

Sunday press conference

After a thrilling Hungarian Grand Prix that delivered a little bit of everything, it was three unexpected faces who appeared at the post-race press conference.

Present were Daniel Ricciardo (Rd Bull), Fernando Alonso (Ferrari), and Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes).

Q: Daniel, what brilliant drive, congratulations. How on earth does that feel?

Daniel RICCIARDO: It feels as good as the first, it really does. I don't know, I mean the safety car at the beginning played to our advantage and then I thought when the second one came out it didn't really help us but we managed to pull it off at the end, had to pass our way through and that was a lot of fun in the last few laps.

Q: You rehearsed that big outbraking move on Fernando last weekend in Germany didn't you? That was from a long way back.

DR: Yeah it was. I knew we had to make a move quick, the DRS was there and I know it could have been my only chance, so I took it and it paid off. Had to be done.

Q: Fernando, you hung onto the tyres, you took a risk and you pushed like crazy. It's your birthday on Tuesday and you nearly had the perfect birthday present. But second place, is it painful or are you satisfied anyway?

Fernando ALONSO: No, extremely satisfied. I think it has been a tough weekend – a tough season in general – so to get a podium is always a nice surprise let's say. We took a gamble. We risked today just trying to get the victory. We went close but as I said, extremely proud of the team, extremely proud of the job we did today and very, very happy.

Q: Rain for the start, safety cars, traffic, tyres degrading, you needed all your experience today. You needed everything.

FA: Well, today we have a combination of things that made the race difficult to execute, difficult to understand and we took our opportunities, our experience... we need some crazy races to get some podiums and today we took the opportunity.

Q: Congratulations. Moving over to Lewis Hamilton: pit lane to podium! Lewis, that was also via the barriers of the second corner at the start. What a crazy afternoon you've had.

Lewis HAMILTON: It's been a pretty crazy weekend.

Q: When you got out of the car yesterday, you were disappointed you had that failure and you had mentally put yourself over 30 points behind Nico. You were convinced he would win and you would struggle to get into the top five and here you are on the podium.

LH: Absolutely. Big thank you to the team, they did a great job with the pit stops and with the strategy and I just tried my best. The car's been fantastic – when it's going. Obviously a lot of points lost, because we could have had a much better weekend but we have a lot of strengths to look forward to in future races.

Q: You were really struggling in the beginning. You were talking about the diff, you were talking about a vibration, we heard you were getting very hot in your seat, you were clearly nursing a few issues as well?

LH: Yeah, to be honest at the beginning obviously a mistake by myself, but the brakes were very, very cold and locked up and I was gone. Fortunately I got going again, thank the Lord I didn't damage the car and you know damage limitation again.

Q: One of your finest ever drives?

LH: I don't think so.

Q: Well, it look pretty damned good from where we were sitting and standing in the grandstands. So Daniel, we go into the summer break, although Spa will be with us soon enough, and you have a great victory. What are you going to do and what does it mean for you in the second half of the season?

DR: Well, definitely going to celebrate tonight and party for a few days I think, enjoy a bit of time off. Then just keep building on what I've done in the first six months and then look forward to Spa. Just firstly I want to thank the team, they've really let me settle in so well the first six months of the year and to grab two victories it's honestly phenomenal, so really pleased. Got a few mates here this weekend, so we'll party hard tonight.

Q: Well done Daniel, that was an amazing victory, very exciting for all of us. You led early one and then obviously came back at the end. When did you think you had it won?

DR: I wasn't sure. I knew that the first safety car played into our hands, we inherited the lead there, pitting for slicks and then, yeah, we were looking alright. Then we got the second safety car and obviously we pitted again for another set of tyres but we obviously lost the lead. I wasn't really sure what was going to happen. We were stayed out pretty long that stint and we were leading a fair chunk of the mid-race but then I knew we weren't going to get to the end on that set of tyres. So we had to pit again and that put me back out of position. Then we knew we had to overtake to win the race. Obviously we had the fresher tyres at our disposal but I knew it was going to be an exciting finish. I honestly had a scare in the middle of the race, for a few laps we had some issues. Basically, we were down on power and had to get a bit crazy on the switches, so I thought the race could have potentially ended early but we got through that and yeah, very happy.

Q: What about overtaking these two, the overtaking manoeuvres in the last few laps?

DR: Yeah, obviously there was only one way to win it and that was to get around them. Obviously I had the advantage of the fresher tyres, but I knew they wouldn't make it easy. I attempted Lewis into Turn Two, I think the previous lap or maybe two before I eventually got him, but just locked up and went too wide. I had a second crack at it and I still locked up but I managed to just hang on and just had a bit more grip around the outside there, so that was that. And then, once I got close enough to Fernando, I knew I just had to go for it. Being in that sandwich there, Lewis was still I think in the DRS zone, basically I couldn't waste too much time and that's what I did and then once I got the lead I knew it was just a couple of laps to go. Yeah, it feels good.

Q: Well done. Fernando, coming to you. What does this mean to you? What does it mean to Ferrari, coming just before the break?

FA: It means a lot. Obviously we had some tough races recently and to see one Ferrari again on the podium is the best news. We took the opportunity after a difficult race, with a wet start and then some difficult decisions to make around the safety cars – if pitted or not. Unfortunately first safety car we went a little bit out of position, because the safety car went out and we were in the last corners so we missed the opportunity to stop. We stopped the lap afterwards and we lost a couple of places. We have to attack, we have to overtake a couple of people and just 10 laps to the end we were discussing if we stop and secure the fourth place that we really needed, those points, so just try to defend the position as much as you can and maybe finish in fourth, so at the end it's the same result but at least you have the chance to fight for the podium positions. So we were in that position 10 laps to the end and at the end we chose the right thing – stay out, defend the position as best we could and secure this second place that, for sure, it tastes like a victory for us at the moment.

Q: Yes, it's interesting what Ferrari will take from this. Presumably you'll still be telling them to push on other types of circuit, this was a very tight circuit obviously?

FA: We'll see. This circuit didn't change much our performance, our position but today we had a little bit of a chaotic race and we took every opportunity we had in front of us. I think cars from behind also had some issues, with Rosberg, with Hamilton yesterday, with the issues in qualifying, we got this position for free. We had Vettel, had a problem in the last corner today, the Force India. We had some cars out of the way let's say and we took benefit from this and we secured some very strong points for the team.

Q: And Lewis... I think a lot of people may be extremely surprised to see you here but it was a fantastic race for you. Did you ever think it was possible? You had some great wheel-to-wheel racing as well out there.

LH: I don't know, I was just pushing as hard as I could to see if I could get as high as I could and yeah, I mean, a great result obviously.

Q: What does this third place mean to you or are you still regretting yesterday?

LH: No, obviously this is damage limitation. On one hand I'm very grateful to have been able to get through with all the difficulties I've had this weekend, obviously yesterday and the first lap. I can't believe how things have gone but to be able to come back through... the safety cars obviously helped quite a lot but naturally I look at the fact that I had the pace this weekend I lost quite a lot of opportunistic points. Still, we're there in the fight, fortunately I stayed of my team-mate, which means I'm still there or thereabouts.

Q: How hard did he come back at you?

LH: Well, he was catching me at three seconds a lap, so it was very, very tough at the end. Fernando, and big congratulations to Daniel, drove fantastically well, both of them. It was very difficult to keep him behind, and also with Nico, and impossible to get past Fernando.

Q: Quite tricky, the last few laps?

LH: Yeah, definitely.

Q: (Ian Parkes – PA) Lewis, we heard on the radio the messages from the team asking you to pull over and let Nico by, around about lap 50-51. We can now see why you didn't do it, otherwise you wouldn't be on the podium. Can you just explain your thoughts at that particular time: what was going through your head? Why you didn't let him by? And secondly, how do you feel the dynamic of your relationship will again maybe now change, following the summer break, with Nico?

LH: Well obviously I'm aware that when you're... y'know I was in the same race as him. Just because he had one more stop than me doesn't mean I wasn't in the same race as him. And naturally if I'd have let him past, he would have had the opportunity to pull away and when he does pit, he's going to come back and overtake me, so I was very, very shocked that the team would ask me to do that, to be able to better his position. But to be honest, he didn't get close enough to overtake but I was never going to lift off and lost ground to Fernando or Daniel to enable him to have a better race. So that was a bit strange. But we've got a long way to go, moving forwards still and, as I said, thankfully I'm still in that battle, so, I hope we can come away stronger.

Q: (Kate Walker – Crash.net) A question for Lewis. Going into the summer break, psychologically, what does it mean for you, the fact that you started in the pitlane, your team-mate started on pole, and you're here and he isn't?

LH: Well that in itself is huge for me. I can't express to you the pain that you feel when you have issues such as the issues that I've had in the last couple of races. It's very, very difficult to swallow, and, to come back the next day and get the right balance between not attacking too much, and not making mistakes, all these different things. So many things that... obviously when you're at the back you're having to push way past the limit than perhaps you would off pole position or in the top five. So the fact that I'm managed to come back through obviously is a showing of just how great this car is and how great this team is – but ultimately we've worked, I've worked hard for it so it feels probably better than perhaps a win, gliding from the lead. It feels definitely much more satisfying when you come back through. And, as I said, to be ahead and to win the fight is really encouraging.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action / National Speedsport News) Two questions, one for Daniel: how does this compare to Canada? And for the other two guys, you've battled wheel to wheel with Daniel. Has he now established himself as a front-runner?

DR: It honestly does compare to Canada. Obviously the first victory is special but it definitely leaves you wanting more. I was just as hungry for this second one and it feels just as good – I won't say better but you realise it a bit more so it feels like you can enjoy it a bit more. And when I crossed the line, everything felt a bit more real, so I guess I took in a bit more of this one today. So, yeah, it feels awesome. And I just want of obviously quickly thank the team as well. To have two victories in the first half of the season with them, obviously I owe a lot of that to them as well, for letting me just settle in, establish myself with them. They never put too much pressure on me, they let me roll into it as I liked – and I think that's been the best balance for all of us. The results are showing and I'll enjoy this one as much as Canada.

Q: Fernando, your thoughts about Daniel – has he established himself?

FA: Yeah, definitely. I think he's leading the champion team. That says all. He's doing a fantastic job this year and now he had a few bottles. In Hockenheim I had a very fresh tyre which probably allowed me to pass with some advantage but even with that it was not easy. Today, I really didn't have the tools to fight but I tried to do my best – but definitely, congratulations to him for today, for the whole championship and it's going to be an interesting fight in the next couple of years.

Q: Lewis?

LH: Yeah, as Fernando said, he's been driving fantastically well from the beginning of the year. So, it's not only now, it's through the whole year he's shown his capability and is going from strength to strength. Not only one of the nicest guys in the paddock but also one of the best drivers here, for sure.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Sera) To Fernando, a couple of questions, first one: does this result show that something can still be taken from the car, and the second one, your birthday is approaching: we know what you wished last year – what about this year? What is the gift you would like for your birthday?

FA: Hmm... I think from this year's car there are obviously some positive things and some negative things. Now, together with the team try to analyse what to carry on and what to change. Philosophy of the car probably is not perfectly right because we are not as competitive as wish, so there are things that we need to change but also there are things that are probably working OK. Well last year it was a very big understanding of what was my wish. Especially in Italy. So, this year, I will not wish anything about the car and I will wish a happy day to everyone in Italy.

Q: (Carlos Miquel Gomez – La Gaceta) Two questions for Fernando. Do you think that this race is one of the best races of your

career? And the other thing, to hear the people cheering “Alonso, Alonso” is one of the reasons that you are following Formula One.

FA: I don't think that is one of the best in my career. It has been a good and a complex race, let's say, to execute and perform – because there were some difficulties around the race that make the 70 laps not straight forward. You just need to make decisions during the race and all of them were, together with the team, and I think we did the best we could. And then in the podiums, the support from the people has been amazing. Especially this two or three last seasons – which is a little bit strange when you think that I won the World Championship the last time in 2006, I suppose that my career should be going down and it's going up. So that's definitely something that keeps my motivation very high. I would like to give them something back in terms of trophy and in terms of titles. It's what we're working on.

Q: (Peter Vamosi – Vas Nepe Kiadoi) Daniel, when do you think your next victory will come? This year you are the only Mercedes destroyer. And do you still continue to develop this year's car or will you focus on next year after Spa?

DR: I think – answering your second question quickly – I think we're definitely going to keep trying to push for this year. There's still a lot to play for. In any case, what we learn this year we can still take forward for next year so the team will keep pushing and I'm sure that now this second victory will keep the motivation strong within the team so that's good. Sorry, what was the first question?

Q: (Peter Vamosi – Vas Nepe Kiadoi) This year you are the only Mercedes destroyer.

DR: Good. Someone's got to do it.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Lewis, during this crazy race, what was the main difficulty for you, trying to find your way on the wet track at the beginning or resisting your teammate at the end?

LH: The beginning. The strange thing about starting from the pit lane is that you don't get ready to go out. Your brakes are cold as you start, your tyres are brand new and obviously I experienced that into turn two. It was an interesting beginning to the race but I'm very very very grateful that I got through.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – UOL) To all of you: three different drivers, three different teams, three different power trains in the last race of this part of the season. Does it mean that in the second part of the season we will maybe see some more competition or did the circumstances of the race create this situation?

DR: I think today obviously the mixed conditions and the safety cars maybe helped out this order in terms of having three different manufacturers up here but I would like to think that it can create something for the second half. I think that in pure dry conditions, Mercedes still have a pretty significant edge on everyone else. Spa, it's a pretty good place to start the second half of the year. Maybe the weather and the changes they have there could create something exciting but forgetting all the stats, obviously this is a great thing to see today: three teams, three manufacturers all up here. It's refreshing, for sure.

FA: I agree with everything. Let's hope so. I think the circumstances and the weather played a big factor today. The circuit characteristics also probably helped some of the power units that we are not on top of the game still, so let's see at Spa. Monza is quite a tough challenge for us and that will give us some answers for the final part.

LH: I think it's great for the fans to see. I'm sure today – people say it was a great race – that's really what the fans want to see so I hope that continues for the future.

Q: (Istvan Simon – Auto Magazin) Lewis, the last time that things didn't go according to plan was at Silverstone – apart from Hockenheim but that was a technical issue – when something messed up your qualifying, you said that you spent the night or I heard you spend the night with your mother, with your father, with your family, with your loved ones. What helped you through this time, in this dip? What did you do yesterday to prepare yourself for the race day?

LH: I had a pizza last night! I did, some pizza and some chocolate and watched a movie. Went to dinner with Niki yesterday and played a prank on him as it was his birthday and just tried to have some fun. We really have some of the greatest fans here and I think really some of my really close fans that I have here really got me through this weekend. I didn't have my family here with me and it's great to be able to turn to them and to be able to receive positive energy from them. I got a letter from one of my fans this morning and just the comments it had in it were really uplifting and really helped kick my mind into gear so I'm grateful for that.

Q: (Peter Farkas – Auto Motor) Lewis, yesterday you were quoted as saying that what happened starts to go beyond bad luck. Could you please explain what exactly you meant by that and are you maybe starting to lose confidence in the team, because of the technical problems and now they asked you to move over for Nico who was on a different strategy?

LH: I don't really remember... I mean yesterday after what was quite a difficult time, I came straight out and spoke to the media so I think fortunately I controlled myself quite well and I don't really remember what kind of frame of mind I was in at that point but it's the same as saying 'it's beyond a joke.' Sometimes there's one joke, there's another joke and sometimes it gets a little bit past that and obviously with the faults that we've had on my car, it's made it very difficult for this championship but as I said, fortunately I got some points today which means that I'm still there or thereabouts but the telling thing would be how my car performs through the rest of the year.

Q: (Carlos Jalife – Fastmag) Daniel, who do you side with: Fernando said a few races ago that the championship was basically over? It was for one of the guys from Mercedes. And Sebastian said that mathematically it was still on, so what's your opinion on that? Is it over or is it not?

DR: I think there's obviously a couple of opinions. When maybe some of us say it's over, I think it's just purely looking at the performance of Mercedes. On a normal weekend with normal conditions on pretty much all circuits, they've been dominant. I think days like today, with some changing conditions, some safety cars, it helps us keep our nose in the fight. I think Seb's right in saying that until it's mathematically over it isn't. If you look at today, I closed in on the championship but realistically we're still a long way off. It doesn't really change the approach in any case. If we're in it or not, we still race for the highest position possible and obviously as we saw today, the win was there for grabs and we took it. In any case, I don't think it changes the approach for Sundays. I think with the Abu Dhabi system they've applied this year, it's still going to be pretty open until late on in the season. We'll just keep doing what we can.

Q: (Cristobal Rosaleny – Car and Driver) Fernando, how impressive or how surprising for you and for the team was having such an amazing pace with the soft tyres for such a long time with the degradation of the tyres. Was it really a surprise, a question of weather?

FA: Yeah, it was definitely a surprise. We found ourselves leading the race when Ricciardo and Massa pitted so we thought OK, let's give the maximum for three or four laps just to open up a gap and stop see whether we are in the final part and then we realised that it was not so many laps to the end and it was a difficult call: stopping and keep pushing and finishing fourth or keep going and risking the cliff with the tyres and finishing fourth or fifth or whatever. So it was surprisingly good, it was surprisingly fast, the car in the race. I think the weather helped us with cooler temperatures and the track a little bit damp in the first part. Obviously you don't stress the tyres as much as a completely hot track. I felt the car was good and it was definitely a surprise.

Q: (Oliver Barstow – Crash.net) Lewis, yourself and Nico have had the odd technical issue over the course of the year. Given the performance between you two is so close, how concerned are you that the title could be decided between you by who has the least technical issues?

LH: Ultimately it is a concern because I've stopped more than him. But as I said, there's still quite a few races to go and it will be telling, dependent on how... Obviously I've got the pace, got the ability, just really whether or not the car holds up.

Race report

Daniel Ricciardo claimed his second grand prix victory at the climax of a thrilling race at the Hungaroring. But despite the Australian's success, for the second weekend running it was Lewis Hamilton who stole the show with a stellar performance that took the Mercedes driver from a pit lane start to a podium finish.

The excitement of the Hungarian Grand Prix started an hour before the race, when the heavens opened and thunder started to roll around the darkened skies surrounding the Hungaroring. But it was not to last, and conditions were markedly improved when the cars lined up on the grid. Before the race got underway, Daniil Kvyat was stranded in the middle of the track as his rivals left for the formation lap, the Russian complaining over the radio that he had no engine.

When action got underway it was in very challenging conditions, with the track both wet and dry and tyre calls hard to make. Pole-sitter Nico Rosberg got off to a flying start, and was 2.7 seconds ahead of second-placed Valtteri Bottas by the end of the first lap. Hamilton's race did not begin well, and while his teammate was charging off with the lead the Briton span at Turn 2 thanks to cold brakes and then began to report worrying vibrations.

By the time Marcus Ericsson crashed at Turn 3 on lap 8, bringing out the Safety Car, Hamilton was up to thirteenth. The mass run for the pits saw the race leaders caught out at the back of the queue while tough calls on tyre compounds were being made in frantic discussions between cockpit and pit wall. The majority went for slicks, while Jenson Button was one of those who elected to stay out on Pirelli's intermediate compound.

The Safety Car was due to come in at the end of lap 11, but another Turn 3 crash – this time from Romain Grosjean – kept Bernd Maylander controlling the pace for a further two laps. When racing finally resumed it was Ricciardo who led the field, but the Australian was deftly passed by Button, whose tyre gamble looked to be paying off.

Further back, Hamilton continued to charge, promoted up the pack by the leading foursome's odd stop and his own overtaking of Esteban Gutierrez, and by lap 14 the Mercedes driver was up to ninth place and in contention for some serious points. Two places ahead a struggling Rosberg was reporting difficulties from seventh, while at the head of the pack Ricciardo put serious pressure on Button for the lead, with the McLaren driver diving for the pits at the end of lap 15, going from second place to a miserable 18th.

The next two laps saw more chaos, with the Force India pair colliding in an incident that left Nico Hulkenberg out of the race, while Pastor Maldonado had a run-in with Jules Bianchi on lap 17, although both men survived to race on after a trip to the pits for repairs. Hamilton continued his fight up the grid, but struggled to get past Sebastian Vettel.

It was all change again at the end of lap 22, when Sergio Perez had a self-inflicted shunt on the final corner, bringing out the Safety Car once more. With Ricciardo, Felipe Massa, and Bottas diving into the pits, Fernando Alonso inherited the lead and fought doggedly to keep it once racing resumed on lap 27. Meanwhile, Kamui Kobayashi retired from the race on lap 25 with a reported mechanical issue.

The restart led to more action-packed laps as Rosberg struggled to pass the Toro Rosso of Jean-Eric Vergne, who was running in P2. Unable to make a move stick, the Mercedes man dived into the pits and Hamilton showed his teammate just who was boss on track by slipping past Vergne without a second thought.

Alonso was leading from Hamilton, with the Briton gaining on the Spaniard at between one and 1.5s a lap. At the end of lap 38, Hamilton inherited the lead when the Ferrari dove into the pits. But it was a short spell in front, with the Mercedes driver making his final stop of the race one lap later.

The second half of the race evolved into a game of high-speed chess, with competing strategies playing out on track. The two-stopping Hamilton – who was wary of his tyres' ability to make it to the end – was asked to make way for Rosberg so that the latter man could build up a gap with which to make his third stop.

But Hamilton, aware that such a move would almost certainly cost him the podium finish now in his sights, refused to wave his teammate past. Instead, the Briton told the team that if Rosberg got close enough to overtake, he could do the job properly. Rosberg was unable to get past despite trying for ten laps, and eventually pitted for the fresh rubber that would keep him in the fight at the very end.

The closing phase of the race was a nail-biter, with Alonso and Hamilton – both of whom were on two-stop strategy – fighting an advancing Ricciardo with a freshly-shod Rosberg not far behind and gaining fast. Both the Ferrari and the Mercedes fell prey to the Red Bull in the final five laps, but despite giving it his all Rosberg was unable to convert his pole position into a podium finish.

Hungarian Grand Prix – race result

1. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1h53m05.058s
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) + 5.225s
3. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) + 5.857s
4. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) + 6.361s
5. Felipe Massa (Williams) + 29.841s
6. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) + 31.491s
7. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) + 40.964s
8. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) + 41.344s
9. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) + 58.527s
10. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 1m07.280s
11. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) + 1m08.169s
12. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) + 1m18.465s
13. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) + 1m24.024s
14. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) + 1 lap
15. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) + 1 lap
16. Max Chilton (Marussia) + 1 lap

Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) RET
Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) RET
Sergio Perez (Force India) RET
Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) RET
Romain Grosjean (Lotus) RET

Saturday press conference

Despite crashes, rain, and changing track conditions it was three not-so-surprising faces who lined up for the post-qualifying press conference at the Hungaroring.

Present were Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), and Valtteri Bottas (Williams).

Q: Congratulations Nico. It was a dramatic qualifying session wasn't it, what with the rain, going off at the first corner etc. What was it like from the cockpit?

Nico ROSBERG: Yeah, quali three was really a big challenge, because the track was just changing all the time in the beginning and especially starting the lap with that first set of options, I was the first one to arrive in the first corner. It was just difficult to judge: how much risk can I take, how late can I brake? It was very, very wet, so I did take it a bit easy and managed to avoid crashing. For Kevin? I guess... It was just massively difficult down there and unpredictable. That can happen. From then on it was easier. It just started drying again and especially my last lap, I really managed to nail it.

Q: And a really big margin as well. Well done. Sebastian, at one point it looked as though you nearly had him, you looked as though you were nearly going to be on pole. Where has the speed come from this weekend?

Sebastian VETTEL: I think probably the nature of the track suits us a bit more – less straights. I think historically we've always had a competitive car around here. It seems that we are a little bit closer but obviously Nico's final lap was very good so the gap was again quite big – bigger than we were hoping for, because as you mentioned if we get everything perfect and Nico maybe has a bit of a wobble, we can have a crack, but it didn't happen. They did a good job. Obviously Q3 was a mixed bag, it could have been anything, so therefore with the more dry conditions at the end to get second was the optimum.

Q: Well done, thank you. Valtteri, once again in the top three. You weren't expecting to be quite so quick at this circuit. Is this a bit of a surprise? Well done by the way.

Valtteri BOTTAS: Thank you, yeah. I think maybe a little bit of a surprise. We knew that Red Bull are going to be really quick here and also Ferrari and obviously Mercedes like always. Like Seb said the nature of the track in theory is not the best for us, but we've been able to work well as a team to bring some updates, which really worked well. Obviously we're still missing some grip compared to some other cars but today was, I think, a really good day from us. Third and sixth, we have a good chance also here to get some really good points.

Q: Now Nico, tomorrow in the race itself, there's the possibility of rain again, your main championship rival and teammate starts right at the back, what are your thoughts?

NR: Yeah, that's been a pity for the team. Not a good thing definitely and we need to keep on working on that. That's reliability. Also, I would be prefer to be out there battling with Lewis. That would give me the maximum adrenalin rush. Like this... of course, I'm very, very happy but it wasn't a gloves off battle with Lewis and that takes away a little bit of the ecstatic happiness. But anyway, tomorrow's still going to be a long race and a challenging race, especially with the weather coming, so still all to play for.

Q: Nico, yesterday you said you were a bit surprised you were so quick, and you needed to find the time. Did the track come to you or did you managed to find the time, basically, through adjustments, modifications to the car...

NR: That was two opposing statements there... 'you were quick but you needed to find the time...'

Q: That's what you said... you were surprised you were so quick but you still needed to find the time. This is a quote!

NR: Never believe what the newspapers are writing!

Q: This is from your own press release...

NR: Oh, OK, never believe what the press officers are writing! No. I've been surprised that we've been able to be so quick this weekend. I think our engine is definitely very, very strong and here the engine doesn't come into play so much, so maybe the gap would be a little bit smaller but in fact it's as big as anywhere really here and that's been great to see. Really cool. It just goes to show how good our car is also.

Q: Did you change much overnight?

NR: It's been an ongoing process, yeah. I mean, with FRIC not being on the car it's still finding my way and finding our way because it does impact the car a lot, especially on a track like here in Budapest. A lot of long corners and fast, flowing corners – but really got there and I'm pleased with where we are now.

Q: Sebastian, tomorrow, can you take the fight to Mercedes? I guess that's the question everyone wants to know.

SV: It depends. I think we are here to fight, we want to do that. If it rains, I think we definitely have a better chance than in normal, standard dry conditions but even then, I think we were closer this weekend. Long run pace, yeah, looked a lot better on Friday compared to them. Obviously hard to judge how much they were sandbagging or running different modes on Friday. So, it should be closer than in the last couple of races, definitely. I think we can have a good fight with the Williams, which seems to be out of reach the last couple of races.

Q: So the question is to Valtteri, can you be second? Can you even be first?

VB: I think, y'know, if nothing special is going to happen, first is really difficult. Still Mercedes is ahead – but you never know. We need to aim for that, always, and aiming for that we can get good results. Obviously here, tomorrow, it's going to be a really close fight, like Seb said, with Red Bull and us. So we need to see how the pace is. If it's enough, keeping them behind, at least one of them, that would be good.

Q: (Peter Farkas – Auto-Motor) Sebastian, I think it's fair to say that you looked convincingly quicker than Daniel throughout the weekend here. Is it because the track suits you or have you found something in the car or are you getting more comfortable with it?

SV: I don't think I was that much quicker, I think it was fairly close all qualifying and practice as well. Since yesterday afternoon the car seemed to be coming my way a little bit and naturally then you pick up some pace. We didn't have anything new on the car compared to last week in Hockenheim – it's only one week ago – so I think probably the conditions, tyres seemed to help me maybe a little bit to pick up some pace.

Q: (Peter Vamosi – Vas Nepe Kiadoi) Valtteri, what do you think right now halfway through the season, you are fifth in the championship? Is there more, can you fight against Mr Vettel and Alonso?

VB: Well, we're always aiming for more. I think there's still a long way to go and double points in the last race so a lot more is possible. I think personally, in the drivers' points, I think it would be good to aim to be third. I think it is possible this year with the car we have and if we keep improving like we've done so far, so that should be the aim.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, is it a big help to you to have a cleaner side at the start?

VB: Yeah, this season many times, I've been on the dirty side so it is always better to be on the clean side and we've normally had some really good race starts and hopefully we'll have a good one tomorrow as well, so we will see. It's quite a long run to the first corner, so the start will be very important.

Q: (Graham Keilloh – F1 Plus) Sebastian, towards the end of Q3, to what extent was the rain that we'd had still making a difference? If it was making a difference, was it helping you get closer to Nico or further away?

SV: I think the first run - obviously we saw Kevin lost it into turn one - was affected by the track being damp, first couple of corners, but I think the last two runs, everyone had no problem, it was completely dry.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Universo On Line) Nico, the fact that your teammate is at the back of the grid, does that change anything for you in the race, start in a different way, maybe new goals because it will be harder for him?

NR: Well, it makes it easier of course, because he's my competitor number one, so I will play it even more safe and just really try and avoid any unnecessary things happening and make sure to get as many points as possible because it's really a free opportunity tomorrow.

Q: (Viktor Bodnar – Magyar Szo) Nico, can you imagine how you would feel yourself if you were in Lewis's place with this series of bad luck?

NR: Well, it's massively disappointing when the car breaks down. I had it two races ago at Silverstone in the lead that the car broke down. It's tough, it definitely is tough because it's not something that you can control, you know, so that makes it really difficult.

Q: (Peter Farkas – Auto-Motor) Nico, it's been anticipated on this track the ban on FRIC would have a greater effect since the corners are a bit longer and the track is bumpier. Have you felt that that was the case, this is why Red Bull was a little bit closer?

NR: For sure it had a big effect, yes, but I think it affected everybody, because everybody had the FRIC system in one way or another and so it seems that we've held on to our advantage and I'm very very happy to see that because it wasn't sure how it was going to go, if some teams might benefit more than others. What was sure was that we had a good system so we were very confident ours was really good but it seems that we've held on which is great.

Q: (Peter Vamosi – Vas Nepe Kiadoi) To all drivers: next year, the Hungaroring will have its thirtieth Formula One race here. If you could change something on the track, corners, facilities, whatever, what would you do?

NR: Well, it's a fantastic race to come to here you know, the fans are so excited and also it's very international, there's a lot of Finnish fans, also a lot of German fans, so for me it's great. Yeah, it's always nice to come here. What would we..? I don't know, it's difficult to say what to change because it's a great track, it's very challenging, it's like a little street circuit but as a real track. It's very tough, so I wouldn't change much, I'd keep it like it is.

SV: Since there's large interest I would probably put more grandstands next to the track so that some of the people don't have to stand all the time. Other than that, I wouldn't change anything.

VB: Yeah, facilities and everything are really nice, lot of fans, lot of support so that is good but I have to say that as our car is quite slick in the straights, that this year I would change the track a bit, bit longer straight. Seb, do you agree, for next year?

SV: No, I'd rather go free beer for your fellow countrymen!

Q: (Silvia Arias – Parabrisas) I would like to know, Sebastian and Valtteri, do you feel as well this impact without FRIC that Nico was talking about?

SV: Obviously I think some people were more advanced than others. For us, it didn't make a big big difference. We had something but yeah, I think we're more or less as competitive as we were before so it didn't change much.

VB: No big difference, no, and we've improved since last weekend for sure, with the current suspension, but I don't think it's the key point of the season.

Q: It's always said to be very difficult to overtake here: is it any easier with this generation of cars or is it still very difficult?

SV: In a Williams, I guess it's fantastic down the straights, you know, you're so quick but it depends. I think it's always been difficult and it will be difficult tomorrow.

Saturday report

With Lewis Hamilton top of the timesheets for all three practice sessions at the Hungaroring, and Nico Rosberg hot on his heels, it looks like a safe bet for a Mercedes on pole following this afternoon's qualifying session.

But five minutes into Q1 Hamilton's car could be found making its way slowly back to the pits, flames pouring from the back. For the second week running, the 2008 world champion faces an uphill struggle to make it to the podium. Making a bad day worse, the flaming Mercedes couldn't stop, no matter what Hamilton tried.

Hamilton was not the first man out of the session, however – Pastor Maldonado his Lotus and stopped at Turn 13 before he was able to put a time on the board.

With two of the back of the grid slots already accounted for, the remainder of Q1 became little more than an exercise in determining the order in which the Caterham and Marussia drivers would line up ahead of Hamilton and Maldonado. Or so it appeared, until Jules Bianchi knocked out Kimi Raikkonen in the dying seconds of the session.

Max Chilton was another driver to suffer problems in Q1, with the Marussia affected by a fuel pressure issue in the final minutes of the session.

After the chaos of the first knock-out round, Q2 was relatively calm. Once times started popping up on the boards it was the Mercedes-powered cars that were top of the pops, with Valtteri Bottas initially leading for Williams before Nico Rosberg resumed his traditional place in P1 with a 1m23.310s lap.

As Q2 reached its mid-point, Sergio Perez was forced to drop out of the running thanks to a hydraulic leak. At the time of the stoppage the Force India driver was in the top ten – just – with a 1m25.211s effort, but the Mexican racer was soon pushed into the dropout zone.

Daniil Kvyat was a late casualty of the session, spinning out at Turn 12 on his last-ditch attempt to make it into Q3. Joining the Russian racer in the dropout zone were Adrian Sutil, Perez, Esteban Gutierrez, Romain Grosjean, and Bianchi.

There was light rain falling as Q3 got underway, and the pitlane emptied immediately as all and sundry went out to set banker laps before conditions

got worse. But it may have been too late – Rosberg ran wide in the rain at Turn 1, while Kevin Magnussen crashed into the tyre barriers at the same place only seconds later. The Dane was uninjured, although the same could not be said for his car.

When the session restarted there was another mass exodus from the pits, but the early times up on the board were unrepresentative of the form seen thus far, with Sebastian Vettel on provisional pole, while Rosberg's 1m26.488s first effort saw the championship leader bottom of the timesheets.

With the second round of laps normal order was restored, and Rosberg was sitting pretty on provisional pole with a 1m23.236s effort, two-tenths faster than Vettel. The improving track conditions made the final minutes a matter of timing, with the last man to cross the line after a clean lap likely to secure pole position for tomorrow's race.

In the end, Rosberg sealed the deal by half a second over Vettel in P2.

Provisional grid

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m22.715s
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m23.201s
3. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m23.354s
4. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m23.391s
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m23.909s
6. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m24.223s
7. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m24.294s
8. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m24.720s
9. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m24.775s
10. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) NO TIME SET

11. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m24.706s
12. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m25.136
13. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m25.21s
14. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m25.260s
15. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m25.337s
16. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m27.419s

17. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m26.792s
18. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m27.139s
19. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m27.819s
20. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m28.643s
21. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) NO TIME SET
22. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) NO TIME SET

Friday press conference

If you read nothing else today, read the response to the penultimate question in the Friday press conference, proof that the respondent is unaware of the purpose of a press conference.

Present were Eric Boullier (McLaren), Christian Horner Red Bull), Monisha Kaltenborn (Sauber), Vijay Mallya (Force India), Marco Mattiacci (Ferrari), and Claire Williams (Williams).

Q: Claire, ladies first, if I can start with you. Phenomenal performances recently, everyone is asking can you take a win somewhere? Will it be on the fast circuits coming up after the break?

Claire WILLIAMS: I hope so. That's why we're here, to win grands prix. The team has done a great job this year to turn everything around. We're building towards that. I think we've still got a lot of work to do. The Mercedes are quite far ahead at the moment. I think we closed that gap a little bit in Germany, so it will be exciting to see what we can do here this weekend and then obviously moving to Spa and Monza.

Q: Do you think the faster circuits, the longer straights are going to be to your advantage? You're quick in a straight line.

CW: Yeah, I'd like to think so. Obviously the Mercedes power unit has helped to drive our competitiveness this year, so it's absolutely a factor.

Q: Now, Susie Wolff made history with, admittedly, a brief appearance at Silverstone. She did well at Hockenheim as well. Has that represented a step forward for women in motorsport do you think?

CW: I'd like to think so. Obviously Susie's appearance at Silverstone was short-lived but she was the first female to take to the cockpit on a grand prix weekend in 22 years. I think she has set the standard in Formula One. It would be great to see more women coming into the sport in a racing driver capacity and I think she does act as a role model in that sense. She did a great job for the team and at the end of the day, for us, that was the most important thing.

Q: Thank you. Vijay, welcome. The results keep coming for Sahara Force India but McLaren have made a little bit of progress, the gap is now just two points. Have you slipped a little bit, what's happened there?

Vijay MALLYA: I don't think we've slipped. We continue to do our best, we've scored points in every race. Williams have done an outstanding job. I think that was pretty clear in pre-season testing. The results are showing. But I think between Williams, McLaren, Sahara Force India, Ferrari, the gap is small and can be closed even in one race. Of course, the double points in the last race may change the equation completely and one never knows in whose favour. We feel quite confident that we can fight to stay where we are or maybe even get a little ahead. I think it's realistic to be optimistic as well. As long as you have confidence in what you're doing and the car is performing, no hard luck stories, there's a lot to look forward to and many races to go.

Q: Do you think you can keep up the development, stay ahead of let's face it a bigger team, in many ways, McLaren?

VM: I don't want to only set the benchmark as McLaren – they are a world championship-winning team. We obviously are ahead on merit. They have the propensity to catch up but equally we have the propensity to improve even further. As I said, it's quite competitive between three or four teams and I think the final race will be the final result.

Q: I'll come to Eric on that question in a moment, but you must be very happy with your two drivers, they're doing a great job. Do you want to keep them, can you keep them?

VM: We have options on both. I'm very happy with both of them and I see no reason why we should be looking at any change.

Q: Eric, catching Force India, what's made the difference?

Eric BOULLIER: It's obviously, first, hard work back in Woking. Everybody is working definitely hard to get to the way we want them to go and the work is paying off in the end and you can see on track we are bringing upgrades every race and we start to be able to work a little bit in a higher position.

Q: Will you carry on developing this car? When do you actually move over to working on next years, with particular reference to the challenge of a new power unit?

EB: I think it's all in one if you want. We will keep developing this year's car as far as possible and as long as possible and as long as we can carry over all the development in the next year's car. Obviously we are preparing already for the arrival of our new engine partner for next year, yes.

Q: Thank you. Christian, coming to you next. This time last year you made a massive step forward, through the summer break as it were, to win all the races after the remaining races thereafter. Can you compensate for the problem you perhaps have with your powertrain and make a big aero jump this year?

Christian HORNER: In all honesty it's probably unlikely. If you look at the gap, it's a significant gap. Last year was more of a level playing field on the power unit side. But obviously with the big regulation change it's reshuffled things, Mercedes are doing a super job and they deserve to be in the position they are, they are in a position of real dominance, dominance we haven't seen for a long, long time, where they keep scoring these one-two or one-three finishes and it's a significant amount of performance to close down. But we're keeping pushing, we're keeping the hammer down and hopefully after the summer break we'll have some circuits coming up that we will be able to get even closer to [them]. But I don't think you'll see a situation like we had last year.

Q: We've heard some speculation about Sebastian Vettel's future. Is there any substance to it or is it silly-season nonsense?

CH: Well usually it's the start of the silly season where he's either going to Ferrari or Eric's made him a big offer or maybe going to Mercedes. So, we just wait to see which team it's going to be. But no, Sebastian's absolutely committed to the team, there's no doubt at all that he'll be with Red Bull next year and he's enjoyed so much success with the team, he's happy in the team and the team are very happy with him. We know we've got a lot to do. None of us are comfortable or happy with the situation that we're currently in - but, y'know, we're in it together and we'll work our way through it.

Q: Monisha, similarly, you made big advances in the second half of the season last year and you must be hoping that you can do the same. What are the chances?

Monisha KALTENBORN: Well you really can't compare actually, last season to this one. We know the reasons why we are like this, this year. Of course it has to do with all the rule changes that came in. Last year we took a certain risk. We were well aware of it but if you allocate the resources you have more to last year's car, this will have an effect on the new car. It's good that we know the reasons but we clearly have to stop making the mistakes we have been making in the last races. So I do hope that we'll make a step ahead but to be realistic I don't expect we'll take that kind of a jump.

Q: Yesterday there was confirmation of a future Mexican Grand Prix. What does that mean to you - and also the fact that Azerbaijan seems to be coming onto the calendar in a couple of years' time as well. The calendar is expanding: what does that mean to a team principal?

MK: Well looking at Mexico, of course it's very good news for us because we know that our partner Telmex and Carlos Slim particularly has had this long-term vision to establish motorsport in Mexico. He's been pursuing this for many years and this has many elements to it, like the Escuderia Telmex, with the drivers, they then got their driver - Sergio - into Formula One and they've been working on this grand prix. And we also know how important that is for the other partners we have. So, such a race, which has so much heritage, returning now is fantastic for the sport and I'll sure we'll see how many fans we have. We were there a couple of years ago doing a show run and we couldn't believe that 200,000 people came out to see that. That tells you what a strong fan base it is - and that's a very positive sign. Now, if you're taking the races beyond 20, I think we've had that discussion as well, that I think we should be careful of not saturating the year with too many races. We know what it means on our personnel. We might have to restructure things again, so I think we should be careful before we take these kinds of steps, and also where we go to - because we want to establish Formula One in these countries, not lose heritage races. So it's a difficult.

Q: Marco, we've seen Fernando Alonso drive some phenomenal races, the last couple of races. Real classic Formula One, wheel-to-wheel stuff. How does that reflect on the team? What's the mood with the team when they see races like that?

Marco MATTIACCI: It's very motivating.

Q: Just motivating, or more than that?

MM: I think when you see your driver that is driving like that, that is very motivating for the team.

Q: And do they want Kimi to be doing the same thing?

MM: Indeed.

Q: There's been some harsh criticism of the car recently. What's your response to that criticism?

MM: Which one are you referring to? Internal criticism or outside?

Q: Outside.

MM: Everybody is free to make comments. I'm happy that they have time to think about our cars because I don't have enough time to think about other teams' cars. I know what you are referring to. I think it's a statement taken out of context. He has a big title and, as I said, I have the utmost respect for Niki Lauda. For me he is an iconic figure of my childhood and in particular for Ferrari. Today he came to our pit to apologise and honestly I feel very uncomfortable for Marco Mattiacci or Ferrari in this case receiving an excuse from such a champion that I think has been put in middle of something. But I think it's clear he is a friend of Ferrari and I have utmost respect for Niki. So chapter closed.

Q: (Péter Farkas - Autó-Motor) Question to all of you. Obviously it is very surprising to learn that the FIA has allowed a change of brake material in parc ferme. Have you got a clear explanation from the FIA yet, why did they let them do it and, do you think it's acceptable? And do you think there is a danger that things you start to ask to change brake materials and even something else in parc ferme before the race after that.

CH: Look, from our perspective it was very interesting to see the way the FIA dealt with it. Theoretically it is a change in car specification and the interesting thing for us to observe was how the FIA dealt with it, the precedent it sets going forward. So should that circumstance occur again, the precedent is now extremely clear and I'm sure there will be further discussion on it and where does that stop? Obviously we'd like to change the engine in parc ferme but that's not quite allowed. I'm sure there'll be further discussion. It was intriguing to see the decisions that were made.

Q: Eric?

EB: Well our position is quite similar to Christian's one. It was a little bit of a surprise to see they could change their brakes obviously. And even if some specs were similar, the rule on parc ferme are very strict. So, as Christian says, it is a serious precedent and we'll see how it develops in the future.

Q: Marco?

MM: From me it's a different perspective from my colleagues - even though I understand where they're coming from. I think in Formula One where everybody is debating about the show, to see a driver from the 20 spot arrive to the podium, for me is a great thing to sell to people and honestly, to

pull the trigger, because changing the brakes that are the same spec, probably they don't have a great impact on the performance, honestly to go to ruin the day for Hamilton was not my principle about racing, so I don't see the need. It is clear we need consistency in the approach of the FIA but I think we have seen a great race from a guy and we didn't feel it was the case to ruin that show.

Q: Claire?

CW: I don't think I have anything to add to that.

Q: Vijay?

VM: My concern is the precedent that it sets. The FIA rules basically say that if a component is similar in mass, inertia and function, I guess that's the definition under which the change of brakes was allowed. Going forward, under parc ferme conditions, one could also argue that the rear wing settings could be changed because the same mass, inertia and function are retained. So long as this is not used as an unhealthy precedent going forward for changes under parc ferme conditions, that is the way I would look at it.

Q: Monisha?

MK: Well, the FIA took probably a surprising decision here but I think more important is to see that they realise that they need to clarify the matter. I'm a bit less concerned about the precedent being set here because if you look at the cases that have gone through the FIA, different courts or tribunals, you very rarely see a certain consistency there because you can't bring up cases from the past but every case is looked at individually, so I'm not that concerned. I tend to agree with Marco, that it just shows you no matter what would have happened, have you also given a penalty, still a driver can come up, right in front, and I think that's the remarkable part about it and shows the dominance of the team.

Q: (Pablo Gorondi – AP) Two parts, the first part is concerning the upcoming race in Russia. Do you have concerns about it considering the fact that the conflict in Ukraine seems to be growing every day. My second question is about... we just heard about the new races in Mexico and Azerbaijan and the one thing that's common to them is that they will both be street races, not on permanent circuits – does this pose a special kind of challenge to you?

CW: Obviously what's going on in Russia and that part of the world at the moment is of huge concern to everybody – but we've always said as a support we try to disengage from taking a political angle on these things. Here the FIA is the governing body of our sport, they issue a calendar and we have to take our direction from them and at the moment, the race is still on the calendar.

Q: Vijay?

VM: Well something similar occurred in Bahrain and we followed the FIA's directive, or recommendation. I think I agree with Claire. It's up to the FIA to guide us and we all follow what the FIA guidance is.

Q: Monisha?

MK: I absolutely agree with that. We have to rely on the governing body and commercial rights holder. They're the ones who have the responsibility and we will do as they say, like we've done in the past.

Q: If we come to the business of... I think Mexico is going to be a permanent circuit, but Azerbaijan could well be a street circuit – what are the thoughts on those two new races? Marco, would you start?

MM: I think it is a great opportunity, first of all Mexico is one of the countries with the greatest tradition about racing. We have had amazing drivers in the history of Formula One. Is one of the upcoming economies in the Americas, probably the third largest economy after Canada, but it's good that we keep promoting the brand. It is clear that, as Monisha was saying this week, there are big effort to be done to establish the culture of racing, particularly in upcoming country. So, but it's good. Definitely a big effort but Formula One needs to reach new audiences so is going to be a another big effort. Let's see what is the profile of the race we are going to have – but I think I would see this in a positive way. It is clear that stretching the championship to many races, it means more investment on our side so it opens another discussion – but I'm positive.

Q: Christian?

CH: It's great to be going back to Mexico. Certainly my memories of Mexico were Nigel Mansell's move on the outside of Gerhard Berger into the last turn. I just hope that corner is left intact. I think it's fantastic for Formula One to be going back to Mexico. Azerbaijan is an exciting new venue, new country to be visiting. Of course there's only so many races that we can accommodate in a year and I think it's very healthy for Formula One to have such competition for these places on the calendar. For new markets coming along like this, I think it's great news for the teams, for the sport and will be of great interest.

Q: Does it make a big difference Eric that it is potentially a street circuit?

EB: Yes it does in one way obviously but GT went to race in Baku already so they have a little bit of experience, at least how to judge the foundation of a track in the city. I know Tilke is in charge so we know he will do a very good job of it. I think it can be very exciting. Street racing obviously we know is a great show, there is more risk of a car breaking, crashing, anything like this, but today the safety is good enough and obviously we rely on everybody involved today to make a very, very good racing show there.

Q: Vijay, your thoughts on that.

VM: We need to race under all conditions and on all surfaces and on all tracks. That's part of the fun of Formula One, I guess, and part of the competitive spirit. Street races have their own unique character, as we've seen in Monaco and Singapore and other places and I'm sure none of us would object to a street race. As far as new countries are concerned, like Mexico and Azerbaijan, fantastic news. The more the Formula One canvas expands across the world, the better it is for the sport and the teams and the sponsors. And that's why I keep nagging Bernie and trying to persuade him that India must come back.

Q: Claire?

CW: I think everyone's said it all. I think to have two new races on the calendar is really exciting for everybody.

Q: Monisha, any more to add?

MK: I think just the aspect of the street race is probably a better approach to take in a country where there is not that much history of motorsport. You can probably attract more people, can be supported even by tourism activities as we've seen in Singapore, the Government backing. I think it's a good idea.

Q: (Kate Walker – crash.net) A question for Vijay. Looking ahead to 2015 it seems almost certain now that you're going to inherit Lotus' place on the Strategy Group. Now I was wondering, first, you've had a year's experience of being out in the cold, and to what extent is that going to inform your input on the Strategy Group, and secondly, to what extent is your role in the WMSC going to inform your contributions to the Strategy Group?

VM: First of all, we've been out in the cold for more than one year. As part of the Strategy Group, if all goes well, yes, we have a best chance to be there. I think the fundamentals of our views will not change. We will represent our views and concerns within the Strategy Group but then the Strategy Group ultimately decides by majority the direction in which we all go. So, I will rest my case there and not speculate more about the Strategy Group or our potential role in it.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Question for Mattiacci. Considering the gap from Mercedes at this point of the season

and the big changes, technical changes, going on in your team, it will be possible to see a Ferrari fighting for a title in 2015 – or it is more realistic to consider 2016 as a goal?

MM: I think the more realistic thing is don't take such kind of commitment at the moment. We need to work every race, definitely we are working for a medium/long-term plan to come back and be at the top, to be extremely competitive but at this stage I really don't have any element to make commitment on when we'll be back at the top.

Q: (Fredrik af Petersens – Honorary) You talked about Azerbaijan, fantastic to go to a new place, a new venue. Is it worth going to a new place with no tradition whatsoever of motorsport and lose, for example, a classical race like the Italian Grand Prix at Monza?

CH: I think it's all about balance. It's about keeping the historical events and also bringing new events. Of course, Monza is a very popular race on the calendar – hopefully it'll be there for many years to come – but it's finding that balance. I think Formula One has done a good job of that over the past few years. If there isn't any interest in Formula One, like we saw last weekend, then why not go to a new market that is crying out for Formula One.

Q: Vijay?

VM: I've always said that expansion of the canvas is good. If there's no history of motorsport in Azerbaijan, well, one can always hope to create interest in Formula One with its attendant benefits but I would agree it would be sad if it were at the cost of a long-established historic race. But, yeah, the wider the canvas, the better for all of us.

Q: Marco, anything on that?

MM: I agree with Christian and Vijay, we need to find the right balance. Formula One has a DNA and a race like Monza, I guess they're extremely important. At the same time, we need to move forward, to look at the future, to bring the culture of racing and Formula One where it's possible to do it. So, we need to have the right balance but definitely we need to move forward.

Q: (Dominik Scharef – Motorsport-Total.com) Last week in Hockenheim, only 50,000 fans came to the race track. Today we saw relatively empty grandstands again. How concerned are you about that?

EB: Good question. We can't draw any conclusions obviously or be scared about what's happening in a couple of venues. You also need to remember Silverstone, for example, was very crowded, having, the same weekend, three major sporting events in the world. There were some other venues – Austria was obviously a great success. I thought that Germany was maybe not as big as before. There are many reasons and to be honest, I'm not an expert, a specialist on that, so I will not comment on this. You were right. As we mentioned before about the new venues, it's true that we need to make a balance so we need maybe more venues because there is a shift of interest on sport, about F1 in particular, in that case, to some other countries. I don't have the answer and I don't think it's a concern now when you see some other venues getting crowds and being successful.

MK: It is, of course a concern because Germany has a strong history in motor sport and we have and have had some great drivers from there, so it's an important market by all means and I think that that just shows that we really need to look at our product, our sport – which is a fantastic product, comparable to any big, global platform, comparable even to football or the Olympic Games – and see how we can connect better to the people outside. It's not about the product itself. We've had some fantastic races and we've had some bad races and that you have in every sport. You can have a fantastic tennis match or a bad tennis match, but it's how you connect to the fans out there or to the consumers and I think that's where we need to improve.

VM: I don't know whether one should be judgemental enough to say that just because attendance was a little lower than before, that it's cause for alarm. As Eric rightly pointed out, Silverstone was a major success despite Wimbledon being on. To the English, these are really two very significant events but so long as the overall viewership and the interest in the sport and the sponsors are happy, we should preserve, as I said before, those races that have more than just a spectator value. Monisha referred to the fact that Germany has produced top class World Champion drivers. We have excellent German drivers in Formula One as I speak so I'm sure that the interest level in Germany hasn't fallen to the extent of any alarm.

CW: I would agree with everything that's been said and that maybe Germany was a slight anomaly but I do think that as a sport we need to look at what we are doing, look at our product and to make sure that it is the best that we can offer our fans. I think we have a great fan base and we have a significant fan base globally but I think we need to look at what we can do to engage a new generation of fans to watch our sport, a younger generation. This is a wonderful sport, it's a great sport, people do want to come and watch us but I think that what we could potentially offer the people who pay a lot of money to come and watch us race every weekend, I think that if we could provide a better show and work together as a group of teams to do that, I think that it would stand us in really good stead for the future.

MM: This is the most frequently-asked question so I think that we still believe that Formula One is one of the most phenomenal platforms of sport. Definitely there are warning signs. I think now after that – I think I have been asked this question probably several times – what we are trying to do in a positive way, to bring all the stakeholders to converge within the right institution and at the right table, to discuss, to make concrete steps in order to have a clear view of where we want to go. I don't think it's positive that every time we have a press conference, we discuss about the issues of Formula One. We are all here to promote the sport. I think we need to do it in a smart way. Definitely, as I said, there are warning signs but I think that we need to move to the next step: that is to discuss, debate and find solutions.

CH: I think it's obvious: that the Germans were obviously so hung over from the result they'd had the previous weekend that none of them could make it down to Hockenheim. If you look at the previous three races, they were all sell-outs: Montreal, sell-out; Austria, sell-out; Silverstone, sell-out. Massive crowds, great racing. So something's got be wrong at Hockenheim for only 50-odd thousand people to turn up. But if you look at the ticket price, if you look at the way it was promoted or wasn't promoted – that race. If we take a car to Sebastian's home town which is 45 kilometers up the road and get 150,000 turn out for it, then it's rather surprising that only half a crowd is in Hockenheim at a race that is Mercedes' home race, Mercedes winning the World Championship – you would have expected a capacity crowd. So then you've got to ask the question 'what's wrong?' Sebastian has been highlighted as one of the reasons to blame that people aren't going there by the promoter of that race, which is rubbish. When the ticket price that they're demanding is so high, you've got to get realistic and there are obviously issues around that race that need to be addressed and it's worrying for all us to see so few people in Hockenheim when there's so much German success in the sport at the moment.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) At exactly the same time as you're lamenting empty grandstand seats in Hockenheim, it became public knowledge that CVC, the owners of Formula One's commercial rights, are planning to load the sport with a billion dollars' worth of debt. Is this not concerning to all of you, collectively, as team owners and businessmen, particularly as it affects hosting fees, revenues etc going forward?

VM: CVC and other shareholders of Formula One, currently, have every reason to be delighted with the profits that they're making and the returns that their investment is providing and of course, as a relatively small team, we have been representing to the commercial rights holder and to CVC that the distribution of income should be more equitable so that all teams are financially able to survive. But that is notwithstanding that they make huge profits. If those huge profits can service huge debt, it's CVC's business, not our business. I don't think we as participants in Formula One should really be concerned about the financials of the commercial rights holder because it's not going to get us anywhere. The fact that the commercial rights holder are now extremely well off doesn't get us anywhere. That fact that debt may be loaded on, so long as it's serviced, does not get us anywhere either. So it's nice to know that somebody's willing to provide a billion dollars of debt to Formula One. It only reinforces the financial success of the sport.

CW: I agree with Vijay. I don't want to be dragged into comment around CVC and its business operations necessarily. Williams are here to go racing and love going racing and I would much rather sit here talking about that.

MM: I already answered before, so I don't think this is the venue to discuss and I'm not going to answer about CVC issues of investment strategy.

CH: I fully support Williams's position.

EB: Nothing to add.

MK: Nothing to say.

Q: (Ralf Bach – Sport Bild) So we learn now that we are going to Azerbaijan. We drove in Bahrain, everybody knows that Bahrain is killing their own people. We go to Russia and no comment. We drove in China, China is not very famous for democracy I heard. So my question is: all you guys say that you have a Formula One and drivers and everybody has to make a good example for young people. Do you think it's a good example to follow Mr Ecclestone everywhere he wants? Next question is when he would go to North Korea, would you follow him?

VM: I think we're racing people, more popularly known as petrolheads. We come here to race and to win and to enjoy it. The governance is an international organisation called the FIA. It is up to the FIA to decide where the sport is conducted. I don't think that the teams, individual participants in the sport, should be holding their individual positions to determine social political issues that you have raised. The FIA is perfectly competent to determine where Formula One should be staged and not be staged.

Q: Anything more to add? Do you all agree with that? No more to add? So the question is you would follow Ecclestone to North Korea or you wouldn't?

VM: You know, it's a not question of following Bernie. I think the question has been wrongly framed. It's the commercial rights holder, it's the FIA. We race where they stage the events. It's as simple as that.

Q: (Christoph Becker – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) Let's put the question in a different way: do you think that as you're talking about promoting the best possible product, do you think it does your product a lot of good going to Baku, given their human rights record, given the fact that they rank – I think – 160th on the list of Reporters Without Borders?

CH: This is becoming a very depressing press conference as we're only focusing on the negativities. Look, there's a calendar that comes out in October or November. We all have a choice whether we enter the World Championship or not. All the people sitting here are racers and they're here because they're passionate about the sport and they want to compete. When we sign up for that championship, we put our faith and trust in the promoter and the FIA and we will attend those races unless they deem it unnecessary for us to be there. All of you will be at those races, or the vast majority of you will be at those races and why, because you're either passionate about the sport or because you earn a living out of covering the sport and I think it's wrong to make Formula One a political statement or subject when we are a sport. We should be talking about the drivers in these conferences, we should be talking about the spectacular racing that happened between our drivers and his (MM's) driver at the last Grand Prix. We should be talking about what a great race it was for Lewis Hamilton to come through the grid, yet all we do is focus on the negatives and it has to be said, it gets pretty boring for us to sit up here and field these questions. So how about asking some questions about what's going to happen in the race on Sunday, what's going to happen in qualifying tomorrow, because if you've got these questions, please point them at Mr Todt or Mr Ecclestone rather than the teams.

Q: (Graham Harris – Motorsport Monday) Talking about tomorrow's race: Pirelli are very optimistic about the tyres, they're not degrading, is it going to be one stop or two stops?

CH: I think it's going to be a challenge, it's going to be interesting whether it's going to be a two stop or even a three stop and I think that was the interesting thing about last weekend's race. The tyres were on the edge, some people ran two stops, some people ran three in it. It created some interested racing. I think the tyres that Pirelli are actually bringing to the races are producing good events, like we've seen at the last few Grands Prix.

EB: Well, the question is a bit early in the weekend, because I don't know if it's going to be one, two or three stops, even though here, obviously, it's very difficult to overtake. So I don't know, I don't yet, to be honest.

Q: And the possibility of rain, Monisha, what about that?

MK: Well, we certainly wouldn't mind that but we cannot rely on that. It is indeed a bit early so we will wait and see.

VM: Well, Monisha has the rain specialist in Sutil but no, it's really too early to comment on tyre strategy on race day. It depends on so many things. I think we were caught out with the temperatures on Sunday in Hockenheim. You really cannot plan in advance. It's a split second decision you have to take on the day.

CW: Yeah, I agree. We don't know yet what strategy we'll go for but our strategy this year has always been verging on the conservative in order to score the maximum amount of Constructors' points and we took Ferrari's very nice P3 in the championship in Germany and we want to just strengthen our position and go into the summer break in a strong position to finish the season off.

MM: I think that the Pirelli tyres have been better than expected today. We have some interesting elements but it's too premature to define what is going to be the strategy but it's going to be an interesting race again.

Friday report

Lewis Hamilton made it two for two at the Hungaroring on Friday, topping the timesheets in both the morning and afternoon practice sessions with a tight margin to teammate Nico Rosberg and a healthy six-tenths over the rest of the field.

Friday morning dawned bright and sunny, with track temperatures similar to those expected for the rest of the weekend. The representative session was largely calm, with the main moment of drama coming very early on when oil on the exhaust of Max Chilton's Marussia caught fire, putting the Briton out of action for much of the morning while repairs were completed on his car. Chilton was back on track in time to post a 1m31.004s lap, two-tenths faster than teammate Jules Bianchi.

While Ferrari showed strong pace on Friday morning, with Kimi Raikkonen best of the rest behind the Mercedes pair and Fernando Alonso fourth on the timesheets it did not look as though the Scuderia had made a dramatic upturn in performance since last weekend in Germany. For much of this season Ferrari have shown pace on Friday mornings only to slide down the order over the course of the weekend.

Many of the teams concentrated on their development work during FPI, with the Mercedes-powered Williams and Force India barely troubling the top ten. Only Felipe Massa was able to scrape into the top ten, with a time two seconds down on Hamilton. Both teams are expected to fare rather better in both qualifying and the race.

Friday afternoon delivered much of the same on the timesheets, with the Mercedes pair once again top of the order with Alonso in fourth. This time, however, it was Sebastian Vettel who was third, six-tenths behind Hamilton.

The 2008 world champion's performance was all the more impressive given the braking issues he was reporting over the radio, telling the team at points that he was unable to stop the car. Following last weekend's brake failure in qualifying Hamilton will be looking for every assurance that tomorrow's qualifying session will not be beset with similar issues.

Further down the order it was Romain Grosjean who had the most difficult afternoon, losing track time to a leak in his cooling system that also affected the Lotus driver's morning running.

FPI times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m25.814s [27 laps]
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m25.997s [31 laps]
3. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m26.421s [29 laps]

4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m26.872s [23 laps]
5. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m27.220s [28 laps]
6. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m27.357s [28 laps]
7. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m27.683s [30 laps]
8. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m27.782s [16 laps]
9. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m27.804s [27 laps]
10. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m27.960s [24 laps]
11. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m27.967s [25 laps]
12. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m29.101s [28 laps]
13. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m28.208s [32 laps]
14. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 1m28.266s [28 laps]
15. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m28.330s [21 laps]
16. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m28.376s [24 laps]
17. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m28.593s [24 laps]
18. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m29.025s [23 laps]
19. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m30.363s [30 laps]
20. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m30.892s [24 laps]
21. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m31.004s [5 laps]
22. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m31.248s [20 laps]

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m24.482s [38 laps]
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m24.720s [38 laps]
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m25.111s [33 laps]
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m25.437s [26 laps]
5. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m25.580s [34 laps]
6. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m25.730s [30 laps]
7. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m25.983s [29 laps]
8. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m25.999s [37 laps]
9. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m26.234s [33 laps]
10. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m26.402s [18 laps]
11. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m26.689s [42 laps]
12. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m26.703s [37 laps]
13. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m26.789s [39 laps]
14. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m26.919s [41 laps]
15. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m27.013s [39 laps]
16. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 1m27.019s [40 laps]
17. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m27.021s [14 laps]
18. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m27.480s [32 laps]
19. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m28.370s [35 laps]
20. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m28.469s [26 laps]
21. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m28.586s [35 laps]
22. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m29.036s [34 laps]

Thursday press conference

Reliability, Mexico, and post-incident discussions were the name of the game at the Thursday press conference at the Hungaroring.

Present were Marcus Ericsson (Caterham), Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber), Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham), Pastor Maldonado (Lotus), Sergio Perez (Force India), and Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso).

Q: Marcus can I start with you? Ten races into your first Formula One season, what have you learned about yourself and about your own racing, your own capabilities over these first 10 races?

Marcus ERICSSON: Obviously coming into Formula One there's a lot to learn. I think this year it's been a bit special as well with the new power units. For sure, the management of tyres, of energy during the races is something you've got to learn quickly, I think it's not only for me but for everyone else as well. To be consistent over a race weekend; important steps during a whole race weekend and you need to be always be consistent in both the driving and the feedback to the engineers. So it's quite a lot of things but I feel like I'm taking steps all the time and learning so that's the main thing.

Q: So it's a work in progress, there's more to come?

ME: Yeah, definitely.

Q: Now, there's been quite a lot of speculation at Caterham. How do you feel about your own position? Do you feel comfortable for next year as well?

ME: I feel good. I think the new owners are pushing really hard. Obviously they want to update the car during the season and keep doing that and that's really positive for all of us. Hopefully now, in the second half, we can have a stronger car and we can be a bit more competitive and fight with the guys in front of us.

Q: Esteban, you've been on the cusp of points, very close to points a few times, 12th in Australia. How close are you to getting into the points, or have you gone as far as you can with this car, is it not possible to go any further?

Esteban GUTIERREZ: At the moment we are doing our best, all the team are pushing really. Without bringing updates we don't see it very different to what we had in Hockenheim. But it seems that step by step, every race we've been closing the gap a little bit and that is putting a lot of hope and also motivation into everyone in the team. From my side I'm trying to do things as consistent as possible and trying to get the most of the car that I have at the moment.

Q: So the expectations for the second half of the season?

EG: Expectations are... I would put them really high! I really want to make a step and that's what the team is looking for, because finishing a season on a high is really important and I think it's a good chance now that we are starting the second half of the season.

Q: Thanks very much, I'll come back to you in a moment with something else but we'll move on to Kamui. Kamui, a change of

ownership at the Caterham and some uncertainty about what's going to happen there I guess. What can you do to strengthen your position and at the same time strengthen the team as well, because you've been around a bit, you know exactly what's required or a driver and you can gather the team yourself and be a bit of a team leader.

Kamui KOBAYASHI: Yeah, hello everyone. First of all, I was quite having these changes during the season with a new owner, but I think this is what we need, otherwise I think we couldn't finish the season. It was the right move and straightaway I think... I mean, team, does it affect them a lot? As you see it in the news I think people left, quite a lot, straightaway, but I think we need to keep motivated because I think if we want to survive we need to change something. I think this is the right thing. I need really hope. Of course, it's the same from my side. I think I need to always drive 100 per cent. This just gives motivation. The biggest things... if we want to change something, we need to change the biggest things not the small things. We have new guys coming and many people left, but I think we have responsible in each part and this is going to help everybody and let's see what happens.

Q: You're known for your attacking style of driving. Does this car allow you to attack as much as you'd like?

KK: Not really! It's not really happy but I need to hope that one day I'm going to make something, a really exciting race. Like a 'train' race is not really exciting for the spectators. I'm pretty happy last race, for example, at the German Grand Prix, we had a couple of pit stops and we saw some excitement during the race. But if it once again came back to one stop, for me it's not really nice to watch the race, I'm pretty happy. Pirelli had a nice tyre decision and think this makes more fun. Even my car... I think Pastor was like Prime and I was supersoft and I could overtake him. It was a little surprising but it's good it happens like that and it's good for spectators.

Q: Jean-Eric, we know that the car is capable of getting into the points, and the qualifying is there as well. But you've had problems in various; well, what seems like different areas, I don't know if you would agree. Is it just one fix that is needed? What's basically the problem?

Jean-Eric VERGNE: I don't think we really have any problems at the moment. The only problem we have is to get the points at the end of the race. Obviously the first part of the season has been quite competitive, but unfortunately I couldn't finish all the races – I think I had five DNFs, so that's quite a few, all the time when we were in a position to score points. So, I will take only the positive and the positive is that we have great people working in the team, working really hard to improve the reliability, and we've got a good car. It's not like if every time we had a problem we were not in the position to score the points. Now I think we just need to keep on working in the same way and the points should be there.

Q: So what are the expectations for the second half of the season then?

JEV: Ah, the expectation is to finish as many times in the points obviously. This is definitely possible. We have a quick, we still have some new updates to come. So I really believe in the team. I believe they can bring us a better car again and just to finish the races... in the points!

Q: So you are confident that things will improve reliability-wise?

JEV: Yeah, definitely. That's not really my big concern... I'm not concerned about it. I'm more concerned about the speed that we need to have every race weekend. And then from there all I have to do is drive this car as quick as possible and do the best job possible. Not thinking there will be a problem happening or not. It's not really in my mind.

Q: Sergio, we heard a somewhat frustrated engineer talking to you in Germany, saying 'fuel saving, fuel saving, fuel saving'. We won't go into the details of the whole conversation but is it a problem for a driver that you don't have some sort of fuel indicator or your own that you can manage, that you have to rely on hearing a message from the engineers. Would you prefer something in the car?

Sergio PEREZ: We have the capability as drivers to see how we are doing with the fuel. We get some target numbers and we have to give them back. Of course, Hockenheim was really tough on fuel for us, especially due to the race I was having. It was very difficult to keep temperatures in the tyres and by saving fuel of course you lose more temperature, so it was really a difficult race for myself, which I was not really expecting after the pace we had shown on Friday.

Q: So you would prefer to have some kind of indicator or are you happy with what you've got?

SP: I'm happy with what I've got. We're all clear on that. Obviously we get the message; we always get prepared of how much fuel we have save and during the race we see how we're doing with the engineer and they can tell us.

Q: Now, a Mexican Grand Prix looks like a real reality for next year, I hope you agree. What are your feelings about it, and I'll come back to Esteban about that as well?

SP: It's great, I'm so happy. Since I left my home at 13, 14 years I never raced in Mexico. I never raced in my home country. Now to go back after so many years and race actually in Formula One is great. They've been really pushing for so many years, since I came to Formula One four years ago. The spirit of the fans is massive back home. It's great for my country, for all the fans back home and I'm sure you all will be surprised at how good the event will be. I'm just very proud and excited. It's great that we can confirm that we will have a Mexican GP next year.

Q: I think there's quite a lot to be done though isn't there?

SP: Yeah, there are a lot of things to be changed. The circuit is quite old. I mean, the last time you raced there was 22 years ago. They already started to build a new circuit. It will be fantastic once again; you are all going to be surprised. I'm sure it will become a very popular grand very soon.

Q: Esteban, your feelings about it?

EG: I have good feelings about it, because all these years that Mexico has been involved in Formula One with obviously first Checo getting to Formula One and now myself, we are two in Formula One and I think this is a great step to have a grand prix. It's really a dream come true for many of us. I had the chance to race once in Mexico City, back in 2008, when we did the world finals of Formula BMW. It was a great experience. I think it was an introduction to what it can be, obviously very, very small by comparison but now we will be able to go into the biggest thing in Mexico and to really share with our fans, with our supporters, to share with them physically the sport.

Q: Pastor, sorry to keep you waiting. First of all, of course, the inevitable question about your contract for next year. Where are you in terms of thoughts for next year?

Pastor MALDONADO: We've been confirmed from mid-season, which is good. It's always good to know the future. It's a great team; I always mention that. There are fantastic people working at the team and pushing very hard to improve the performance. We've been suffering a lot since the beginning of the season. Most of the problems have been down to reliability. We've been nearly... most of the races stopped and not finishing, which is not the best when you are looking for performance. We didn't have the chance to test and explore 100 per cent of our package. But it's looking quite good. It's always been a great team in the past and for sure will be one of the good ones for the future.

Q: A lot of changes have been made – maybe just for reliability's sake but also from competition's sake – are you feeling those changes, do you actually notice those changes, and also, do you feel that the car is a bit too track specific, that it only works on one type of track?

PM: It's difficult to say because even in the last race, Romain, my teammate had a problem with his car and he needed to stop and to finish the race earlier than me. Unfortunately, we still have some problems. Most of the problems are due to the power unit but we've been working very hard with Renault to try to help them and to help each other to have a more stable car and at the same time, better reliability for the races and to approach the weekend in a different way. Sometimes we need to jump on the track just thinking about finishing the race and not thinking about exploring the full performance of the car which is not a great approach, but sometimes you need to maybe do one step back to recover the things in the team and it seems to be that now we have more the entire control of the car it's getting better and better, so hopefully this weekend will be good for us and both

cars in the points would be fantastic before the break.

Q: (Alan Baldwin – Reuters) Sergio, on the Mexican Grand Prix again, it was on the calendar before but it didn't happen this year. Are you sure that it will now happen next year, that the problems of getting the track ready and everything else will be overcome and it will be done in time?

SP: Yeah, hundred percent sure that we will go to Mexico next year, no doubt about it. Everything's confirmed. Last year was a difficult situation due to the time that we had to build the circuit, but now there is no doubt and I think we can all think that we're going there. Already they're building the circuit, they've already started on the circuit, so yes, we're definitely going there.

Q: (Graham Killoh – F1 Plus) Esteban, it looks to outsiders that the Sauber benefited in Germany from the removal of FRIC up and down the field. Is that your feeling and the feeling within the team?

EG: Yes, it is the feeling and we tried to get that opportunity, to take advantage of this position. Maybe it was not a big thing but it gives us a few tenths per lap, probably, which may benefit a lot in the race, so that's what we're looking to and that's our main focus, to extract that.

Q: (Peter Vamosi – Vas Nepe Kiadoi) Pastor, there are some rumours that John Player Special will be on board again with Lotus. Has this a special meaning for you?

PM: It's difficult to say because I'm not getting involved in marketing and this part of the team. But for sure, it's always welcome, a sponsor is always welcome and whoever can join the team, it's always welcome. From my point of view, it's a good team in terms of image, marketing, one of the best in Formula One, for sure.

Q: (Heinz Pruller – Honorary) Can I ask the Mexican gentlemen about the Mexican Grand Prix? I have been there in '68 in the Magdalena Mixhuca park. I guess this will be a new circuit, they will change this circuit. How much will they change the circuit and how far advanced is the work on it and what is the date for the Grand Prix next year?

SP: We don't have a date confirmed yet. I think once the calendar is released, I suspect that it might be towards the end of the year because that's when we go back to America and also it gives more time to the circuit to rebuild, to make all the changes necessary for Formula One to host a Grand Prix. It will be totally different. I was so unlucky not to be in a Formula One race back in Mexico but I think it will be quite different, and as I said before, I'm really enthusiastic and I'm sure you're all going to be surprised as to how well we can do this kind of event.

Q: (Heinz Pruller – Honorary) Will it be in the Magdalena Mixhuca park; will they keep Peraltada corner?

SP: I don't know if they're going to keep Peraltada. I suspect that they're going to make some changes. It's a very historic corner. Everybody I have been talking to in the park, they all tell me 'how are we going to have the Peraltada?' Everyone is really excited about Peraltada but we don't really know if we're going to have it because I think we're also going to change the layout of the circuit.

Q: (Cristobal Rosaleny – Car and Driver) Esteban, Checo and Pastor, all of you come from Hispanic countries and now Mexico is going to be on the calendar next year which is very good news for your fans too, that they will have you closer than ever, but don't you miss more Hispanic people in the paddock – mechanics, engineers and other professionals that maybe can help to really establish motor sport in your countries? And are you thinking about doing something about it from your experience, which has been tough, coming to Europe and growing into Formula One?

PM: Yes, I know that at Lotus they have a plan – especially for Venezuelan people – to join in various different areas in the team. That will be good. I know that there are some Venezuelans working in the factory. We have this plan and year after year I hope this will increase, but for sure, it will be very good to compensate the programme, not only with the drivers but even with the people who want to work with us and want to join the teams.

Q: Sergio, how do you think Mexicans would get on in Northamptonshire?

SP: Yeah, it's a long way to travel and for us to come over to Europe is not so easy but for me, for example, I had to leave home when I was only 15 so I think that kind of thing, that kind of culture has to change so I'm sure getting back onto the calendar with the Mexican Grand Prix, that will definitely help. There is a lot of excitement about Formula One back in Mexico so I'm sure that the younger generation are all interested in Formula One and I will be really happy if this can open doors to have engineers, mechanics, drivers, people working in the media, more and more Mexican and more Hispanic overall. That would be great for Formula One and for the sport.

EG: I think the platform will start growing. Obviously when you have Mexican drivers, now we have a Grand Prix, it will even produce 3000 jobs back in Mexico related to that. When you build a platform in Mexico, then that platform starts to transfer to other areas, to Europe, to Asia and obviously into the top level. So I think it's the way to go and it will be very pleasing to help and also to be part of opening the doors and all of these things, opportunities for more Hispanic people here.

Q: (Joo Gabor – Index) To you all, Felipe Massa just said in the paddock that Magnussen was to blame for the crash at Hockenheim and that the FIA made a mistake by not penalising him. What do you think about the FIA's stance?

KK: It's very difficult to say. For me, Magnussen looks very difficult to avoid. He's keeping his line. For me, it looks as though Felipe is a bit too tight on his line, because I think if he gave a bit more space, I think he would not have had the accident, because it looks as though... Difficult to explain what Felipe's going to do. It kind of looks like he suddenly dived into the corner. I think Magnussen could have avoided it by braking or whatever but it's just after the start. He braked in that corner, I think he would lose a lot of positions so it's a very difficult part. In the end, I don't think we can see the mirrors. The mirrors are quite small and I think that at that angle it's very difficult to see. I think that's the biggest problem.

SP: I think it was really really close at the start of the race. Turn one at Hockenheim is... that kind of accident can happen. Kevin did everything to avoid Felipe. In the end, they touched and it was a really really bad accident for Felipe. Who to blame is difficult. I think they both collided but it's difficult to blame someone from that accident.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports F1) Just on the subject of accidents – obviously we have Esteban and Pastor who have both been involved in a couple of incidents with each other this year – when you do have a crash, do you, as drivers, do you look to blame somebody? Do you look to find somebody at fault? Or is it easy to accept when you're to blame? Do you ever talk to each other and in the case of Esteban and Pastor, have you had words since the last race? Just your personal thoughts on what you do after you've been involved after a crash.

PM: When you make a mistake for sure, it's easy to accept. Before, you need to accept and learn from the mistake. We are not perfect sometimes. When we are racing each other, you can make some mistakes. We are racing, we are doing our best to take a position or to defend a position and sometimes, when it's very tight, the contact happens.

EG: Well, I think it's very simple, it comes down to having respect between all of us and as Pastor says, when you make a mistake, you just have to accept it and really the strong position to do it in public and as well to find the right compromise, because at the end, it's not beneficial for any of us. If we both crash, we both end our races. It's obviously not beneficial, so it doesn't matter what happens afterwards. Already the effect and the problem is already done. We just need to look into more... It's fun racing, this is what we enjoy, this is what we like and between Pastor and myself, for example, yes, we've been involved, but we've also spoken to each other and we find the right compromise and we keep a good relationship. It's not a problem. In the end, we are here, we enjoy it and it's our passion to race.

