was really good, the tyres held on ok, so that was really the key to the victory. So massive thanks to the team for having improved from Barcelona and I'm just ecstatic

Q: Sebastian, podium for you today, I guess you must be delighted that you've extended your championship lead?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, I think overall I'm very happy and pleased with the result. We know that it's very difficult to overtake here. I think first of all congratulations to Nico, he did a very good job, a very controlled race. I think he had the pace and the tyres to respond whenever we tried to get a little bit closer, yeah. The start of the race... fantastic start but no room. I think I could have gone past both Mercedes but didn't have the room, had to lift. Then Mark came and it was tight into the first corner. And after that I was a bit surprised by the slow pace in the opening laps. Usually you expect two silver arrows in front of you and there were two buses today going for a cruise - at least in the first couple of laps. But obviously the strategy was clear and they did a very good job. We were lucky on the strategy point of view. The team did a fantastic job to get past Lewis, so yeah. After that, with the restart: pretty difficult. Warm-up was very, very tricky. I saw Lewis was all over Mark behind me, so I think we can happy with the result. Great achievement from the team again. We seem to like this place the last couple of years so very happy. Congratulations, thank you, thanks to our partners as well. Thanks to Infinity, they are pushing an awful lot in the last couple of months to help us and I think it goes without saying, thanks to Renault as well, two cars out of three on the podium again powered by Renault - in 'Little France' in a way, so it's sort of a home grand prix for them so congratulations as well. Overall, as I said, pretty happy.

Q: Mark, fourth in the opening stint but obviously the safety car at the first stop gave you and the team the opportunity to jump ahead of Hamilton. Important moment for you?

Mark WEBBER: Yes. First of all, congratulations to Nico. It's a very special place to win at so, yeah, he had a seamless weekend and that's what you need to do here. It's never easy when you're leading, you still have to pull it off. So, well done to Nico and Mercedes. For us, we knew it was a little against us starting on the second row but got an absolutely incredible start - and sod's law it's the shortest run to the first corner so, I think Seb and I had nowhere to go really so we were lifting. It's looking like Nico and Lewis had pretty tricky ones, so we'll try to save some of those starts for future reference. And then after that it was just basically saving tyres and making the one-stop work. It was completely predictable that if the race was going to stack up then the two-stop was not really an option to come back into traffic. So we had to go very long, all the drivers were nursing the cars very aggressively and as you say, it was nice to get Lewis. Obviously it's never nice to lose positions around the stop so I'm sure he's not too pleased with it but in the end we'll take that position. It was difficult to get the restarts going on the primes but in general just really driving around, saving the tyres and waiting for the chequered flag.

Q: Nico, first son of a former Monaco Grand Prix winner to repeat the feat. Congratulations. 30 years on from your father Keke's victory here at Monaco. Did that add a certain extra-special something to this win today.

NR: It is special to hear that, yes but honestly that's not what I was thinking about when I was crossing the finishing line, definitely not. Just extremely happy to win this race. Also, we've had again such a difficult time behind us. In the last couple of races pole position and dropping back so much. There was always that a little bit in the back of my mind today in the race: 'I hope that it's going to last and I'll be able to pull it off today and not drop back again.' Because it's not nice when you're starting in front and dropping back. And then today the team gave me a great car. It's really fantastic to see how they've been able to improve in such a short space of time. Little improvement here and there but on this track - this track suited us anyway - and so it was enough to make it happen.

Q: Nico, what was it like to be in control of a race but then have to mentally reset each time? There was nothing straightforward about the way that race unfolded for you today.

NR: No, definitely not. It wasn't very nice y'know? Because I was in a great rhythm on those prime tyres, trying to nurse them towards the end and then all of a sudden a race stoppage. It's never nice to get out of that rhythm y'know? Because especially around Monaco it's so easy to have a quick concentration error and then you're in the tyre barrier and it's the end of the race. So, it was really important today to remain concentrated and that didn't make it easy, all those safety cars and the red flag and everything - but fortunately in the end it all worked out.

Q: Did you think at any point about the school runs you used to do down these roads and the fact that you were actually going to be winning a race on the roads you used to go to school on?

NR: No! There was a lot of thoughts going through my mind, definitely, but not about the roads to school. Various things. Even, to be honest, winning Monaco in a silver arrow. I was thinking about that and that's very special to me.

Q: Sebastian, you hinted in your answer in the unilateral that the Mercedes were slower in the opening stint than you expected them to be. You said it was fair play to them but you could tell they were driving to a tactic today.

SV: Yes, definitely. I think we could see that the field didn't spread out, so as I said, they did what worked best for them. Obviously Lewis lost a couple of positions with the safety car – I'm sure he's not too pleased about that – but we took that, no question. Yeah, I think it was very marginal on one stop. I think the red flag helped all of us to put a fresh set of tyres on to save that ten, eleven laps, total race distance. It was clear what they were doing a couple of laps after the start. They were going quite slow and trying to obviously make the one stop happen. And fair play, they were in the lead, around here it's very tricky to pass. Every time I tried to get a little bit closer with Lewis... in the beginning with Lewis it was quite close, yeah they reacted, they had the pace, so they could afford to go slow and then if they had to, they had the pace to pick it up again. In that regard, not the most exciting race because you just wait for the chequered flag. It's still a lot of laps, looking after the tyres wasn't straightforward for us today – so overall, happy with the result we got.

Q: Obviously when the safety car came out that caught Lewis out, the Mercedes had just completed a lap. Where exactly were you when you got the message to come into the pits.

SV: The safety car wasn't out yet. Obviously it was a very, very good call from the team. Initially we wanted to pit a lap earlier but then we aborted that. Obviously there was a yellow and in the end I think we were just a little bit lucky. So we decided to pit and when I changed tyres and went back out, at the same moment the safety car came – which probably helped us a little bit. I don't know if Lewis had a problem with the stop or if it was just down to the fact that the safety car came at the wrong time for him. But, yeah, it was nice. At some stage I was hoping that it might be enough to get Nico as well but he obviously was in the lead by quite a bit at that time, before we came in.

Q: Mark, there were quite a lot of incidents today, obviously a couple of safety cars, red flags. Some drivers were making passes today but did it feel very touch-and-go, very marginal out there to you?

MW: To make moves? Yeah, I think so. Especially when you're with the guys I was with today, very experienced and they know what they need to do and where to put the car so, unless you had a big discrepancy in tyre performance, like I did after my pitstop – I had to clear Nico Hülkenberg pretty quick and try to make that undercut work a little bit – but in general after that, as the guys have touched upon, it was measured, controlled aggression, if you like, trying to nurse the tyres as best you can. It became very, very obvious early in the grand prix that the tyres were going pretty well. Obviously the pace wasn't electric and, fair enough, that's how... you can do that if you're at the front of the race, as I did last year, so you can do that. And when the options were starting to go that far – the supersoft – the one-stop started to become viable for everybody and that's why it probably wasn't a super-exciting race today for the fans. But even if it was two-stops, it would probably have just been a bit more action around the pitstops and obviously not much on circuit because that's the sort of track it is.

Q: (Ralf Bach – Der Spiegel) Nico, the two secret test days that you had in Barcelona. How helpful were those days for you?

NR: That you have to ask, you have to ask Pirelli about all this, about this issue. I'm not going to comment. I'm not going to comment on that. You have to ask Pirelli.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Nico, we often hear drivers say that the most exciting race to win other than their home Grand Prix is Monaco. Obviously this is both for you. Could you please give us a bit of a sense of the elation and euphoria you must be feeling? What was it like doing that slowing down lap?

NR: Unbelievable. If there's maybe a childhood dream... when I was quite young, watching the race, always. First memories were of Ayrton Senna with his yellow helmet, red and white winning, a childhood dream to one day win the Grand Prix of Monaco, because it is my home and that's the most special race for me to win, so the feeling was just incredible, it was unreal. That's what's so special about the sport: these emotions that you then get and that makes up for all the difficult moments that have gone before, those great moments of joy and winning. Amazing.

Q: (Vincent Marre – Sport Zeitung) Nico, now that everything is going well, I would like to rate the percentage of your chances of winning the title?

NR: I haven't thought about that at all yet, because just two weeks we ago were seventy seconds away in the race and even today, tyre degradation was still an issue. I think we were in a better position, much better definitely, but it's also a different track, very different track, different circumstances. I had the possibility of taking it easy and dictating the pace initially to save tyres, so we shouldn't get over-excited now, for the next couple of races. We still have a bit of an issue with our race pace and that's still what we need to work on, and also the development race. Everybody's pushing forward, flat out, and we need to make sure to keep up with that as we have been doing at the moment, which is great to see, because that was one of our weaknesses last year, we dropped away mid-season. For now it's going really well, so thanks to everybody back in the factory, doing a really cool job. But we have to wait and see. I'm definitely not thinking about the championship, I'm just thinking about today, winning Monaco.

Q: (Jussi Jakala – YLE) Nico, do you think this was maybe the final seal to get rid of the status of being Keke's son, so that you have achieved everything by your own skills now?

NR: Don't know, that's for you to judge. I don't think about that in that sense so you need to judge that for yourself. I can't comment on that.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action/National Speedsport News) Mark, before the red flag, Lewis got right up alongside you at Rascasse. What happened, did he maybe catch you by surprise there?

MW: No, I was probably just saving my tyres a bit too much and yeah, he was going for a little bit of a surge also, I think. They were probably a little bit more comfortable on the primes in certain performance areas of the circuit and also the car characteristics, so, yeah, he was a little bit more comfortable on that section of the track. I was also just... we knew we had a long way to go in the race and also I had four or five laps less on my tyres, because I did the undercut on these guys. I had to give him room. I think experience helps in those scenarios. I thought he might tap me... I could just see him in the mirror. I thought 'mmm, he's in there somewhere' but I had to give him the room and then thank God we got round Rascasse together somehow. I think that was probably not that straightforward. Not possible for GP2 drivers but us boys managed to pull it off which we should be able to so it was a rewarding little battle.

Q: (Bob McKenzie – Daily Express) Nico, referring back to that previous question about your father: have you at times, when you were younger or when you came into Formula One, did you feel any pressure from the fact that your father was so well known, being a World Champion, that sort of thing?

NR: I've always felt very fortunate to have had my father... what he achieved and everything... to have his support and extra pressure? It's a normality for me you know, having my father World Champion. I grew up with that, started racing like that, so it's not something where I feel any extra pressure because for me that's normal.

Q: (Jacqueline Magnay – News LTD Australia) Mark, I'm just wondering whether you have an opinion on this secret tyre testing,

whether it had any impact, and whether you think there was any advantage to Mercedes having done the testing?  
MW: That's a fair question. I think we were probably a little bit surprised that it happened. I don't think it probably had a huge bearing on today's result. I think their car was always going to perform pretty well round here, to be fair, but yeah, you can't unlearn what went on at the test obviously, so we need to see how the test came about and whether it's within the rules or not. I'm sure Mercedes thought it was OK, so that's why they did it, so time will tell. But I don't think it affected today's result.

Q: (Frederic Ferret - L'Equipe) Nico, what was the most difficult thing for your victory today, getting the pole yesterday, starting after the safety car, or the last lap with the emotion?

NR: Qualifying was difficult because of the conditions. The start was very difficult because I had a bad start. Those were the two keys. Once those two things were done, from then on it was OK. There were still some challenges with the safety car, because the tyres were very cold on those prime tyres, for example so there were other challenges but the main ones were qualifying and the start.

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## F1 Monaco Blog - Race report

Monaco was once described by the novelist Somerset Maugham as a sunny place for shady people. The sun-dappled Monaco Grand Prix grid was cast into shade on Sunday afternoon following a tyre testing row that saw Red Bull threaten to protest the results of the race before the twenty-two cars taking part had left the pits to line up on the grid.

The Milton Keynes racers were concerned that a post-Barcelona tyre test using the current Mercedes car had given the Silver Arrows an unfair advantage in Monaco qualifying, with Red Bull conveniently forgetting that Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton had claimed pole at three of the five races preceding the contentious test.

After an action-packed race that saw two Safety Car periods, a red flag, and seven retirements, Rosberg crossed the line in first place, in the process becoming the first second-generation Monaco Grand Prix winner in Formula One history. When the chequered flag fell, it was to the news that Ferrari and Red Bull had both launched a formal protest with the stewards complaining that Mercedes had violated Article 22.4h of the FIA Formula One Sporting Regulations, but the race result went uncontested.

At the race start both Mercedes managed to stay ahead of the Red Bull despite a slowish getaway from Rosberg and a charge into Ste Devote from Sebastian Vettel. The front four drivers held position until the first round of pit stops, which saw Vettel swap to fresh rubber at the end of lap 30. It would later prove to be the perfect move from the Red Bull pit wall: Felipe Massa crashed into Ste Devote as Vettel was pitting, bringing out the first Safety Car of the race and sending the pack into the pits en masse.

Race leader Rosberg was first in the Mercedes pits, and while Hamilton was waiting for his turn he was jumped by both Vettel and Mark Webber, losing two precious places the Briton was unable to make up despite spending the bulk of the fifty remaining laps hanging onto the Australian's rear wing.

Massa's crash was but one part of Ferrari's bad day. The Brazilian driver was taken to hospital for checks and has since been released, but the fact that Massa's Sunday incident was identical to the crash that saw him unable to take part in Saturday's qualifying session was concerning to the team. In the other Ferrari, Fernando Alonso struggled to maintain track position, ceding places to Sergio Perez, Adrian Sutil, and Paul di Resta over the course of the 78 laps.

Where Ferrari struggled, Force India soared. Adrian Sutil delivered an impressive performance that resulted in a well-deserved fifth place finish, vindication for the German racer after recent races have seen him hampered by a string of bad luck. Following the red flag, however Sutil took no prisoners, pulling off a series of impressive overtakes around the outside of the Loews' hairpin. Di Resta was just as impressive, charging up through the field from 17th on the grid to a P9 finish, overtaking where necessary and deftly avoiding the damage caused by the demolition derby taking place ahead of him on track.

For the Monaco race was a demolition derby of sorts, with seven of the grid's 22 cars failing to make it to the chequered flag. Charles Pic had a purely mechanical retirement, but the other six drivers who saw their afternoons cut short were all involved in collisions, most of which were avoidable.

Massa appeared to take himself out, causing the first Safety Car in the process, and less than ten laps after racing resumed, Pastor Maldonado was pushed into the barriers approaching Tabac by Max Chilton, who was able to race on. The damage to the barriers led to an extended red flag period, followed by a Safety Car restart. Next to go was Jules Bianchi, who had suffered collateral damage in the Maldonado-Chilton shunt but raced on for 15 more laps before crashing out at Ste Devote with a failed brake disc. The final Safety Car came out thanks to Romain Grosjean, who rear-ended Daniel Ricciardo, taking both men out of the race and earning himself a ten-place grid penalty for Montreal in the process.

The last man to retire was Sergio Perez, who had delivered a feisty performance from start to finish, dicing with – and passing – teammate Jenson Button and Fernando Alonso, before an ill-judged attempt to crowd Kimi Raikkonen into the barriers at the Nouvelle Chicane saw the Mexican racer clip the barriers himself, leading to the suspension damage that eventually caused his late retirement following what had been a spirited performance.

### 2013 Monaco Grand Prix results

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 2h17m52.056s
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) + 3.888s
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) + 6.314s
4. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) + 13.894s
5. Adrian Sutil (Force India) + 21.477s
6. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 23.103s
7. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) + 26.734s
8. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) + 27.223s

9. Paul di Resta (Force India) + 27.608s
10. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) + 36.582s
11. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) + 42.572s
12. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) + 42.691s
13. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) + 43.212s
14. Max Chilton (Marussia) + 49.885s
15. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) + 62.590s

Sergio Perez (McLaren) RET  
Romain Grosjean (Lotus) RET  
Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) RET  
Jules Bianchi (Marussia) RET  
Pastor Maldonado (Williams) RET  
Felipe Massa (Ferrari) RET  
Charles Pic (Caterham) RET

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## F1 Monaco Blog - Saturday press conference

After a close-fought qualifying session in changeable weather conditions, Nico Rosberg claimed his third consecutive pole of the season. Joining him on the front row was teammate Lewis Hamilton.

Present were Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), and Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull).

Q: Nico, I guess in some ways the result that many people had expected – but it was not straightforward in the way it was achieved today, given the conditions.

Nico ROSBERG: Oh, definitely, yeah! It could have been a lot easier out there today. The conditions were all over the place and as soon as it started drizzling again the lap times became a lot slower, even on the Inters. So it was really difficult and changing so much, y'know? So you really have to be out there at the right time with the right tyres, especially in Q2, changing over to slicks – but I'm really happy. Everything went to plan and the last lap was OK. It's great to be on pole again, especially in Monaco. If at any track then it's this track where it makes a difference.

Q: Lewis, you held provisional pole position for a matter of a few seconds...

Lewis HAMILTON: Thanks!

Q: ...before Nico came through. Did you think you'd done enough on that lap? Did you think that today was the day?

LH: I didn't, definitely not. I've been struggling all weekend as you can see, my pace was sucking all weekend and just struggling with the car if I'm honest. It's the first time I've ever had that experience here in Monaco, since 2005, every year, I was on it and didn't have any problems with confidence or anything like that – but this weekend has been difficult. So I'm really happy to be here, be able to lock-out, obviously, the front row for the team and just massive improvement for me, considering all the sessions in qualifying – so I'm still chuffed.

Q: Sebastian, you were fastest in Q2 but when push came to shove at the very end, were you just missing that final little bit, do you think?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, I think it was very close. Mercedes was very quick all weekend, we know they are very quick on one lap. But I don't want that to sound like an excuse. I think it was a bit more than a tenth missing and I think I had that today but it didn't come together on the last lap. Really, if anyone's to blame... I think the car was very, very good and if anyone's to blame then it's me. So, not entirely happy .with the last lap but quite happy that there isn't a Ferrari or a Lotus ahead. Tomorrow I think these guys will have to stop at least as much as us – yeah therefore I think sitting in third is still a good result and should be a good opportunity tomorrow to win the race.

Q: Back to you Nico, it's 30 years since your father Keke won this grand prix, 30 years to the year You're bidding to become the first son of a former winner to win the Monaco Grand Prix. Your thoughts on tomorrow's grand prix.

NR: Well, it's always nice to hear these statistics but... yeah, it's nice but it doesn't really change much for tomorrow. Just very happy starting first. And you know, in Barcelona we were still struggling a lot in the race. I was 70 seconds behind at the end of the race from the race winner. We're improving, it's difficult to understand the tyres and get the most out of it. We're improving step by step – but there's still a lot of question marks remaining. And so here, yeah, I'm sure we've made a step forward but it's still going to be difficult for us tomorrow, definitely. It's still our weakness but we'll make the best of it and, who knows? You can always have a few surprises.

Q: Obviously Nico it's an all-German final this evening in the Champions' League, you've stuck the car on pole position so a fair bit to shout about there – but there was one moment in Q1 at Mirabeau where you appeared to be about to go straight on – so quite a close moment. Did you have your heart in your mouth at that moment?

NR: Two moments actually! I did exactly the same thing twice. I was just surprised by the lack of grip going into there and then I didn't really want to accept the next time around that I had to take so much speed out, and so I went straight again. But anyway, it was the beginning of the session, it was drying out so I knew that there was plenty of time to set a time later on. But of course those moments are not great. Prefer staying on track.

Q: Lewis, I guess it's moments like that where you guys really show what you can do, finding grip levels. At no point in the weekend have we had any wet-running and you had to go out there and find the limit almost immediately. Can you just put into words how you do that and what it feels like, what you're getting back through the car?

LH: That's not an easy question to answer. It's just down to feel and we all have... that's the skill that we have, to feel the grip when it's unknown and that's really one of the most exciting things about this session: you never knew where the grip was. You'd arrive in a corner: sometimes you've overdone it: sometimes you've undershot. And like Nico said, it's surprising how little grip there was in some places. And that's what makes the session so exciting. And like I said, I'm just happy. Congratulations to Nico, he did a great job today – but I'm really happy I could be up here with him.

Q: Sebastian, your thoughts on that – and also on what we saw on Thursday from Red Bull in terms of long-run performance. Obviously we know what's happened the last few races with Mercedes after strong qualifying but this is a very different kind of race track in terms of tyre wear, isn't it?

SV: Yeah, I think we will have to wait until tomorrow really to be precise – but I think we had an idea on Thursday. Our performance on Thursday – my performance on Thursday was not great. I wasn't feeling the car and therefore today I was much, much happier. We improved the car a lot so having that extra day yesterday I think helped us. Right from the start this morning the car was much more to my liking. I felt much more confident, got into the rhythm nicer which is the most important around here. If you don't feel comfortable then you just don't dare to go faster. So I was very happy with the car and I'm, I think, very confident for tomorrow. Long run pace looked already good on Thursday so I expect it to be again a bit again a stronger on Friday [Sunday]. I think we're pretty much average in terms of tyre wear, so yeah, the last couple of races Mercedes was worst in that regard but Monaco is a different track. A little bit different what we can expect tomorrow, so I think we still have a great chance from P3, hoping for a good start and then getting into the race nicely, doing the right calls at the right time and hopefully come out ahead. That's the plan. But surely those guys have something against that. But yeah, our target tomorrow is to win.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Seb, you were the only one in the last outing who did only one flying lap instead of two. First of all, why did you do it? And second, was it a mistake? Because everybody seems to be faster on the second lap.

SV: Yeah, would, could, should! I think if I could decide again then I'd probably go for two and two. Two laps every time. I was confident that when the track picks up I'm able to nail the first lap. My first sector wasn't bad but the first two corners, which is turn one and then the Casino, the fronts weren't ready and then you play catching up. You feel that you've lost something. Overall I was happy with the lap but I think there was a tenth, a tenth-and-a-half for sure somewhere. So therefore initially a little disappointed. But as I said, overall happy because on Thursday it didn't look as if we were anywhere close to the first two rows, so I'm happy with the result and confident for tomorrow.

Q: (David Tremayne – The Independent) Two questions to Lewis. Can you expand a little bit more on what you said about this struggle. Is it a matter of just the setup of the car?

LH: No, the setup of the car is good. It's been good all weekend but that's probably... that last lap is probably the first time I've switched my tyres on all weekend. And when you don't generate the heat in your tyres you don't have the confidence to hit the brakes hard and brake late. Even on that lap, my tyres weren't ready by turn one, similar to what Seb was experiencing. That means you just have a bit of understeer and you're playing catch-up for the rest of the lap. But generally the rest of the lap was great. That's why my middle and my last sector were competitive. It was a big improvement for me because in P1, P2 and P3 it was a disaster. I think it's just that it's a new car still. For whatever reason I'm still coming to terms with it.

Q: (David Tremayne – The Independent) Lewis you've been criticised again lately – it's the lifestyle thing again and that's why you're struggling and everything else. What's your reaction to that?

LH: Well, I'm not really aware of it. Someone mentioned something about my dog. How the hell can a dog be distracting? I don't really know how I could live my life any different. I'm enjoying my life, so if people have a got a problem with that then that's there problem.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – l'Equipe) A question to Sebastian. Apart from the start, where do you think you can overtake the Mercedes tomorrow?

SV: I don't know. There's a lot of laps here, 78, so... I think on track it will be difficult, we all know that. I think obviously I was fourth last year at the end of the race for quite... many laps. I had the feeling I could go faster, I think Nico was in second, he had the feeling he could go faster but it's difficult to overtake. In 2009 I didn't mind that it was difficult because I was in the lead, it always depends where you are. On track it will be difficult but, yeah, if all goes well hopefully the Mercedes will struggle and we'll sail past in the pit stop. I think we can't rely on that. As I said tyre wear for will for sure play a role tomorrow but I think we need to look after ourselves first and then we'll see what happens and hopefully we make the right calls at the right time. I think that will definitely be the chance we have.

Q: (Vincent Marre – Sport Zeitung) My question is to all three of you. Two weeks ago Fernando Alonso was mentioning the GP2 race, he was mentioning the fact that it helped him because he realised that he could overtake at a specific curve and in some words he was... Tom Dillmann was helping him to overtake at this curve. So my question to all three of you, I would is when you are watching the GP2 races, does it help you. How do you watch it, what do you feel, do you prepare for the race with that?

NR: I always watch it, and especially I learn from the start. See how it goes, grip left and right, how it goes into the first corner. That's probably the only thing I personally pick up from them.

LH: The same really. I have a question, though. What corner was it?

Q: It was in Barcelona. It was the third corner.

LH: Round the outside.

Q: Yes, Tom Dillmann did it. He [Alonso] was saying that he was not thinking he was able to overtake there.

LH: Yeah, it can definitely help sometimes.

Q: (Leonid Novozhilov - Fl Life) My question is to Sebastian Vettel. Do you have maybe special training exercises for Monaco race? Or maybe for you it's same race as other races?

SV: Interesting question. I think it would be ideal to get some extra laps compared to everyone else, but that's not possible – they would need to block the whole city and you're not allowed to do that so it's a bit difficult. Surely around here it's a very different track, it's very bumpy, you need to be very sharp. Timing matters. You need to dare to go close to the rails. It's difficult to practice. Obviously we have a simulator and you get an idea, but it's different in reality, especially when you brush the wall. You feel it a little bit more than in the simulator. But it's good fun. We enjoy coming here.

There has been some talk about the track not being safe. There will always be some risk but I think we have for example the best marshals here for the whole year, so it does make you feel safe when you know that if something goes wrong these people know how to take care of you. So compliments for that and generally I quite like street circuits.

Q: What about you Nico, because you have a whole warm-up routine involving footballs and various things with your trainer. Is it different in any way here in Monaco?

NR: No same thing. I just like to play some soccer before getting in the car – just to move about it.

Q: (Malcolm Folley – Mail on Sunday) Nico and Lewis, you'll talk through tonight how you'll approach the start tomorrow. Can you just confirm to us that you'll be expected to race against one another but clearly the instruction will be to make sure that you don't take each other off early in the race?

NR: Can you assure us that you're going to behave from now on? Then we'll answer the question. Of course, well we respect each other and the start is going to be important for sure and we'll see who gets to the first corner first. I have the advantage that I'm ahead and on the clean side of the grid so that will definitely be good and then from there we have to see how it goes – who's quicker in the race and strategy and things like that.

Q: Your thoughts, Lewis?

LH: Yeah, I think tonight we'll speak about it. It's obviously important that we position ourselves in a smart way that we can keep Sebastian behind and then focus on trying to grab that one-two.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Nico congratulations for the pole. How much easier would it have been in dry conditions?

NR: It's never easy, but for sure the conditions out there were more difficult out there than if it had been completely dry. I don't know it was probably similar because it's the same for everybody, so yeah similar.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) To both drivers of Mercedes. Your car has some news here on this track. From the information you got in free practice do you believe you can have a race different from the last ones where you also started from the front and lost a lot of performance?

NR: It's only two weeks since then, yeah. We were 70 seconds away then so for sure we still have large problems in the race and it's definitely still going to be a difficulty yeah. The track is an advantage for us because you can't overtake so easily. It also eats the tyres less this track, so for sure there are some advantages. We made a few changes to improve things so we are progressing and hopefully looking better than Barcelona but it's still our weakness you know, so we have to wait. But it can also be a bit better than expected tomorrow. We just have to wait and see.

Q: Your thoughts on that Lewis and when there is a fix coming for this problem in the race?

LH: There isn't a fix. Obviously we've been working very hard to understand them, so there will be a slight adjustment. Hoping that they will be a little bit better for us. As Nico said it's difficult to overtake here but it has only been two weeks so we haven't made a huge step forward but hopefully with less high-speed corners here we might stand a better chance.

Q: (Walter Kosta – Saarbrücker Zeitung) Question to Sebastian. Did you expect that the team Lotus, in this qualifying, would be the third power, with your friend, I mean Kimi, before Ferrari, with Alonso?

SV: I think it was difficult to foresee what is going to happen in qualifying. In practice it looked as if the Lotus is very quick, at least Romain was very, very quick through all the sessions – sometimes a little bit too quick, especially in the first corner, he was struggling a little bit there. I spoke to Kimi on Thursday and he said that he didn't feel so well yet but I think they managed to improve the car. But as I said before, when you feel confident around here, when you like your car, you can gain quite a lot of time, much more than on a normal track. So it's very important to feel comfortable. So in that regard it is a surprise that Lotus beat Ferrari because Ferrari looked very competitive already on Thursday.

Q: (Barna Zsoldos – Nemzeti Sport) Lewis, it's already three-in-a-row for Nico. How do you cope psychologically that your teammate is constantly faster than you in the qualifying, because it's a completely new situation for you?

LH: It is a new situation for me, one that I seem to be dealing with pretty well. As I said, I've had pretty good seasons here in the past in terms of being on the pace. This has definitely been one of the worst so far. So to be second is a bit of a blessing for me considering how slow I was earlier on in practice. Of course I need to correct this. As soon as I'm able to extract the maximum from the car hopefully in the next couple of races, hopefully we'll see the true pace.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Nico, this is the third pole in a row for you. I would like to know how is the situation. You made pole position on the last two races and don't make any mistake and you are the real Monegasque guy because you grew up here. I want to know how is the feeling to make this achievement, the pole position, in your really home grand prix.

NR: Very special for sure. I've grown up here. Lived here all my life. Gone to school here. The way through the tunnel is my way to school and now I'm driving through there with a silver arrow. To be on pole today is a great feeling and yeah fantastic, look forward to tomorrow and make the best of it and try to get a good result.

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## F1 Monaco blog – Saturday report

The final practice session of the Monaco Grand Prix weekend was a chaotic hour that saw numerous shunts, one of which was severe enough to have a knock-on effect on the afternoon's qualifying.

Felipe Massa appeared to lose steering as he locked up his brakes and crashed into the barriers at St Devote, smashing every corner of his car in the process and bringing out the red flags. The shunt left the Ferrari mechanics with a significant rebuild in the two-hour break between practice and qualifying. Next to crash was Romain Grosjean, who also damaged his car on the St Devote barriers and leading to a rebuild, while Adrian Sutil had a less spectacular collision with the barriers at Massenet.

And the drama didn't end there. With a wet lunch break between the sessions, qualifying started on a damp track, and in less than two minutes Q1 had claimed its first casualty: the Marussia of Jules Bianchi, which drew to a halt having belched out plumes of smoke.

The changeable weather conditions meant that the opening stages of Q1 were far busier than normal, with the drivers doing their best to set a banker on inters in case conditions worsened. Only Grosjean and Massa didn't join in, their teams still working hard to fix their cars and get their drivers out on track. But it was almost all for naught – Grosjean made it out with three minutes remaining, but Massa was unable to take part and will start Sunday's race from the back of the grid.

As the track began to dry, lap times fell, with seemingly every driver taking the top slot on the timesheets as he crossed the line. With less than ten minutes remaining, conditions had changed enough that the braver teams began to consider a move to slicks, but before any stops were made the

timesheets began to change even more rapidly, with provisional P1 man Lewis Hamilton knocked down to P17 in the space of three minutes.

In the closing minutes of Q1 Grosjean made it out of the garage and went fastest on his first timed lap, taking advantage of the drying track conditions that saw much of the grid briefly sitting at the top of the timesheets. Pastor Maldonado ended the session fastest, while the dropout zone was – for the first time this season – not comprised of the usual suspects.

In addition to Massa and Bianchi, who were essentially unable to take part in Q1, the dropout zone was made up of Charles Pic, Max Chilton, Esteban Gutierrez, and – unexpectedly – Paul di Resta. Giedo van der Garde made it through to Q2 for Caterham, the first time the Dutch racer has done so.

The second session began as rapidly as the first, with grey clouds continuing to roll across Monaco from the sea, bringing with them the threat of rain and consequential elimination from qualifying for any driver without a solid banker lap in place. Inters remained the tyres of choice, with countless drivers coming off at Sainte Devote before returning to the track.

As was the case in Q1, times changed so rapidly it was hard to keep up – van der Garde briefly found himself sitting in P6 on the timesheets, but within the space of a minute he had been knocked down to P11. Timing was paramount, with drivers setting a banker and then keeping a watchful eye on the skies while sitting in the pits and contemplating a move to slicks. Sebastian Vettel was one of the first to make the move, beginning a run on supersofts with three minutes remaining that saw the rest of the pack follow suit.

Van der Garde spent a brief moment in P3 after improving on supersofts, although the Caterham driver dropped three places in as many seconds as faster rivals crossed the line. At the end of the session the Dutchman was in P15, knocked out with Maldonado, Valtteri Bottas, Grosjean, Daniel Ricciardo, and Nico Hulkenberg.

By the time the final top ten shoot-out began, there was no doubt that the supersoft was the tyre compound of choice. All ten men were out of the pits as soon as the track opened, with grid position key to Monaco success. Hamilton was the first man to set a truly representative time with a 1m15.790s, before Mark Webber took the top spot with a 1m15.134s.

Subsequent laps saw improvements on a still-drying track, with pole position being a matter of perfect timing as well as perfect pace. Red Bull looked to have found the pace that was missing for much of the weekend, with Sebastian Vettel claiming provisional pole with a 1m14.333s, four-tenths faster than his teammate in provisional P2.

It was a busy session, with drivers taking two laps to get their tyres up to temperature for a good run. As a result, the streets of Monaco were filled with traffic for the duration of Q3. Webber took provisional pole from his teammate, before being scooped by first Hamilton and then Rosberg. Mercedes claimed another front row lock-out, with local boy Rosberg claiming top honours.

#### Provisional grid

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m13.876s
2. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m13.967s
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m13.980s
4. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m14.181s
5. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m14.822s
6. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m14.824s
7. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m15.138s
8. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m15.383s
9. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m15.647s
10. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m15.703s

11. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m18.331s
12. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m18.344s
13. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m18.603s
14. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m19.077s
15. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m19.408s
16. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m21.88s

17. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m26.322s
18. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m26.633s
19. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m26.917s
20. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m27.303s
21. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) NO TIME SET
22. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) NO TIME SET\*

\* Felipe Massa was issued with a five-place grid penalty for an unscheduled gearbox change, and will start from P22. The Brazilian was unable to take part in qualifying following a significant shunt in FP3.

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## F1 Monaco Blog – Thursday press conference

An afternoon spent talking tyres kicked off at the senior team personnel press conference on Thursday afternoon in Monaco, with little else on the agenda.

Present were Robert Fernley (Force India), Paul Hembery (Pirelli), Christian Horner (Red Bull), Gerard Lopez (Lotus), Alain Prost (RenaultSportF1), and

Franz Tost (Toro Rosso).

Q: Alain, it's been a while since we last saw you in an FIA press conference, welcome. Explain a little bit about your role with Renault Sport?

Alain PROST: Well, my role is mainly is an ambassador for Renault, the brand Renault, since last year. Even if I have done many things with Renault in the last few years, for different things. Also this year I'm advisor for the strategy, being part of the executive committee.

Q: In terms of 2014, how far advanced is Renault's programme?

AP: Everything goes well. The engine should run in June on the dyno, the final version. But everything is belonging to the programme.

Q: And when do you think that Renault Sport will be finalising its teams for 2014?

AP: I'm not myself negotiating with the teams but we all know that it's going to be accelerating during this weekend. I don't know. I cannot say all the dates for all the teams but I hope very quickly.

Q: Paul, if I could turn to you next. An awful lot of debate and opinion in Formula One at the moment regarding the Pirelli tyres this year, some pro, some anti. What is your opinion on the way that the Pirelli tyres are influencing the racing, and also what changes will we see to the tyres from Canada onwards?

Paul HEMBERY: Well, obviously there's a lot of different opinion, quite divided, among fans, commentators, teams and you're never going to please everyone. That's one of the challenges you have but from our point of view it's the same for everybody, they have exactly the same tyres to work with and somebody's going to end up winning on a Sunday. From Canada? Well, we're still finalising the ultimate details for Canada. We're trying to minimise the changes, for sporting equity reasons of course. We want to resolve the delaminations that we've seen, that have occurred when we've picked up debris. That, from a tyre maker of course is something that we've wanted to solve. It doesn't look good. The tyres have stayed inflated but it still doesn't look good from an image point of view. So that's where we're at. We're trying to finalise that, working with the teams. We've had good collaboration. Of course, some people might want something different and again you're not going to please everybody but we have to do what's correct for the sport and what's correct for Pirelli.

Q: While we're talking tyres I think it would be nice to get the reaction of the team principals and chairmen here on the panel. Christian, can I start with you. What's your opinion on the Pirelli tyres and the racing this year?

Christian HORNER: I think we've been pretty consistent throughout the year really. The tyres, on occasion, have been a bit too marginal. That includes races we've won at in Malaysia and Bahrain. I think it's good that Pirelli are looking at it. I think the most important and most fundamental thing is from a safety perspective, if you do have a delamination, if you have a big chunk of rubber, you don't want that to hit a car component or worst case a driver. So, there are safety issues that I know some of the drivers are concerned about. Hopefully, Pirelli are a very capable company. I think they know what they need to do and hopefully that can be resolved very quickly.

Q: Gerard, is that an opinion your share - that the tyres have been too marginal this year?

Gerard LOPEZ: Yeah, we've echoed the safety issues and said that whatever needs to be done on safety grounds is obviously fine with us, we're not going to go against that. As far as the tyres being marginal goes, we've found them to be quite consistent. But then again - different cars, different drivers, different styles... they work for us. So we're actually quite happy with the way they are.

Q: Franz, what about you and Toro Rosso?

Franz TOST: I think the problems started in testing, because in February it was very cold when we were out the first time this year and if I remember only Jerez was an acceptable test but otherwise in Barcelona it was quite cold. There we couldn't do a proper test for the tyres. I think if we had tested in a warmer country some of the problems we observe now could have been sorted out. Therefore, I hope that in future we will do these tests under other conditions, under conditions under which we are racing and then I think Pirelli immediately will react and will come up with a proper solution. So far we at Toro Rosso haven't faced bigger problems.

Q: Finally to you Bob. From a deputy team principal's perspective: safety, racing, what's your opinion:

Bob FERNLEY: I think Pirelli have done a good job. Fundamentally we're looking to try to average out at two to three stops per race and I think if you take the extremes in any 20-race series you're going to have some that might do four and some that might do one. But overall were going to achieve the objective. I agree with Paul, it's the same for everybody. I think some of the teams will have put in resource perhaps this time year to start looking at how they're going to develop their car, what suspension programme they're going to put in to optimise the tyres, other teams will continued to work on aero. That's the choice of the teams at the end of the day and you've got to deliver what you think is the most competitive package. But there are four points of contact on a track, it doesn't matter how much else you do, you've got to make the tyres work.

Q: Alain, I'm sure you've been watching the racing quite intently. Has the sport got the right balance at the moment between exciting racing or tyres dominating too much?

AP: I think in the past and very recently it's been very [much] criticised for not having a show or indecision. We should [feel] very lucky that we have these kind of races. In the last few years, we have the decision only in the last grand prix. Obviously, also think about next year when we have the new engine coming we will talk maybe a little bit more about the engine, the technology, about being much closer to the product of the automotive industry. But we still need to keep the show also. We need to keep the indecision so it's going to be even better balanced but at the moment I wouldn't criticize what we have today.

Q: If I could move on and turn to you, Franz. Both of your drivers in their second year with Toro Rosso this season. What improvements are you seeing from Jean-Eric Vergne and Daniel Ricciardo and as drivers who have been part of the Red Bull driver programme, do you see something in either of them that suggests that they could move up to the senior team?

FT: Yeah I must say that both of the drivers have increased their performance and their understanding of the car of the technik, of everything, much during the last two years and they are still learning a lot. But I must say that so far they have done a reasonably good job and if we provide them with a good car, a good package, they are always able to score points. Of course, Daniel Ricciardo has a little bit more experience as he did already 11 races with HRT and you can see this. Jean-Eric Vergne is coming up with good technical feedback. He is learning also a lot. I expect from both of the drivers a very competitive second half of the season, once more if we provide them with a good car and then we will see how the future will be.

Q: Christian, I'm sure as Red Bull team principal you keep an eye on all the young drivers in the young development programme?



CH: Yeah, absolutely. Both youngsters have been members of the Red Bull Junior team for quite a few years now and of course we watch their progress with great interest. They're both young, talented drivers, both developing very well. It's good to see. They're both racing here on merit. For sure they're two guys we have a watchful eye over.

Q: We're getting to that stage of the season where traditionally you sit down, Red Bull, with Mark Webber and negotiate a new contract for next year, it's normally towards the early part of the summer. Has anything been the case or has happened this season that might influence those negotiations? Will you be sitting down with Mark soon? What's your thinking for the future?

CH: Well, we're sitting here at race six, so y'know there's still quite a few to go. But at the relevant time we'll sit down with Mark and see what he wants to do, what his plans are for the future. Our interest is quite simple: we want the best two drivers in our cars going forward. Mark and Sebastian has been a tremendously successful partnership. It's won three consecutive Constructors' World Championships for us and obviously Mark's made a significant contribution to that. At the relevant time – which isn't now – we will sit down and talk about the future.

Q: Gerard, can we talk drivers with yourself too? Kimi Räikkönen has hinted recently that there are maybe a couple of options open to him for next season. He's certainly being asked an awful lot about his future. I assume Lotus would like to keep him but realistically how likely is that?

GL: Well I think Kimi's quite happy where he is right now. Knowing Kimi well, outside of the track too, he could just as well announce that he's stopping altogether. So, I wouldn't take any bets whatsoever. I think we're looking pretty good in terms of keeping him, as long as he gets what he wants, including a performing car, which is what he really wants. For the rest, we'll see. He for sure will tell you there's no such thing as a pre-contract, only real contract, and we'll sit down at some point in time and discuss the future with him. But everything is wide open on the one hand but on the other hand everything is looking pretty good for us to stay with us. So we'll see.

Q: Do you feel external and internal pressure then? A) to develop a car that Kimi – and Romain – can perform in and b) is there external pressure from other teams who would be interested?

GL: I don't think we need to put on any additional pressure, I think I put enough pressure on them to perform – but I think it's good if you have a driver that really wants to have the best possible package and actually can make use of it – and Kimi certainly can. The other thing with Kimi is that he needs an environment in which he can function, and he certainly has that with us.

Q: Bob, turning to you, it's been a very positive start for Force India this season. I wonder if the start changes the target and your goals for this year? Is fifth place in the Constructors' Championship a realistic target given what's happened so far?

BF: I think it's one that we certainly should aspire to. It would be very, very hard to continuously compete with McLaren through the year but they're also going to have some issues in terms of when they switch over to the 2014 car and, like all of us, when do we move those resources? I think a lot will depend on how far they've got with this car when they actually do that. But for sure, we've already amended our programs and our team principal is very keen for us to ensure we stay fifth.

Q: Finally on the subject of drivers, Alain, for French drivers in Formula One this season, we're here in the South of France for the Monaco Grand Prix, do you see anything in those drivers that might indicate to you that one day they could be the next French World Champion?

AP: Difficult question! Because the last 20 years there have been announced many, many times a new French champion. Just let them work, y'know? There are four, we are very lucky to have four, different competitiveness in teams. Romain for sure is in the best position to win at least maybe the first race very soon. And just wait and see. Don't put them under too much pressure, they have enough.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Question for everyone except Monsieur Prost. Going on the subject of the tyres, one of the things, one of the theories that we've had in the press room is that the part of the difficulty has been the lack of a more modern test car. You know we haven't got the DRS, the KERS, the... everything's a bit different. Have the teams considered investing in a Dallara machine – or similar – that Pirelli might be able to use that you can all agree on? Then that way no one team would have an advantage. Christian?

CH: I guess the fundamental thing is we can never agree. Everybody agreed for Lotus to do the testing when they weren't so competitive. Now they're competitive and probably there's a few teams that aren't so happy that they're not doing the testing. So, it's a difficult one. It's a difficult one for Pirelli, it's a difficult one for the teams but at the end of the day we don't need to make it too complicated. I think the way things are at the moment is too complicated for the fans. It's too difficult to follow races where you've got four stops, going on. It's hard enough when you're in the race. I think we need to just wind that back a little bit and more than anything make sure we eliminate any safety issues.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) That isn't really what I asked. I was wondering what sort of things you guys as a group could do going forward to try and make sure the focus of the... wasn't necessarily criticisms of the tyres but how you could actually improve them as a group so that everybody was happy with what they were running on?

CH: Well, I don't think you're ever going to get everybody happy. Y'know, that's the fundamental issue and unless you open testing up again, where everybody tests, it's probably very difficult because people's cars behave in different ways. So I can't see a situation where the teams will say 'yes, we'll jointly fund and run a car for a tyre supplier.' I'd be surprised.

Q: Franz?

FT: No, we should use Friday morning, the first session or the first half-hour for testing new tyres – not sitting around like today, doing nothing. People in the grandstands, no cars out there. We just could use this – it was half an hour or 35 minutes as usually – to test new tyres. This is what I suggest since two years.

Q: Gerard, your thoughts?

GL: My thoughts are... I would agree with Christian on the fact that it's really difficult to get everybody to agree on anything in Formula One – be it tyres or be it anything else. And I think it's going to stay that way just because it's competitive both on and off the track and so on. I remember when, indeed, when we were asked to propose a car – and by the way, that car has nothing in common with what we're running now – everybody agreed and now suddenly everybody thinks that's the mystery to knowing how to use those tyres. And as I said, both cars are completely unrelated. So it's very difficult to get anything done that everybody accepts. Maybe a solution like running Friday tests, I don't know – but even that requires everybody to agree and some will and some won't. And so I think that's always going to be part of Formula One: The fact that this is agreement and disagreement and that's the way forward I guess.

Q: Bob?

BF: I think Franz's idea's got a certain amount of merit. I'd love to endorse that with the element of having young drivers in there as well, just so that it ticks two boxes. But I think that Pirelli have a great deal of resource, as we all do outside of actually track testing. And for instance, even with the incidents that we've had with the delamination, a lot of it can be done on rigs and everything else – and I think that's where most of it will be done in the long term.

Q: So Paul, how difficult is the job that Pirelli have without the facilities to test in the way that was traditional in Formula One?

PH: Well, it's one of those cases where you're damned if you do, damned if you don't. You're clearly not going to get everyone to agree, and with a tyre, certainly if you design it around a certain application you can make a certain vehicle go quicker – and that's clearly why we're wanting to make changes now. Some people want more changes, some people don't want any changes for example. The Friday is useful where you're coming to a point of wanting to actually introduce a change – but you can't go testing with 11 teams on a Friday with various specifications because it simply doesn't work that way. I think a good step forward would be winter testing actually in hot conditions. Y'know, if we were able to get to Abu Dhabi or Bahrain before we get to Australia, at least you'd have an advanced indication. You've also got to remember, if we do find surprises, and I'm quite sure next season there could be – assuming we have a contract which we don't have at the moment – but assuming we're going forward, you could get to a situation with the new powertrain, which from the indications of the teams will have a lot of torque, and will increase wheelspin, tyre wear, overheating, you could end up in a situation with a surprise again. So there needs to be a balance. Teams have clearly got restrictions on resources. The test teams were got rid of for good reasons from their point of view – but some sort of mid-range solution would be useful to us, even if it means staying on after a few events during the season, then that would be extremely valuable from our point of view.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – The Citizen) Alain, as Renault Sport brand ambassador, how do you feel about the fact that the public perception is that in fact Infiniti won the championship last year as the engine supplier because if one looks at the team principal's shirt, there are five Infiniti badges and two Renault badges, yet Renault seems to be paying it all. How do you feel about that?

AP: I know it's very difficult... it's always difficult to answer this kind of question for me. The perception you can have here is obviously the right one, could be the right one. The involvement of Renault in Formula One, is very clear over the last few years. As you can see, the market in Europe is not very good and they're already aiming for having a new image, new visibility in new markets: Russia, Brazil, India and a little bit less in China, those are the big markets for Renault. Obviously everybody would like to maybe have a different situation for Renault inside Formula One, for example, again, a new team, a Renault team, but the strategy of the president and of Renault is very clear. They want to stay the way they are at the moment and I must say that in this country they were talking about how it's working very well and they're increasing the image of the brand and they're selling more and more cars and they want to continue like this. As I said, the perception you can have here maybe is a bit different to what they achieve instead of having a proper team, more aggravation. Again, talking about strategy, if you see what Renault has done in the last 37 years, they went from the French national team to being a partner with Williams and Benetton and then another team and then now they are supporting a team with whom we have won the World Champion for the last three years. So they could change, they could maybe change in the future, but at the moment we need to keep to this strategy decided by the president.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action/National Speedsport News) A question for Alain: there's a lot of talk these days that the drivers cannot drive 100 percent flat out for the whole race. Let's take a year when you had a good car, say 1985. How much of the race could you drive 100 percent flat out? When you weren't driving one hundred percent, what percent were you at and what parts of the car did you have to conserve, to make sure they lasted the race?

AP: I think it's difficult to compare, obviously, because today the cars are so advanced: normally the driver can push 100 percent in normal conditions. The tyres this year are very soft which makes it a little bit different. In our time, if you want to compare, we had to take care of the brakes and gearbox and fuel consumption and obviously also tyres because sometimes we had to be careful of the tyres, but the regulations were also very different and at one stage we had three types of rubber and we could make changes and I very often ran hard tyres on the left and soft tyres on the front. I even raced in Las Vegas in '81 with qualifying tyres on the front, but that means we cannot compare, but that also proves that you need to adapt yourself, as a driver, as an engineer, to the regulations and obviously we're experiencing complaints this year... in fact it's not that different compared to last year, except that you maybe don't want to see some rubber on the track and having accidents. But apart from that, you just have to adapt to the situation, drivers or engineers. It's typically Formula One.

Q: (Alan Baldwin – Reuters) Christian, I may have misconstrued your comment earlier but do you seriously believe that Lotus have somehow benefitted from the fact that Pirelli are using a 2010 Renault for testing, and maybe Paul could answer whether privileged information has somehow been given to one team?

CH: No, I don't think privileged information or anything in any way has been done underhand. At the end of the day, Pirelli needed a car to test, they originally came to Red Bull. At that time, it was almost unanimously agreed that Red Bull shouldn't provide a car and then it was a matter of finding who could provide a car. Lotus was an obvious choice. Running had to be done by Pirelli with drivers that weren't current race drivers. You can understand that that work has had to be done. I wasn't trying to point out that there was any specific advantage from that, I was trying to point out that you're always going to struggle to achieve compromise and agreement.

Q: Given the changes between 2010 and now, Paul, how different is your test car to what we would see on the track?

PH: They're probably, in terms of performance, closer to the 2011 cars with the blown diffusers. They're going, certainly, a little bit harder than we anticipated this season. We're probably lapping our 2010 car three to four seconds slower, for example. That gives you an indication that we're not stressing the tyres during our testing as much as the cars are today. But there's not a perfect solution to that. We're not going to get unanimous agreement from everybody. Next year, the cars are so different that there's really nothing available today, even including today's cars, that would allow us to simulate the effect of the new powertrain. I think if we just take a sensible approach, in terms as I've already mentioned, of the winter testing and the potential to make adjustments during the season, but bear in mind you need agreement, you need eleven teams to agree to adjustments so if we've something that's affecting eleven teams, then that's really often easy to do. If you're making something that might affect some teams and not all teams or perceived benefit to others then you can imagine that's difficult. So that's a very strange balancing act that we're trying to do. We agree, we set out this year for two to three pit stops over the season, we probably will average that still, we will get some races like Barcelona which was won this time with four stops. It was won two years ago by Red Bull with four stops so it's not exceptional but I guess as commentators it's harder to follow, it keeps you awake, you don't have your afternoon snooze any more, and that's one of the difficulties. It will be easier here for you.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – Associated Press) Alain Prost, it's not been since Olivier Panis in 1996 for a French driver. What advice

would you give Romain Grosjean, for example or the other French drivers... the frustration about that long spell, what advice would you give to them?

AP: I don't think you can give advice to the drivers to be honest. They know what they do, I'm out of Formula One as a driver for the last 20 years exactly and why should I give advice to... we all see what is happening, we see that Romain, for example, has a very good car, he should be able to win a race very soon as I said. But no advice from myself. If they want to have advice they can ask a question and I'm happy to answer but not giving advice like this, no. Mental is a very strong thing for sure, but also we give them a lot of pressure very often, but this is a cycle. As soon as one is going to be winning, it could snowball and I hope it works like this.

Q: (Bob McKenzie – Daily Express) Alain, every year someone says that Monaco is too dangerous. This week's hero was Ralf Schumacher. I wonder, it hasn't really changed much since your day. Do you think it is too dangerous? Do you think it's still a relevant place for a Formula One to be held?

AP: I wouldn't say that. It's as dangerous as another race track can be dangerous. It's different, for sure. You have to be a little bit careful, especially in the traffic with all the cars. Being alone is not being more dangerous than with another car. I must also say that the passive safety, what they do with the marshals and all the work they have done in the last thirty/forty years, is exceptional and yeah, there are some conditions... when it's wet in some places where it could be a bit tough but it's such a fantastic race for everybody, especially for the drivers obviously. That is part of the tradition and you should accept it, even if it was a little bit dangerous, obviously. You should accept that.

Q: On the pit wall, is that a bit of a worry when you send the cars out?

BF: I think that Monaco represents the ultimate of the man and machine around a very difficult circuit and if I was a driver, I would relish the thought of it and I'm sure most drivers do. From a team point of view, it's wonderful to see the cars on the limit so close to the barriers. It's what we should be doing.

GL: Yeah, Romain came close to the barriers too. On another race track we would have gotten away with it, just overbraked and instead of trying to go straight on, decided he could take the corner and just took off a little bit of the left front of the car. I think the drivers love it. It's a different track, they love it for the atmosphere, they love it for the excitement. If you talk to the drivers it's quite an amazing experience. I've driven it myself actually, it's quite an amazing experience if you get really close. I remember one of Robert's laps, he probably thought it was one of the best laps he ever did and it was here in Monaco, so I think drivers love it.

Q: (Rodrigo Franca – VIP Magazine) Speaking of 2014, what do you think about the improvement of the Formula One show and also, what is the biggest challenge for the teams and Pirelli for the new regulations of the V6?

FT: First of all, the new regulation is a big challenge from the technical side, because it's a new engine, new air system, the complete car will be new and then it's a challenge also from the financial side because everything is much more expensive. Whether the show will be improved or not I can't say yet because it depends how good the different engine manufacturers work. If there's one of them finding a special solution then we will not have such interesting races as we have now because these cars will be in front. If they are all nearly equal as is the case in the current races then I'm sure we will also have very interesting races in the future. Nevertheless, this is a new regulation and we have to get the best out of it.

Q: Challenge for Pirelli?

PH: A contract? A contract is probably the first one. If you follow the regulations, on the first of September we're meant to define the specification for next year but as yet we don't really have a full picture of what the cars are going to be like, so you can imagine there's a certain element of shooting in the dark. Having said that, it's a probably a year where we will probably step back, be cautious. There's going to be enough going on for the teams next year as you just heard from Franz, all those changes. So I think it's a year where we'll be stepping back: zero degradation, no pit stops and they can do all the talking.

CH: It's difficult to say. It's a massive change, probably the biggest change Formula One's seen for probably the last 25 years, I would have thought. It's hellishly expensive, especially with trying to develop a car this year and design and produce a car for next year with the changes that have been introduced, the timing of which probably isn't ideal for some of the teams further down the grid. It's a big regulation change. I think you'll probably see significant differences between the teams early on but that will then converge and engineers will undoubtedly be very creative with the solutions that they come up with. It's going to represent a different challenge, a different type of racing as fuel economy will suddenly become a premium point. We're yet to see what affect that will have on the racing. At the moment, we've very much got an open mind.

GL: I would agree, the timing is... I don't know if it's well chosen. It's certainly odd. We can understand the engine manufacturers who are trying to have a product that is closer to what people are buying out on the streets. At the same time, there comes a point where Formula One was doing really well in terms of excitement, in terms of cars being matched, in terms of races being open, so let's hope that it doesn't reshuffle the cards in a way that is... unexpected would be good but unexpected with huge gaps would be really bad. I don't think any of us can really say today what the effect is going to be, so that's it, a little bit of an unknown for everybody.

BF: Yeah, I think that we won't be having discussions about tyres next year, it will be a completely different programme.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Paul, you've talked about changing or tweaking the tyres from a safety perspective yet when we discussed the matter in Barcelona, you said that there had been no more failures this year than in previous seasons, so are you genuinely changing the tyres for safety aspects or are external pressures being brought to bear from other more powerful teams?

PH: No, I think the team pressure is something that is really in the media rather than a reality. I think that if you're a tyre maker and the mode of failure this year is more dramatic because the tyres aren't deflating they're actually cutting into what we have now is a high tensile steel belt, that creates an opening that overheats and then creates what you've seen with the delamination. That's something that's not very good from a tyre maker's point of view and we wish to get rid of so we need to do it for good reason. I think every team would agree with that. So you've got to try and do it though with a minimum amount of change because there's a number of teams that have taken an approach this year that's different. They decided early on what the challenges of the tyres would be this year and quite rightly they're saying OK, change but don't make it so dramatic, so that's the situation we're in and we're closer to finalising the changes for Canada and that should be the end of it.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – The Citizen) Alain, when we spoke a year ago here you said that what ultimately pushed your team, Prost Grand Prix, out of business was the engine costs. We've heard quite a few people here talk about engine costs next year. Renault, in particular has come out and said that their price will be between 20 and 25 million which is a 250 percent increase over the current price. What do you say to that? Is there a chance, do you think that teams could go out of business because of engine prices next year?

AP: It is a problem, it's first of all part of negotiation and the price you've said is much higher than it is in reality, but again, I'm not the one negotiating. Your reference with my team is obviously a good reference. I was paying \$28 million for the Ferrari engine in the first year and I was supposed to give

\$32 million the year after. I had to pay this money but I had to give a guarantee and pay almost cash before. That was in September, October or November, I don't know. Why I say that because it's always a way of trying to get the best for the general interest and we will see what is going to happen in negotiation but also you need to know that the budget of Renault Sport F1 is €150 million per year, and you can imagine... if you just make a very quick calculation about the price you can imagine divided by four teams, for example, and you will realise that Renault is paying a big contribution.

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## F1 Monaco Blog - Thursday report

Friday running in Monaco takes place on a Thursday, extending the weekend for sponsors and high-flyers and confusing the paddock regulars for whom F1 and 2 mean it's definitely Friday.

The opening practice session of the Monaco Grand Prix weekend took place under a bright blue sky, with the sun glinting off the waves in the harbour. With no tricky weather conditions for the drivers to contend with, it was a relatively peaceful session that saw low-key track exploration and very little in the way of incident.

Despite the calm, however, it was a close-fought battle on the timesheets that saw homeboy Nico Rosberg pip Fernando Alonso to the top slot by less than a tenth. Romain Grosjean ended the morning in P3 for Lotus, one-tenth behind Alonso and nanoseconds ahead of Felipe Massa in the second Ferrari.

As is now traditional in F1, once the installation laps were complete watching fans were treated to around half an hour of empty track before the session kicked off in earnest. When the running resumed, fans were treated to a brief spell of short runs for pace that resulted in relatively frantic track activity before the teams concentrated their efforts on longer runs.

The session ended with a spin for Adrian Sutil at Sainte Devote.

The afternoon session was once again topped by Rosberg, with teammate Lewis Hamilton just behind in P2. The Mercedes pairing have long been expected to fare well this weekend: the car has shown strong pace in qualifying throughout the season so far, and the characteristics of the Monaco street circuit make tyre degradation less of a concern than it has been at previous races this year.

Ferrari continued their run of strong form, with Alonso and Massa again closely matched, separated by a tenth. The Scuderia have not won in Monaco in over a decade: the last time a red race suit graced the top step of the podium here was 2001. The aim this weekend is to deliver another win on the back of Alonso's strong performance in Barcelona, and based on Thursday's results, Ferrari are in with a stronger chance this year than they have been for quite some time.

The big moment of drama in the afternoon came about courtesy of Grosjean, who overbraked going into St Devote, attempted to make the corner anyway, and clipped his car on the barriers, trashing his front wing and damaging his suspension. Shortly afterwards, the session was red flagged so that track officials could repair damaged kerbs at Piscine.

### F1 times (unofficial)

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m16.195s [30 laps]
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m16.282s [26 laps]
3. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m16.380s [20 laps]
4. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m16.394s [22 laps]
5. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m16.469s [27 laps]
6. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m16.993s [26 laps]
7. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m17.020s [26 laps]
8. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m17.129s [28 laps]
9. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m17.378s [24 laps]
10. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m17.380s [22 laps]
11. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m17.509s [25 laps]
12. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m17.548s [26 laps]
13. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m17.625s [20 laps]
14. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m18.193s [25 laps]
15. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m18.454s [24 laps]
16. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m18.754s [27 laps]
17. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m18.830s [27 laps]
18. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m19.067s [24 laps]
19. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m19.203s [20 laps]
20. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m19.438s [27 laps]
21. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m19.773s [19 laps]
22. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m20.225s [20 laps]

### FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m14.759s [45 laps]
2. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m15.077s [50 laps]
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m15.196s [37 laps]
4. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m15.278s [38 laps]
5. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m15.404s [41 laps]

6. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m15.511s [38 laps]
  7. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m15.718s [10 laps]
  8. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m15.959s [39 laps]
  9. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m16.014s [32 laps]
  10. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m16.046s [42 laps]
  11. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m16.349s [43 laps]
  12. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m16.434s [40 laps]
  13. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m16.823s [42 laps]
  14. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m16.857s [40 laps]
  15. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m16.935s [44 laps]
  16. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m17.145s [37 laps]
  17. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m17.184s [42 laps]
  18. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m17.264s [46 laps]
  19. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m17.892s [40 laps]
  20. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m18.212s [43 laps]
  21. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m18.784s [40 laps]
  22. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m19.031s [30 laps]
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## F1 Monaco Blog - Wednesday press conference

The Monaco Grand Prix is the jewel in Formula One's crown, that cliché-riddled but spectacular harbourside race that provides the sport with the bulk of its residual glamour. As is par for the course, the opening press conference of the Monaco weekend was all about just how special the principality is.

Present were Jules Bianchi (Marussia), Jenson Button (McLaren), Romain Grosjean (Lotus), Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber), and Adrian Sutil (Force India).

Q: A question to you all. Round six of a 19-race season coming up, the same points are up for grabs as any other grand prix. It's just another race... or is it? Is Monaco the greatest race of them all?

Jenson **BUTTON**: Good afternoon. Is it the greatest of them all? I don't know really. I think they're all pretty special in their own right. Some of them have more history than others and Monaco is definitely one of them. A lot of us also live here, so it's a very special race. But I think if you've had the opportunity to fight for a win and actually cross the finish line first, it's a very special race, yeah. You feel as though you celebrate that win, obviously with your team, but also with everyone watching here, because it's such a confined space. It's a very special place to win. But there are so many other races that mean a lot to us and certain races that mean more to us as individuals than Formula One as a whole.

Q: What about you Adrian - greatest race, or will it be when you finally get a good points-scoring finish?

Adrian **SUTIL**: It could be, yes, definitely. But I feel this as a normal race. Like every other race really. You try to the best possible. In a way it's a bit different because you know from the past and from experience that there are more possibilities out there. It's a very tricky circuit, unforgiving and easy to make mistakes, [see a] safety car. The risk is high here and that opens up some situations for you... it can work well for you or the other way. Having that in mind gives a nice race, a nice weekend. Starting last or starting at the front doesn't mean you will win the race. It's all up [for grabs]. You need to be on the point and just stay focused for the whole race, until the race is finished.

Q: What about you Jules? You've raced here before, not in F1 of course but it's like your home race. How up for it are you?

Jules **BIANCHI**: Yeah, of course I'm really excited to be in the car tomorrow. I think this race is special for me because I was born in Nice, which is not really far from here. It's like a home race, as you said. I can't wait to be in the car even if I know it is a tricky track. It's not easy to be quick here. But anyway I had some good records in the junior categories so let's see what we will do.

Q: Nico?

Nico **HULKENBERG**: Like Adrian said, the approach is the same to every other grand prix. It's definitely special. I've never won here. I've been on the podium in GP2 and that was certainly. Even in F1 to achieve a podium here or even a win would be special and I think it stands out a bit more than a normal grand prix let's say.

Q: Romain, another man for whom Monaco Grand is also a home race.

Romain **GROSJEAN**: Yeah sort of. Monaco is not France but basically it's not far. A special race, with a special podium as well at the finish, when you get meet the Prince, which is nice. There's 25 points, as every other grand, but I think Monaco is a special one to me.

Q: Lewis, how special is this place?

Lewis **HAMILTON**: Good afternoon everyone. Yeah, Monaco is spectacular. As Jenson said, a lot of us live here. I don't feel like it's like any other race. Winning here is unique and special, in its own way. When you do win here, when you finally get that, you have the most incredible feeling. Every time you come here that's what you're chasing for every year.

Q: Jenson, before we came to Monaco, news that Honda are returning to Formula One as engine suppliers to McLaren in 2015. What was your reaction to that news?

JBu: I thought it was good news. I think for us as a team it's good news for the future but I also think for the sport as a whole it's fantastic news. Having another engine manufacturer in the sport is good. We have three very strong... four, sorry, four very strong engine manufacturers in the sport and I think with the new regulations it's going to bring in other manufacturers and Honda being the first to announce that is great and hopefully there will be more.

Q: Was it good news for you personally? You had quite a long association with Honda before?

JBu: I've got a lot of connections to Japan and Honda is one of them. I spent a lot of time working with them in the old days... it seems like a long time ago now, but a lot of very positive moments and I look forward to that in the future. But it's a long way down the road still so we've got to focus on

what we're doing now at the moment, with Mercedes and in 2015 it will change.

Q: This season, Adrian Sutil, started really well for you in Australia. Since then things haven't gone quite your way. Do you think you're suffering a huge amount of bad luck at the moment?

AS: There's no good luck and no bad luck for me. It's just certain things happen and then you have to get behind it and see where the problem is. Many problems we had... small, but they turned out to be absolutely important for the race. A little wheel nut in Barcelona, which was a problem and it caused a pit stop which was almost a minute long and the race was over – no question. It was very impressive how quick the car was again. The race speed was very good, and the pace. So, it's good to know the car is fast: the package is fast. It's like the little piece of the puzzle we need to put together. The most important thing: the problem we had, we solved it. It was a different problem to Malaysia. It's just a question of time that I will have my results. I will not give up. I will fight hard for it and try to also be clever and make a good result soon.

Q: Jules, a lot of people are talking about you and paying you quite a few compliments given your start to Formula One. How would you assess the opening five races of your Formula One career?

JB: Well obviously it's been a really positive start for me – and for the team as well. Trying to do the best result that we can. We know it's difficult, we have to be realistic – we won't score... well, it will be difficult to score points for us. So, just trying to do our best, trying to push as hard as possible and yeah, the first five races has been really nice. Some improvement on the car, some improvement with myself, so I'm really confident for the next fourteen races.

Q: It's been a good battle between Caterham and Marussia. The last couple of races Caterham seem to have had the upper hand. Will that change this weekend?

JB: I'll try my best to do it, yeah for sure. Caterham are a bit in front but we saw in Barcelona that we were a bit quicker in the race pace – so that's positive for this race. Anyway it's a bit special so we will see tomorrow – but anyway we will have a good fight with them.

Q: Nico – if one word were to sum up your season so far 'frustrating' might be right up there. Has it been a huge frustration for you since you moved to Sauber?

NH: Well, frustrating is maybe not the right word but it hasn't been super-satisfying for sure. We're not delivering the results we want to and the results we thought we could deliver. We're just a bit too slow, it's as simple as that and we're not competitive enough. At the moment the whole team is pushing and everybody in the factory at Hinwil is trying his best to make the car quicker and solve the issues. And that's where all the focus is, to be honest now. We have to improve this car and then I'm sure we can fight for points more often.

Q: Is it fair to say you would have expected more than the five points from the first five races with the team?

NH: Yes, that's fair to say.

Q: Romain, qualifying: always important here in Monaco. This year your average grid position 8.4. If you qualify there that puts you in the thick of things again. How much of your focus and preparation this weekend is on qualifying – not just the race?

RG: I think here more than everywhere else qualifying is important. It's not a secret that overtaking in Monaco is hard – unless there is a little bit more degradation than we had last year and you can try a different strategy. But yeah, we will work on it. We started quite slowly this season and we recovered pretty well from Bahrain onwards and that's what is important to know. And yes, we can definitely improve that which is not as good as we would like.

Q: Can you be more aggressive personally, do you feel, going into the qualifying on Saturday?

RG: I don't think it's a question of 'aggressivity'. It's just the relation between the car and yourself. It's very tight this year. The tyres have changed a little bit, you need to understand them fully and from there I'll push.

Q: Lewis, talking of tyres, both you and your team-mate Nico Rosberg have suffered similar problems – but not at the same time in the last couple of races. Is it a puzzle? Whereas in Bahrain you had a better race than Nico, in Barcelona he had a better race than you. Is the problem easily solved?

LH: It's definitely not easily solved. It's something we're working on internally. Just working as hard as we can to assess and understand where we went wrong: tyre pressures, temperatures and all of those kind of things. I don't think it's going to be as bad – hopefully – moving forward. It's definitely something we're trying to improve on. So hopefully we won't have as many bad races as we did the last one.

Q: Given what's happened in the last couple of races, some people say this is your best chance of a race victory. Do you share that view?

LH: Not particularly. Not particularly. I think it's a good... we have a good opportunity this weekend but you never know what the others are capable of. Last year they were quite competitive, Mercedes was quite competitive here. Obviously our car is better this year so we should still be competitive this year. But the Ferraris and the Lotuses and the Red Bulls are massively competitive as well. So, we just have to wait and see.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Question for Lewis, obviously you had a very difficult weekend in Barcelona and we assume you will have gone back to the factory, studied all manner of data and drawn some conclusions. While you can't necessarily tell us about those conclusions are you expecting an improved performance for the weekend? Do you think you've got a good level from which to build after, you know, what was quite a challenging weekend?

LH: I definitely do. I think a huge amount of work has gone into understanding where we went wrong. As I said, the guys have really kickstarted a lot of different discussions. Obviously it's a real science trying to understand these tyres. Everyone's trying to understand them but I really feel this weekend will be a better weekend for us compared to the last. And moving on from here I think we'll just continue to learn and improve.

Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) Question to all the drivers except Lewis – because Lewis just tweeted a photo of new helmet especially for Monaco. Do you do something for this race specially? And for Lewis, another question, if you can comment about Paddy Lowe who will follow you from Woking to Brackley.

Q: Helmets first, Jenson?

JBu: No more special than normal, no.

Q: Romain?

RG: That means you don't follow me on Twitter! I tweeted it yesterday. Blue, white and red.

Q: Adrian?

AS: The only change I have on the helmet is a Uruguayan flag. Since many years I wanted to do it and now it's on – because my father is from Uruguay but I will keep it on for the whole season and from now on for the rest of my career. It's not special – not specially Monaco.

Q: Jules?

JB: Yeah, I have a special helmet for Monaco – but you will see it tomorrow.

Q: Nico?

NH: No. No special – just the basic helmet.

Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) What does Paddy Lowe bring to Mercedes?

LH: We'll see, time will tell but obviously Paddy's... I've had great experience of Paddy over the last five or six years. He's obviously a great person and massively intelligent and will be a great asset for the team, so I'm really looking forward to working with him. We look forward to it.

Q: (Livio Orriochio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Lewis, in 2002 David Coulthard started in pole position, he didn't have the fastest car in race conditions and he won the race. Michael Schumacher was behind him with a car which was much faster but he didn't get to overtake him. Do you think this is the reality this year, that you can repeat what Coulthard did?

LH: I think that if you were just watching last year, it's very difficult to overtake. I think Mark won it last year and just controlled it from the front, even though he had a very competitive car, so yeah, overtaking is very very difficult here as I proved a couple of years ago. So if you're able to get out in front, it's more than likely if you're able to manage your tyres that you can stay there. Definitely.

Q: On the subject of overtaking here, is it all about patience, Adrian? Do you just have to hope the moment comes but you've really got wait for it?

AS: Yes, well, overtaking is difficult but I don't see qualifying being an important thing for the race. Just looking at all the last races, there have been several drivers starting from the back or in midfield and they were on the podium. I think Lotus have been a good example. You need to have the right strategy. Mercedes? Yeah, they've struggled. They were one and two in Barcelona and had big problems in the race. It just shows that the tyres are so difficult in the race and it's a very different thing – qualifying and race – but I'm here to race and the points are given in the race. Qualifying... it doesn't really matter where you are, you have to stay focused really.

Q: (Jens Walthers – German Radio) Lewis, how would you describe your relationship with your teammate, Nico Rosberg? Are you teammates, colleagues, friends, neighbours?

LH: Well, we're neighbours, next door neighbours but we're teammates too. We work hard together to try and push this team forward. Obviously we have a lot of history together from being teammates and friends since 1997, so we've known each other for a long long time so naturally we have a friendship but of course ultimately we are fierce competitors.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Jenson, when the Honda deal was announced, it naturally raised the question as to whether you might still be around in 2015, but Jonathan Neale (McLaren managing director) said you have a job for life. Can I ask how that makes you feel first of all, and secondly, when he says for life, how many more years do you think you might have left as a racing driver?

JBu: Did he say a job for life or a job as a racing driver for life?

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Job for life.

JBu: Ah, OK. I don't know what that means then. I don't know. I don't want to think about the future too much at the moment. I think that yeah, you've got to live for the moment and I don't think that trying to agree a lengthy deal for the future is something that is interesting at the moment for me. I'm 13 years in the sport, I want to have freedom and that feeling that if it doesn't feel right any more: stop. But I definitely don't feel that yet. It feels that it is going to be a long way down the road. For me, that freedom is important in the future.

Q: (Paulo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Lewis, do you think that if the Pirellis do change slightly that it will help Mercedes in the rest of the championship?

LH: I definitely hope so, it can't be any worse for us, that's for sure. I think that if they do make some changes they will help everyone really and will definitely change the way the races will go, compared to how they have gone.

Q: Nico, Romain, do you welcome a few tweaks to the tyres, a few changes?

NH: I'm not sure what happens now. Obviously Pirelli provides the tyres and I understand that there are still some discussions there with the FIA and Pirelli, so I'm not sure what's going to happen but we will go forward, we will work with what Pirelli will provide. Tyres are changing, some people deal better with them than others and I think we have to adapt.

RG: Well, it's not able to change in the middle of the championship, even though it's maybe only a small change, we don't know but I think we were pretty competitive with the original ones and the team has been working well with that so we will see, we will do our best.

Q: (Gary Meenaghan – The National, Abu Dhabi) Question to all of you: could you just talk about your first memory of Monaco when you were growing up as a fan and what your impressions were and how they compare to how it was when you actually got here as a racer?

JB: Obviously, when I was young, I was watching Formula One and that was my life because I was racing in go-karts and coming here to Monaco with my family to watch a race was something special, it was like a dream to maybe one day drive on this track. I didn't expect that. Now I'm here, it's a special moment for me and I can't wait to be on the track and enjoy this moment with my car; for sure it will be a great moment.

AS: My first time here in Monaco was in Formula Three in 2006, I believe, when I raced with Lewis in the European championship. It was a great race weekend, yes, I really enjoyed it, but no contact before that. It was maybe a bit too expensive for my family at that time, we couldn't afford it.

NH: Is that specially about Monaco or in general? First time I came here was in karting, there used to be a kart race here. I don't know if that's still on and then after that, GP2 in 2009, yeah, it was great, good fun, a very unique place, very challenging, one of the few circuits that we still have in the

calendar which doesn't allow any mistakes. I always really enjoy coming here for the track, for the atmosphere, for everything really so I'm happy to be here.

RG: One of my first memories was 1996 when Olivier Panis won, the last French driver to win, a long time ago. When I came here, I found it more challenging than what you think it is on the TV. A long time ago.

JBu: Well, my first memory was in 2000, my first year in F1 and it was all going well until Loews (now Grand Hotel) and I T-boned Pedro de la Rosa and caused a red flag. In those days we had spare cars – in those days, Christ, a long time ago – so we basically had a running race back to the paddock for who got the spare car. That was quite fun.

LH: I think for me, apart from watching Ayrton crash into the wall when he was leading by a long way, I think my first real experience here was the same as Adrian's when we were both here in Formula Three. It was a great weekend. I remember I was planning to stay in Menton and then I called Martin (Whitmarsh) and he fixed me up with a hotel room in the Beach Plaza and it was just a ball all weekend, it was one of the best weekends of my life up to that point.

Q: (Ian Parkes - Press Association) Lewis, you've been asked about your relationship with Nico a few questions ago; what about your relationship with Adrian these days? Has that changed at all now since Adrian's returned to Formula One? Obviously it ended quite acrimoniously not so long ago. Adrian, from your perspective, how are things between you and Lewis now?

LH: Things are different, definitely. We've spoken a couple of times and we've planned to get together at some stage and just have a chat basically. We've been great friends for a long long time and we've had some of the best times together along the way, especially, as you said, in Formula Three times. You can only really count your good friends on one hand maybe, so as people say, good friends are hard to come by, so I want to make sure we get things right.

AS: Well, as he said, yes, different and I'm still waiting for a coming together. I can't say anything more.

Q: (Aleksander Tabakovski - Vecer Macedonia) Question for all drivers and especially for the German drivers, because this weekend will be the final of the football Champions' league, between two German teams, Borussia and Bayern. I just want to hear your feelings about it and from each driver, who is their favourite soccer team?

JBu: I'm not a big football fan.

Q: Which B do you fancy most?

JBu: Whoever scores more goals, I'll go for.

LH: I always like Bayern Munich. When I was playing football – I used to – when I was playing on the computer games I used to play Bayern Munich quite often, so I will say them.

RG: I'll follow Jenson's comment.

JBu: I kind of like Bayern so I hope they will win.

NH: It's kind of cool to have two German clubs in the final but strange as well at the same time. They've played twice in the German league and now they meet again in the European final which is a bit weird. I'm pretty neutral, I'm not a Munich or Dortmund fan but I've become more of a football follower recently and I just watch it, enjoy it, but I don't really care who wins.

AS: OK, so I'm not a football fan but I'm from Munich, that's the answer: Bayern Munich for me, yes. I'll keep my fingers crossed.

Q: More importantly, do either of you think you could be the back page headlines in the German newspapers on Monday morning or will it all be about the football?

NH: Probably be a lot about the football.

AS: I hope I make some good headlines after this weekend.

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