



## Getting to know the Suzuka Circuit

To try and describe the magic of Suzuka is to do the place a disservice. Like Spa and Monza, it is one of those tracks that sends shivers down your spine the first time you see it, and makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end.

The Suzuka Circuit is a pure temple of motorsport, a racetrack to end all racetracks.

But why take my word for it when you can hear the teams and drivers say much the same in their own words?

“I think it’s one of the best circuits on the Formula 1 calendar, along with Spa, and one which every driver loves,” Sebastian Vettel, Red Bull.

“A great first sector, high-speed turns, and interesting corner combinations all make Suzuka one of the best race tracks of the year,” Michael Schumacher, Mercedes.

“Suzuka is without doubt one of the classic F1 destinations, both for what happens on track, and for its place in the sport’s history,” Mike Gascoyne, Team Lotus.

“I think it’s one of the best circuits on the Formula 1 calendar, along with Spa, and one which every driver loves,” Nico Rosberg, Mercedes.

“Suzuka is one of my favourite circuits and definitely one of the nicest tracks,” Tonio Liuzzi, HRT.

But what makes Suzuka so special? Virgin Racing team principal John Booth explains:

“Suzuka is one of the driver’s favourite tracks on the calendar and it’s easy to understand why. It’s a very challenging and technical circuit with frequent directional changes. Two critical points are the S-turns, a flowing combination of five corners where it is important to get the entry right; and the Spoon Curve, a double left taken as one, where it is crucial to find the perfect line and carry momentum into the following straight.”

And, of course, there’s the Ferris wheel. How can you not love a circuit reached by taking the train to the middle of nowhere and then following the giant wheel till you hear the sound of engines?

Much like Spa and Monza, those other temples of motorsport we visit each year, Suzuka is a high power track that’s tough on tyres. As a result, Pirelli will be bringing along the same medium-soft tyre combination that served the drivers well in Belgium and Italy.

“The wide range of speeds and corners at Suzuka mean that it is essential to have a versatile tyre, with the soft and medium compounds providing a good compromise between grip and durability, together with the possibility to create some interesting pit stop strategies,” Pirelli explained in their Japanese Grand Prix preview.

“The technical and abrasive layout of Suzuka, particularly in the long and fast corners such as 130R, place heavy demands on the construction of the tyres, which have to absorb huge loadings that equate to 800 kilograms or more.”

As a result, tyre management is vital, and the race should lead to some good performances from Jenson Button, both Saubers, and the Ferrari pair, all

of whom are either easy on their tyres or have cars that don't put excess pressure on the tyres through extreme levels of rear downforce.

For while Suzuka is a medium- to high-downforce track, teams will need to balance getting the right level of cornering speed with making life as easy on the tyres as is possible.

As far as circuit characteristics go, it is worth mentioning that – as a consequence of the figure of eight layout – Suzuka is the only circuit on the calendar that sees the drivers running both clockwise and anti-clockwise, which eases the physical strain from cornering at high speeds.

That being said, it would be foolish to underestimate the physical effort required to take on Suzuka. The track, with its mix of medium- and high-speed corners, is as technical as it gets, and that's before you throw elevation changes into the mix. The circuit is also a lot narrower in real life than it appears on TV, and precision is vital at every point in the lap.

Cosworth had a fairly lyrical summary of Suzuka's challenges, which has been copied in full below.

"Suzuka has a versatile mix of high and low speed corners of different configurations around an almost 6km long track shaped like a figure 8," Cosworth said. "It is a technically, physically and mentally challenging race circuit. The ultra-fast 130R turn is arguably one of the sternest tests of the season for car and driver alike.

"At Suzuka, more than most other places, success will be a result of all parameters working in harmony – chassis, engine, tyres and driver. Engine performance alone is not a key indicator of car performance around Suzuka, although it plays an important role. Drivers will need to be quick on the throttle heading out of the Spoon curve in order to maximise their run through 130R, the quickest part of the track where engine power will come to the fore. The "S" curves at the start of the lap are another special feature of Suzuka with quick change of direction crucial to a competitive first sector."

One element of the car that shouldn't suffer too much this weekend is the brakes, with low wear and no cooling problems expected.

The DRS detection zone has been announced as the exit of 130R, with activation along the main straight. Renault technical chief James Allison is anticipating a few DRS-powered hairy moments in practice and qualifying...

"Turn 1 and 130R ... will be particularly interesting in 2011 to see whether anyone dares make it through them in qualifying with their DRS system activated," he said.

The current configuration of the Suzuka Circuit has been in use since 2003, when 130R underwent slight modifications. The track measures 5.807km; presuming it runs for the full distance, the Japanese Grand Prix will last for 53 laps, bringing the total distance run to 307.471 kilometres.

The 2007 and 2008 Japanese grands prix both took place at the Fuji Speedway, and as a result the group of past Singapore winners still racing in F1 is fairly small: Sebastian Vettel (2009, 2010), Fernando Alonso (2006), Michael Schumacher (1995, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004), and Rubens Barrichello (2003).

The group of previous pole sitters is similar: Sebastian Vettel (2009, 2010), Felipe Massa (2006), Michael Schumacher (1994, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004), and Rubens Barrichello (2003).

Fastest laps in Suzuka have been claimed by Mark Webber (2009, 2010), Fernando Alonso (2006), Rubens Barrichello (2004), and Michael Schumacher (1995, 1998, 1999, 2002).

The current lap record at the Japanese circuit is Kimi Raikkonen's 2005 time of 1.31.540s, set at an average speed of 228.372kph.

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## F1 Japan Blog – Thursday press conference at Suzuka

Suzuka's Thursday press conference featured six drivers, but the big questions were put to the two men currently fighting for the championship.

Present were Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin), Jenson Button (McLaren), Paul Di Resta (Force India), Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber), Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus), and Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), and the bulk of the non-championship questions were the usual chatter about loving the track, the fans, and the country.

The main question of interest concerned the overall safety of Suzuka as a circuit. Fortunately, none of the drivers thought there were any problems.

"I don't think it's the case here that the barriers are close to the circuit," Button said. "I don't think it's an unsafe circuit to race on. I think that you can't make a mistake because it's not asphalt in a lot of places, so you touch grass or you're into the gravel, you can end your day early. It's very unforgiving in terms of stopping the car. It's not unforgiving in terms of having a big accident, so the safety is not an issue here but I think we find it exciting knowing that if we do make a mistake then we get punished for it and that's why a lot of drivers really enjoy racing around here and a lot of new drivers find it quite difficult in their first season when they come here, in terms of pace, or find themselves off the circuit in a gravel trap somewhere."

D'Ambrosio agreed, as did Kovalainen.

"Obviously last year I didn't want to try to be brave or anything in ten laps in Free Practice 1," D'Ambrosio said. "But I think what Jenson described is quite right: you don't feel like you're in danger – actually I've never felt that in Formula 1, or in motor racing since I started. I think it's a safe track. Now Degner One, for example, is a corner where you're not going to go there and try to nail it within two or three laps, because you know that if you make a mistake you will probably end up in the wall. Well, obviously it is sometimes a different approach but I think all the time you're in the car you

don't focus on what's outside the white lines, you just try to stay in the middle and that's what you focus on. It is making it different, it will probably take a bit more time to feel at ease on the track but you eventually do so."

"I personally prefer Suzuka to Istanbul but like Jenson said, it has nothing to do with the run-off area, it's got to do with the shape of the circuit, shape of the tarmac, how we are actually running," Kovalainen added. "I think it's a great layout, high speed, change of direction, it's where a Formula 1 car is at its best and we wouldn't race here if it was too risky and if the circuit hadn't passed the tests. I don't think we have any more concern (about here) than we do at other places."

Button was asked to comment on the news that his McLaren contract had been extended.

"All I can say is that I am very happy," the British driver said. "I think this is a great opportunity over the next couple of years to really work closely with Vodafone McLaren Mercedes. We are so close to fighting with Red Bull, but yet so far. I think it is good to have the continuity going forward for the next couple of years. It is going to help us take the fight to them next season, I hope. That's what we are working towards. It's been a good couple of weeks. I have been enjoying racing and it is nice to finally sign on the dotted line and get a deal in place for the near future."

From that point on, the press conference was all about Vettel's championship winning weekend. First up, he was asked if he minded being congratulated on the title in advance, or if he was superstitious about it.

"Obviously there's still a chance for Jenson to win the title and for me not to win the title," Vettel said. "As I said, even if it's only one point – I said it straight after Singapore – we tried all year and we always try to keep our feet on the ground and approach this race by race, and try to do the best. The moment you decide to fly, sooner or later there's a moment when you will come down as well. You have to, nothing flies for ever. I think it would be wrong to think like that at this stage and as I said, the target going into this weekend is not to get one point, in a way it's not to win the championship, the target is to do our best. If our best, for some reason, is tenth, then we try to get a tenth but if our best is possibly to win the race then we have to go for it and try to win the race. We want to do it in the right way, so I think if you have the ability, the package overall, to do well around here, you have to enjoy it and you have to make sure that if the chance is there to finish on the podium you finish on the podium. Yes, there would be reason to celebrate, even if we finish tenth, but it wouldn't be the same so we try to race as usual and we try to get the best out of ourselves."

Button was then asked to comment on Vettel's reference to the fact that the McLaren driver was still mathematically in contention.

"I think it's great, going into this race, Sebastian thinking that I have a chance of winning the title," Button said. "He's probably the only person here... or the only person that's saying so. It's all but over. I think for Sebastian, he probably doesn't want to think about it until after the race because after the race, when the championship's actually done it's a big buzz to cross the finish line and win the championship and I'm sure that's something that he's looking forward to but he doesn't want to think about right now, and especially to discuss with us lot here. For me, this is a circuit I'd love to win on, I think we all would. It's all about the challenge and to come away with a victory here would be very special. I'm sure it would be overshadowed by a certain person winning the championship but it would still be very enjoyable for myself."

Asked what it was like to be one point away from a second title, the defending champion refused to be drawn.

"Well, that is what most of the people talk about and for them it is over, but even if it's one point, I said it straight after the race and I still say the same thing even if people would like to hear something else," Vettel said. "Even if it is one point we need to make sure we get it. If someone feels to do me a favour he can push Jenson down the stairs later on. That would help [laughs]. I don't think that is the way we should think about it. We are in a very good position. I am looking forward to the race here more so than anything else as this is a special track, very challenging. I think you just need to look at the first sector and life for us doesn't get much better. It is great to be here. We have had a tremendous run the last two years so we try to do similar to that and hopefully we will have a good weekend."

Winning a championship is always special, but Vettel was asked if it would mean more to be crowned at the circuit that has made champions of F1 legends including Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost.

"Unfortunately they took the log cabin down at the hotel, so there is no more singing," Vettel joked. "Fortunately and unfortunately. Some people you don't want to hear when they sing! We are focused on the race first of all, which is what we enjoy more than anything else and then we will see. I remember the years when Michael was very close, I think in 1998 to win the championship, and then he had an engine blow up. Before that I wasn't following, but I have seen enough footage and read a lot, especially about Senna and (Alain) Prost. I don't think I need to touch on it. Everyone knows. It is a special circuit. Not just because it is a challenging circuit, but the history around here. It is one of the grands prix with real tradition and real history. In a way you feel it every lap but also it was very special to me two years ago to win here for the first time so we try to do it again."

And in the only other bit of non-Vettel chat, Button was asked to reflect on recent comments that he was currently delivering the best performances of his career thus far.

"I thought I drove pretty well through my championship-winning season, especially the first part of the season but I'm definitely a better driver now: the experiences that I've been through – good and bad – since then: it's pretty traumatic when you're fighting for a championship and you're struggling for pace, so the experiences I've been through and the confidence that I have now and the team that I'm working with – they definitely help my performances," he said. "Am I more content? I don't know. I've been pretty content over the last few years, in terms of racing and in terms of private life, so that's not making a difference."

Finally, Vettel was asked to reminisce about his days driving alongside Kobayashi. The German driver had some lovely things to say.

"I have a lot of good memories," Vettel said. "I remember that it was Kamui's first year in Formula 3, so he came in as a rookie, but you can ask Paul as well. We were all in the same team at the same time and I remember in some corners Kamui was – I don't know – 10kph or even more quicker than all of us. We didn't understand. And he was quicker the whole weekend. In other corners, obviously, we were a little bit quicker than him, but it's always give and take and I don't think he's lost his craziness that you sometimes see."

"I remember the race that we had here and he overtook I don't know how many cars," the Red Bull driver continued. "It seems that sometimes he sees

gaps or he finds a different line on the track that other people don't find. I think it makes him a very good driver; you never know for the future. Obviously the situation has changed a little bit, there are a lot more cameras around now and we don't get to see (one another) or chat as much as we did in the past but I think – or I know – he's still the same kind of guy. I wouldn't mind racing with him again – as long as I make sure he's not 10kph quicker in some corners.”

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## F1 Japan Blog – FPI at Suzuka

Japanophile Jenson Button celebrated the extension of his McLaren contract by topping the timesheets in Suzuka on Friday morning in a 1-2 for the team.

The British driver led teammate Lewis Hamilton by one-tenth in a morning that saw Sebastian Vettel crash and Pastor Maldonado stop on track.

Vettel's incident, which came fairly late in the session, saw the Red Bull driver overcook it coming out of Degner One. As a result, he didn't have a chance of making it through Denger Two unscathed, and the 2011 champion-elect found himself parked in the tyre wall. Driver and car were essentially fine, and there are no concerns that Vettel will miss out on any of FP2 as a result.

Maldonado had a fairly hairy morning, running onto the grass through the esses before coming to a stop on track. It first appeared as though his retirement from the session was as a result of damage to the car, but Williams later revealed that they had stopped their driver before mechanical concerns made themselves more publicly known.

In the break between the morning and afternoon sessions, Williams confirmed that Maldonado's engine – which was due to be replaced this evening – was on the brink of failure when the Venezuelan driver called it quits for the morning.

Aside from the two moments of interest brought about by Vettel and Maldonado, it was a fairly low key session. The first half hour was primarily composed of installation laps, and the last twenty minutes saw lap times tumble as drivers made the move to the option tyre.

Business as usual, really.

The only business that wasn't usual – although it wasn't completely unheard of either – was Vettel's accident preventing Red Bull from dominating the timesheets in the manner to which the team have become accustomed this season.

FPI times (unofficial)

1. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.33.634s [20 laps]
2. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.33.725s [18 laps]
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.34.090s [22 laps]
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.34.372s [24 laps]
5. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.34.426s [25 laps]
6. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.34.937s [23 laps]
7. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.35.585s [27 laps]
8. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.35.590s [25 laps]
9. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.36.033s [22 laps]
10. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.36.370s [18 laps]
11. Bruno Senna (Renault) 1.36.487s [18 laps]
12. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1.36.700s [21 laps]
13. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.36.948s [24 laps]
14. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1.36.949s [22 laps]
15. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1.37.103s [29 laps]
16. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.38.197s [18 laps]
17. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.38.331s [11 laps]
18. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.38.446s [8 laps]
19. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus) 1.39.168s [10 laps]
20. Karun Chandhok (Team Lotus) 1.39.946s [22 laps]
21. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.40.872s [13 laps]
22. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1.41.019s [24 laps]
23. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT) 1.41.106s [25 laps]
24. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1.41.775s [25 laps]

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## F1 Japan Blog – FP2 in Suzuka

Jenson Button topped the timesheets again this afternoon, as Kamui Kobayashi delighted fans with one of the ballsiest saves of the season.

The Japanese driver lost control of his car when he risked opening his DRS on the notorious 130R, but was able to hang on despite a trip across the grass and narrowly avoided planting his Sauber in the wall.

Kobayashi's accident avoidance techniques would have been useful in the Williams garage this afternoon. Rubens Barrichello brought his FP2 to an early end at Degner One when he was unable to recover after planting a wheel so far on the grass he was nearly in the flowerbeds.

Soon after, Maldonado also pulled to a stop at Degner One, and the team had to suffer the indignity of seeing two of their cars broken down at the same corner while the yellow flags fluttered in the wind.

As with his morning retirement, Maldonado's FP2 was brought to an end thanks to mechanical failure, although Williams have yet to reveal the precise cause.

The rest of the session passed with no major incident, although there were a few spins and offs that damaged little more than lap times.

Speaking of lap times, a number of drivers saw their first runs on supersofts ruined by Maldonado's early exit; the yellow flags prevented those on a flyer from learning just what the option tyre is capable of around this track.

Other items to note...

Jarno Trulli's best time was deceptively slow; the Italian driver's session was brought to an early halt as the result of some electrical issues spotted by the team.

Tonio Liuzzi's best time – around a decade slower than Button's pace-setting 1.31.90ls – was not representative of his or the car's capabilities. The Italian driver stopped on track after four laps thanks to sudden drop in water pressure. For a better idea of the HRTs' likely performance this weekend, look at teammate Daniel Ricciardo's best effort.

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.31.90ls [31 laps]
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.32.075s [33 laps]
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.32.095s [35 laps]
4. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.32.147s [28 laps]
5. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.32.448s [34 laps]
6. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.32.710s [26 laps]
7. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.32.982s [27 laps]
8. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.33.245s [26 laps]
9. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.33.446s [36 laps]
10. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.33.681s [33 laps]
11. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.33.705s [25 laps]
12. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.33.790s [36 laps]
13. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1.34.393s [35 laps]
14. Bruno Senna (Renault) 1.34.557s [27 laps]
15. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1.34.601s [33 laps]
16. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.36.038s [33 laps]
17. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus) 1.36.225s [35 laps]
18. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.37.123s [14 laps]
19. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.37.440s [30 laps]
20. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1.38.093s [30 laps]
21. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.38.387s [16 laps]
22. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT) 1.38.763s [36 laps]
23. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus) 1.39.800s [24 laps]
24. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT) 1.42.480s [4 laps]

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## F1 Japan Blog – Friday press conference at Suzuka

The team personnel press conference is usually the good one of the weekend – questions of substance, interesting answers, and not PRed from start to finish.

But this weekend in Suzuka, media and team members alike must have been a bit tired, as this is very much a diet press conference, light on matters of interest. Present were Giorgio Ascanelli (Toro Rosso), Pat Fry (Ferrari), James Key (Sauber), Paddy Lowe (McLaren), Adrian Newey (Red Bull), Naoki Tokunaga (Renault).

Q: Naoki, do you regard this as a home race?

Naoki TOKUNAGA: Yes of course. Coming back to Suzuka is always quite a good feeling. Not only because the circuit is very challenging both for the driver and the engineer but also it is my home grand prix. Also the fans, they are fantastic. They are always respectful with us and very happy and they know how to enjoy their race weekend. This year I came here with a little bit extra emotion obviously after the tragedy, so I am quite happy that the fans and the teams all got together again here in Suzuka for this great sporting event.

Q: When Honda and Toyota were involved there were a lot of Japanese people in Formula 1, but not so many these days. What is your background and how did you get into Formula 1?

NT: I studied in Japan and since then I have always wanted to work in motorsport and in particular Formula 1. My career started in an automotive company in Japan, but I always wanted to seek an opportunity in England to get a job and luckily I think it was in 2000 I got the job as a vehicle dynamics engineer at Enstone. It is how my career started and I enjoy the life there. It looks like it is a bit stuck in England but, nonetheless, it is not at all a bad country and I am quite happy being there.

Q: This weekend so far, are you happy to be back on this circuit rather than the slower corners of Singapore.

NT: Yes, this circuit is quite hard on tyres because the tyre energy as a byproduct of the tyre forces are quite high. Especially the front tyres. It is one of the highest circuits of all grand prix tracks. Coupled with this is the abrasive surface of the tarmac. Those combined can make the tyre degradation quite high so I think it is important you set the car balance right to avoid understeer in the high speed corner. We focussed today on getting a good balance and we worked on ride height and spring rates to get an easy to drive car. In P1 the balance is a little bit loose on the rear and poor traction. The good thing is the front of the car was quite strong in midcorner so we try to keep it and we worked on the rear to get it a little bit better. Also we try a little bit new differential mapping to help traction so in P2 the drivers were generally much happier so I think it was good sessions.

Q: Giorgio, we heard basically the expansion plans of the team at the Italian Grand Prix. Tell us how those are going and in comparison to the RRA, the Resource Restriction Agreement.

Giorgio ASCANELLI: Well, we have developed a plan. We will increase our capacity in aerodynamics, of course, and then in more or less every other part of the company. The accent is on aerodynamics and simulation. As per the RRA they are not a consideration yet. I don't think we are going to hit the limits anyway. A good selection of people is ongoing and we will have to try to make the best of it.

Q: Looking forward, when it comes to next year the rules are pretty much the same. But with the exhaust, how big a change is that?

GA: It is a very large change. I think this morning our car was quite better than this afternoon just because we had an evolution of the exhaust which unfortunately broke on us. I don't quite see this happening next year.

Q: Which, you don't see such breakages happening next year?

GA: I think there is going to be more limited space for development.

Q: So there is more work than perhaps would appear to be apparent?

GA: Yes.

Q: James, you have brought a lot of stuff this race. It's an important race for one of your drivers. How has the testing gone during the session?

James KEY: It has been okay. We had a lot of new bits. It wasn't just pure aero parts, there were mechanical parts involved in the bits we brought so we were pretty methodical this morning going through everything to check the affects of what we brought to make sure there were no hidden issues. That seemed to be okay. This afternoon we have been working more with the package that we have. The balance of the car needs improving at the moment, but the numbers we are seeing, the data all stacks up to what we expected, which is the most important thing. So I think so far so good but there is certainly some work to do this evening to get more out of it at the moment.

Q: Was that an effect from Force India pushing you or was it already planned?

JK: It was always planned to have an update for Suzuka. We have pushed it fairly hard recently because of Force India's good form of late but this time last year we set out when the major packages we wanted to introduce would be targeted for and Suzuka was the last major package of the year so we always had a plan to come here with some new parts.

Q: Paddy, interesting that both your drivers spoke about better straightline speed now and also a better rear wing for qualifying. How has that happened?

Paddy LOWE: Well we have a new rear wing which is better for qualifying! The principal difference between qualifying and the race is the DRS so it doesn't take a rocket scientist to work out that that is the reason. We have a wing and we have made a step on the difference between DRS on and off. That was the wing, actually, that we had in Singapore. Originally intended for this race but we managed to bring it early to Singapore.

Q: In terms of the rules talking about DRS, what changes for 2012? How have you been able to develop for 2012?

PL: This was the first year using it obviously so for all the teams it was a big learning curve. A big area, a big opportunity to make a difference against your competitors. The rules next year are exactly the same with the DRS so we will see the technology will mature more. Probably we will see less differences between the teams in terms of DRS effect. But we will still find more bit by bit.

Q: Just going back to DRS it was slightly more complicated than just opening and closing the flap?

PL: Do you mean in terms of how it works through the race and though the event?

Q: Yes.

PL: I think it has been a fascinating area for this year not just for the actually race and the entertainment it has given with easier overtaking which I think has transformed the nature of races. Technically it has been fascinating. It has added a whole new dimension to the process of selecting the best wing for an event. It used to be quite a one dimensional task, run a wing, have a little look at what your competitors were doing as well iterate through the weekend to the right wing level. Now you have an extra dimension which is what is your qualifying pace, what's your race pace with the DRS, without it, and even with the complication that if it is raining in qualifying then you cannot use the DRS. You might have to factor that in if it's a weekend with potential rain. Lots of complicated sums for the guys to do in the office with the computers to work out what's the best plan.

Q: Adrian, Kamui Kobayashi said yesterday that one of the great strengths of Sebastian Vettel's was his ability to communicate to the engineers. Tell us about that and his other strengths.

Adrian NEWEY: He is a very bright young lad who thinks a lot about what he does. Takes a lot of time to try and understand the car, understand his own performance. Like most good drivers he has a good feeling for the car. He is very strong in some areas. He has a very good feeling for the tyres, what can I say.

Q: Is that communication though something that stands out as you have worked with many drivers over the years?

AN: I think Sebastian is very gifted naturally but he works hard at it and that is always the hallmark of a great driver.

Q: Some of the drivers you've worked with, have they worked as hard or can you just see an extra dimension from him?

AN: Pass.

Q: In terms of today, how are your feelings about today? It is interesting three manufacturers in the first three places.

AN: It's Friday, what can I say. It's the usual thing on a Friday. We don't know exactly what fuel loads people are running and everybody is trying to understand what suits their car on the day. I think Friday, get on and do your own job and then Saturday and Sunday you start to find out where you are.

Q: A lot of teams say this circuit suits their car better. They weren't so happy with the slower circuits such as the slower corners of Singapore, but your car seems to work everywhere. Is that the case?

AN: I will be able to tell you on Sunday evening.

Q: But you're happy with the performance so far?

AN: So far, yeah.

Q: Pat, the tyres this year were obviously very new. What sort of changes do you see for next year?

Pat FRY: Well the rear construction is changing. Compounds are changing so exactly what that is, I don't think it is going to be a big step or as big a step in terms of how the degradation of the tyres is affected. I don't think we will actually know until we actually run them.

Q: That is something you have had a problem with in terms of temperature. Is that something you can see a little bit the goalpost moving and is that going to be a problem aiming at those goalposts next year?

PF: I don't think so. I think the goalposts are going to be in a similar position. We have just got to move our car so we are working closer to the right area and that's what we are working on now and over the winter.

Q: At what point is the car at the moment? We have heard talk about how it is going to be a much more aggressive, revolutionary car next year.

PF: Things are progressing as you would expect this time of year really. It's the same bunch of guys. They are motivated and doing a great job. We will never know if it is good enough really until the first race.

Q: Is it more revolutionary?

PF: It's different. It looks a little bit different but I think there are exhaust rules changing. There are lots of little bits that will end up with the cars looking slightly different but I wouldn't class it as a revolution as such.

Q: Are there such things as revolutions in Formula 1 now?

PF: Not really, no. It is just hard work isn't it?

Q: Adrian, we've seen that you've built cars for lots of former champions who have been crowned here in Japan, from Senna to Prost to Hakkinen. How would you rate Vettel amongst those former champions?

AN: Unfortunately I wasn't involved with Ayrton when he was crowned champion here, so I can't comment on that one. It's a bit along the lines of the question earlier. I think Sebastian is obviously supremely talented but I kind of feel it's unfair to start comparing one driver I've worked with against another.

Q: Do you think he might have the potential to go on and be a multiple World Champion even beyond this season?

AN: I think undoubtedly yes, there's no doubt Sebastian can do it. It's up to us to try and deliver the car that allows him to do it.

Q: Not a technical question but one for everybody. We move on to Korea next, which was a new track last year, and then on to India, which is a new track for this year. How important do you see the constant expansion of the Formula 1 calendar, and for you, and your teams, how much are looking forward to India? How much can we learn from India? How much can they learn from Formula 1?

AN: I think it's great to be going to new places. India is obviously a country we've never been to before so in that sense it's very good, we enjoy going to new circuits. The only caveat I would put on that is that it's important that we don't forget our long-standing traditional circuits. Coming to Suzuka or Monza, Spa, all the great classic circuits that we have and still do go to - I think it would be an awful shame if they dropped of the calendar because, at the end of the day, it's those that are there year-in, year-out and if Formula 1 lost them, it might be difficult to ever get them back again.

PL: It is a World Championship, so I think bringing the race to more parts of the world... India is a very major population centre in the world, so I think it's great to be going there. We need to go to more places. Going to the States next year is also a really great step.

Q: It looks as though fighter pilot-like canopies are going to be inevitable in Formula 1. What are the technical challenges and do you feel that a closed cockpit runs counter to the spirit of Formula 1?

AN: I don't think they are inevitable, actually.

PL: I don't think it's inevitable. It's something that's being studied. A lot of discussion has occurred at council meetings in the FIA as to whether such a thing is right for the sport. An essential feature of Formula 1 is that it's open-wheeled and open-cockpit. I think the decision, if ever it was taken, to close the cockpit would be very, very fundamental and I think those councillors have already expressed reservations about that, so I think there would have to be a very, very compelling case made that that was an essential feature for safety. Some work is being done to research into it and so far I don't think that a compelling case is emerging, even though there is a risk... I think the biggest risk still present in Formula 1, to a driver, is in that area, as we saw with Felipe the other year, but it's not necessarily proven that a canopy is the right solution to that.

Q: Mercedes, next year, has five former technical directors employed, a new Formula 1 record: how can you survive against them with all this human brain-power?

PL: I hadn't realised it was five. Yeah, that is a lot. Yeah, all is lost. I think we should just all go home! No, they're all good guys. We know them all. I think it's a strong team. We look forward to competing against them.

AN: Similarly, I'm going to worry about what we do in Milton Keynes, not what's happening in Brackley, to be perfectly honest.

PF: Same. I'm not really thinking about it, to be honest. I've got my own issues and things to sort out. It's a strong team, as Paddy says. Time will tell, won't it?

NT: Each team has its own approach and I think we have a different approach. To tell the truth, I am concentrating on our team, the structure and strategy, how to distribute our resources. We have a different approach.

GA: Or all six of us could go to Mercedes as well and make it!!! Mercedes could manage enough, they pay well, I'm sure we could agree on something!



JK: It's always difficult to comment on what other teams are doing, because you never really know how they are structured and how they work. As Paddy said, it's a pretty strong line-up of people, all with good experience. Personally, I've only really worked for relatively small teams and I guess the one thing I could say from a small team's perspective is that efficiency is certainly better when you're small and I guess with more people, particularly good experienced people, maybe that takes a bit more managing, to make sure it all fits in together – but it's not really for me to say.

Q: Adrian, Ferrari is promising a very aggressive new car for next season. McLaren's drivers, also, were complaining somehow, because the car this year was not as powerful and as competitive and they have put a lot of pressure [on their team]. What is the Red Bull going to be next year? Will it be an evolution of what we have now? Do you think that the advantage that you have is enough or are you going to explore new roads and surprise everybody again?

AN: I think that fundamentally there's no point in doing something new if it's not better, so our approach is certainly not complacency, so we're not thinking: 'we don't have to do anything, we'll still be quick enough next year.' That would be enormous folly. We're working away trying to deal with the regulation changes. I think, as mentioned, the restriction on the exhaust exit position is actually a very big change; it goes through the car. Other than that, the regulation changes are significant but not huge. So, in that sense, the car will be an evolution, it will bear a family resemblance to the RB5, RB6, RB7 lineage. It's just a matter of pushing on, as always. As Pat mentioned earlier, the fact is that you don't know how much performance your competitors are going to find over the winter, so it's get your heads down and get on with it, and you find out where you are come the first race.

Q: To Paddy and Adrian, what do Jenson Button and Sebastian Vettel have that their team-mates don't have, whether it's positive or negative? What extra thing do they bring to the team?

AN: One's English, one's German, I guess. I don't know, how you can answer that? I can't answer for Paddy, obviously, but I think for Sebastian, this year, he's obviously driving with great confidence on the back of his championship from last year. I think importantly, the change to Pirelli tyres has taken Mark longer than Sebastian to understand how best to use those tyres. In truth, you can have this perception that the difference is big; it doesn't take much of a swing for things to change, so while Sebastian has clearly had a much stronger run than Mark this year, quite often the difference in the race has been quite small but the results have been different enough that the points standing is where it is.

PL: Between our two drivers, they are very different personalities, they have different styles in the car, but they are both great champions and both driving very well and at similar pace. I think that's great for us; they both give good feedback but complimentary, so it works well.

Q: If one is deeper in his analysis of the car, there must be differences in some ways.

PL: I think it's a bit like you see in races. Lewis has a very aggressive style, he can go straight out there and find the limit immediately. Jenson will work up to that point more subtly to that point but I think that what's great is that you come to qualifying and both guys will go out and deliver the lap. It's just a slightly different way that they do their homework.

Q: Adrian, in two years of racing in Abu Dhabi, Sebastian is the only person to have won there. What is it about the Yas Marina circuit that suits Red Bull and Sebastian?

AN: Crikey, I don't know is the honest answer to that. We have had a good run there for the last two years but I'm not sure there's any particular feature of the circuit that makes it well-suited to Sebastian and the car. Can't answer that I'm afraid.

Q: Paddy, following on your DRS comments earlier on, would you like to see DRS use being totally free throughout the weekend, including the race?

PL: I think not, no. The whole point of it was to improve the overtaking in the race. I don't think we want to make overtaking trivial. It's a fine balance, I think it's one that's set at the moment by the FIA in their selection of the zone length and the number of zones, and I think that works well. They need to keep tuning it but if you just made it completely free in the race, I really think that you would make it far too easy and that would go the other extreme in terms of detracting from the spectacle.

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## F1 Japan Blog – FP3 at Suzuka

On Saturday morning in Suzuka, Jenson Button made it a clean sweep at the top of the timesheets. The British driver has been fastest in all three sessions thus far.

But the general sense in the press room is that Red Bull are sandbagging, and that there's a lot more pace to come this afternoon. Sebastian Vettel has won the Japanese Grand Prix from pole for the past two years, and there's no reason to believe it will be any different today.

The Red Bulls have scored every pole of the season thus far, and it would be highly unusual for a driver of Vettel's calibre to drop the ball now.

Following a Friday practice crash, the champion-elect admitted that he would exercise more caution in the weekend's practice sessions, but in qualifying and the race all bets will be off. Vettel might only need one point to win, but he's not the kind of racer to harvest points when victory is in sight.

The final practice session of the Japanese Grand Prix weekend saw retirements from both Bruno Senna and Tonio Liuzzi.

Liuzzi limped out of the session after 8 laps following an undramatic loss in hydraulic pressure that saw the HRT stop on track, while Senna's retirement was somewhat more chaotic.

The Renault driver brought out the red flags when he ran wide at the exit of Spoon before crashing into the tyre barriers opposite, snapping his front left wheel tether in the process. Senna's crash was about as classy as it gets – he lined up on the grass with the wheel neatly positioned on his nose cone.

FP3 times (unofficial)

1. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1:31.255s [13 laps]

2. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1:31.762s [16 laps]



3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.32.122s [18 laps]
  4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.32.279s [16 laps]
  5. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.32.401s [14 laps]
  6. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.32.429s [16 laps]
  7. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.32.725s [19 laps]
  8. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.32.878s [17 laps]
  9. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.33.058s [15 laps]
  10. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.33.424s [14 laps]
  11. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.33.469s [18 laps]
  12. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.33.545s [18 laps]
  13. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.33.818s [17 laps]
  14. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1.33.836s [21 laps]
  15. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1.33.990s [16 laps]
  16. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.34.321s [21 laps]
  17. Bruno Senna (Renault) 1.35.389s [5 laps]
  18. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.35.651s [18 laps]
  19. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus) 1.36.327s [16 laps]
  20. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus) 1.36.912s [14 laps]
  21. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1.37.938s [17 laps]
  22. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.38.011s [16 laps]
  23. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT) 1.38.355s [19 laps]
  24. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT) 1.41.907s [8 laps]
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## F1 Japan Blog – Q1 at Suzuka

As the pitlane opened for the start of qualifying for the Japanese Grand Prix, air temperatures were 23 degrees, while track temperature is 36 degrees. Wind speeds have been steadily increasing all day.

The first laps show the usual split between confident teams and those less sure of making it into Q2. Ferrari sent their drivers out on the medium tyre, while HRT and Virgin left the pits shod in the softer compound.

By the time the session approached the ten minute mark, all drivers barring Nico Rosberg, Tonio Liuzzi, Bruno Senna, and Heikki Kovalainen had left the pits, although not everyone had crossed the line and set a timed lap.

Fernando Alonso is currently top of the sheets with a 1.32.817s, leading to a provisional 107 percent time of 1.39.314s. While Liuzzi has yet to set a time, Daniel Ricciardo's current 1.28.061s sees the HRT driver safely within the 107 percent time, meaning it's unlikely any driver will fail to qualify this afternoon.

With six minutes remaining, Senna, Rosberg, and Liuzzi have yet to leave the pits and so remain firmly in the dropout zone. Keeping them company for the moment are Jarno Trulli, Timo Glock, Jerome D'Ambrosio, and Ricciardo.

Senna and Liuzzi finally hit the track with only five minutes remaining, while Rosberg continues to sit pretty in the garage.

The Renault team deserve praise for getting Senna's car back together after a hefty FP3 shunt. Their efforts were repaid by the Brazilian, who set the fastest time in the first sector on his first timed lap, and crossed the line in P8 before being instantly displaced by other drivers..

Liuzzi has returned to the pits without setting a time. Rosberg is getting out of his car, and will not set a time this session. While the team have yet to confirm the reason, the rumour doing the rounds of the press room is that the Mercedes driver was sidelined with a hydraulics failure.

As the chequered flag falls, Kamui Kobayashi is fastest with a 1.32.626s. The dropout zone is comprised of both drivers from Team Lotus, Virgin, and HRT, plus Nico Rosberg.

### Dropout zone

18. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus)
  19. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus)
  20. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin)
  21. Timo Glock (Virgin)
  22. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT)
  23. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes)
  24. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT)
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## F1 Japan Blog – Q2 at Suzuka

It was a calm Q1 under the Japanese sun, although Mercedes' Nico Rosberg suffered a hydraulics failure on his installation lap and was unable to set a time in the first session.

Tonio Liuzzi suffered problems with his HRT (as part of an ongoing theme that's been running all weekend), and was also unable to set a time in Q1

thanks to a reported engine failure.

Rosberg will almost certainly be allowed to start tomorrow's race from P23, given the pace he's demonstrated all weekend, but Liuzzi might not be so lucky.

The Italian driver has completed a mere 12 laps across all three practice sessions, and has yet to complete a lap within sniffing distance of the 107 percent time. Friday morning saw Narain Karthikeyan driving Liuzzi's car; the reserve driver completed twice as many laps in a single session as the full-time man has managed all weekend.

Sebastian Vettel adds further fuel to the Red Bull sandbagging fire when he crosses the line in 1.31.424s early on in Q2. But Lewis Hamilton bests him by nearly three-tenths when he takes the top spot with a 1.31.139s. Predictions of a 1.30s pole might not be all that far-fetched...

Mid-way through the session, Kamui Kobayashi, Adrian Sutil, Bruno Senna, Rubens Barrichello, Pastor Maldonado, Paul di Resta, and Sergio Perez are in the dropout zone, although di Resta and Perez have yet to set timed laps.

With two and a half minutes remaining, the bulk of the grid remain in the pits and look unlikely to do a final run. Cars need to leave the pitlane in the next few seconds if they are to cross the line in time to complete a timed lap.

And the dropout zone leaves the pits as one, although Sergio Perez doesn't do it in his car. That'll be P17 for the Mexican driver.

Toro Rosso have taken the brave – if foolhardy – decision not to defend their precarious places in Q3. But the team decided a few races ago that their race pace was so much stronger than their qualifying ability that there was little point in fighting for positions that could be made up with ease on Sunday.

And with that, the session draws to a close. The dropout zone is comprised of neat pairings of Force Indias, Williams, Toro Rossos, and Sergio Perez. Kobayashi has made it through to Q3 in front of his home crowd.

#### Dropout zone

11. Adrian Sutil (Force India)
12. Paul di Resta (Force India)
13. Rubens Barrichello (Williams)
14. Pastor Maldonado (Williams)
15. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso)
16. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso)
17. Sergio Perez (Sauber)

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## F1 Japan Blog – Q3 at Suzuka

The first man to set a time in Q3 is Ferrari's Felipe Massa, who manages a 1.31.287s and holds pole for a nanosecond.

Hamilton bests Massa with a 1.30.617s, good enough for provisional pole.

Button manages a 1.30.736s, while Vettel crosses the line in a very surprising 1.30.825s. Webber takes provisional P4 with a 1.31.156s.

Half the pack has avoided running this session, which makes for very slim pickings on the writing front. We've had installation laps, but not much in the way of times.

McLaren mis-timed Hamilton's final run; the British driver missed crossing the line before the chequered flag by milliseconds, and his chances of retaining that provisional pole are slimmer than none.

Vettel takes provisional pole by a whisker, and Button takes P2 by slipping across the line in a very tidy 1.30.475s, only 0.009s slower than the Red Bull.

Hamilton would almost certainly have taken pole from both men, given his pace throughout qualifying, but the poor timing from the team scuppered that chance.

No times set from Schumacher, Senna, Petrov, or Kobayashi, all of whom will have been saving tyres for Sunday's show. With 40 percent of the top ten choosing not to run, qualifying has gone from the thrilling to the ridiculous.

Change the regulations now to save qualifying.

#### Provisional grid

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull)
2. Jenson Button (McLaren)
3. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren)
4. Felipe Massa (Ferrari)
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari)
6. Mark Webber (Red Bull)

7. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes)
  8. Bruno Senna (Renault)
  9. Vitaly Petrov (Renault)
  10. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber)
  11. Adrian Sutil (Force India)
  12. Paul di Resta (Force India)
  13. Rubens Barrichello (Williams)
  14. Pastor Maldonado (Williams)
  15. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso)
  16. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso)
  17. Sergio Perez (Sauber)
  18. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus)
  19. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus)
  20. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin)
  21. Timo Glock (Virgin)
  22. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT)
  23. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes)
  24. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT)
- 

## F1 Japan Blog – Saturday press conference at Suzuka

Seasoned pole sitter Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) joined McLaren drivers Jenson Button and Lewis Hamilton in the post-qualifying press conference in Suzuka on Sunday afternoon.

Vettel, who had not topped the timesheets all weekend, delivered yet another stellar qualifying lap to claim his umpteenth pole of the season.

“It was a great qualifying for us, no doubt, especially as these guys looked so quick right from yesterday morning onwards,” the Red Bull driver said. “We were struggling a bit yesterday to set up the car. I did a mistake in P1, which did not help. Lost the front wing, but the team did everything to bring it back and just in time it arrived and we got it for qualifying.

“Once you are in the car, you have got a new set of tyres on, you think you have got everything set up and you find yourself in Q3 – then you know it is between you, the car and the track,” Vettel continued. “To be honest I enjoyed it a lot. I knew that after the first run of Q3 it was possible.”

But despite his Q3 confidence, the current and future world champion admitted to a worrying lack of pace on Friday.

“I think it’s pretty simple: we were not quick enough, we were not quick enough on one lap yesterday, in particular myself,” Vettel admitted. “I wasn’t quick enough this morning on one lap on lower fuel so yeah, we definitely weren’t taking it for granted to fight for pole and we weren’t sure whether we stood a chance because McLaren, in particular, looked very competitive.

“The focus was to make sure that we got everything out of ourselves, whether that’s pole position or not didn’t really matter that much. It was key to get everything out of the car, out of myself this afternoon which I think we did and we just got pole, so obviously it’s a nice reward – as I said, a lot of hard work put into it.

“Yesterday afternoon we have been pretty competitive on high fuel so we’re looking forward to the race, but as Jenson says, it’s going to be tricky,” Vettel concluded. “There will probably be three or four stops. It’s a long race, a lot of things can happen, your pace might be good at the beginning or it could be bad at the beginning and then turn around so we will see. We have to go with the tyres and see what we can do, but we are very happy for today.”

Despite McLaren’s impressive pace in practice and qualifying in Suzuka, Button is less optimistic about their chances in Sunday’s race.

“If you look at our one lap pace in practice it was very good but if you look at our long runs, I think we were about 1.5s slower than these guys,” he said. “Either they were running a different fuel load than us – yeah, I wish we had 200 kilos in the car – or we are seriously in trouble. Hopefully they were running less fuel than us, but as I said, however much fuel you ran yesterday, the consistency is very difficult with these tyres, especially with the softer of the two and it’s going to be a hard race tomorrow.”

Button and Hamilton were asked to explain Vettel’s continuing domination of the season.

“Is there an explanation?,” Button asked. “He’s done a better job and Red Bull have done a better job than we have, basically. That’s it.”

Hamilton felt that McLaren could have taken the fight to Red Bull had recent improvements to the car come earlier in the year.

“We’ve not had the car – for the whole season – that we have now,” he said. “We would have been able to compete a bit more if we had.”

Hamilton was impressed with the performance of his car, but rued the chance of a final lap that could have seen the McLaren driver on pole this weekend.

“The team have done a fantastic job to get us here and to be able to compete with the Red Bulls on this kind of circuit is pretty impressive,” he said.

“The car was feeling great. I felt I had a couple of tenths at least left. I had time. There were a couple of corners where I lost a bit of time on my first runs. I felt I was in a position to at least fight with these guys but it was a bit dangerous at the last corner where I had Mark [Webber] attacking me and I

had Michael [Schumacher] down the outside. It was very, very strange and that's really where we lost the lap."

Asked to go into further detail, Hamilton declined.

"I prefer not to, really," he said. "I think you could see it on the TV. I would have to watch the replay, but Jenson was in front of me. He slowed down to get his gap and I was coming up to the last corner, trying to make sure that I had a gap between me and him. It wasn't that big and just as I was coming into the chicane I looked in my mirror and I saw Mark diving up the inside of me, and then I saw... I didn't even see Michael but as I gave Mark room, Michael nearly crashed me on the left, so it was... quite dangerous."

One of the biggest concerns this weekend is tyre degradation, with Pirelli predicting around four pit stops per driver.

"The degradation here... it is a very fast circuit and the first sector, particularly, is quite tough on the tyres," Hamilton said. "But I think everyone is in the same boat and making the tyres last is going to be interesting. I think there is going to be a similar kind of strategy to what we have seen in the past."

"I really don't know what's going to happen tomorrow," Button said. "Yesterday, people were running lots of different fuel loads when they were running longer runs. I hope they were anyway, and tyres don't seem to last that long but hopefully it will be a different story tomorrow."

"I really haven't got a clue at this point in time on how many pit stops it's going to be: definitely more than one and probably definitely more than two so you are working towards three and four pit stops I think," he added. "So it's going to be interesting to see how that goes. Hopefully our pit crew is strong at the moment. I think they are, they've looked good in the last couple of races and hopefully we're better on the tyres tomorrow than we were yesterday."

"I would say there is a fair difference to last year," Vettel added. "I think everyone can feel that. We are faster overall, if you look only at the lap time, but we are making a lot of time up on the straights with the DRS system around here, which is quite powerful in qualifying."

"In cornering I think we are a little less strong than last year," he continued. "One, because of the car and second, probably because of the tyres. But it should be an interesting race tomorrow as it is not that straightforward. Last year it was a one-stop race and once everyone has done their stop we race to the chequered flag, but this year it could be quite entertaining. I don't think it is yet 100 per cent sure what the right strategy will be exactly. I think we will definitely see more than one stop that's for sure."

Finally, the drivers were grilled on the current status of Q3, which sees fewer drivers running every week thanks to the need for tyre preservation. The exchange, which was a masterclass in question avoidance, has been copied in full below.

Q. Qualifying has become a declining spectacle this season; I think we all admit that. I would like to know your opinions on having extra tyres allocated just for qualifying from 2012 onwards, so that we actually get all ten people running for a change. It's been a declining spectacle.

JB: Has it?

Q. We had three people sitting out last weekend, four people sitting it out this weekend; the number of people running has reduced all year.

JB: It's different from where we are sitting, I think. When you're fighting for pole, and it's that close I think it's a massive spectacle, having two different makes of car and engine, and two different drivers fighting it out and being that close in qualifying is phenomenal. To have that is great, I think it's exciting.

Q. But the tyres? How do you feel about increasing the allocation and having qualifying-only tyres for next year?

JB: Well, I think that's the case, isn't it?

SV: I think the bottom line is that even if we had more tyres... where do you get the points? You get them in the race, so even if you had more tyres, then the situation arises where tyre degradation is high, you will still - no matter how many sets...

Q. If they were just for qualifying, or just for Q3...

SV: Yeah, obviously... I think the cars that didn't go out twice or didn't go out at all - I didn't see it - obviously they used up their tyres beforehand, to make it to Q2 and then to Q3. For us it's a bit different because we are in a lucky situation whereby the car is good enough, especially in first qualifying, on hard tyres, to usually get through. I don't think we need a different type of tyre, I think we have enough stops in the race.

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## F1 Japan Blog – The Japanese Grand Prix as it happened

I could start this piece with the usual preamble about weather and atmosphere. But all we're really looking at is the next 53 laps before Vettel is crowned 2011 World Drivers' Champion.

And they're off!

Vettel squeezes Button onto the grass, and Hamilton takes advantage of the move to slip past his teammate into P2. Button radios his team calling for a penalty for Vettel.

Kobayashi is one of the big losers off the start line, dropping from P7 to P12 on the first lap.

The stewards have announced they are investigating the Button-Vettel incident on the first corner.

Lap 3, and it's beginning to settle down on track. Vettel is pulling out his traditional lead, but has only managed 1.5s so far. It's a lot, but nothing when

compared to his Singapore advantage. Given the number of pit stops we're expecting to see this afternoon, Vettel needs to be pulling out at least 1s a lap.

Nico Rosberg is clawing his way up the grid, albeit slowly, after he was unable to set a time in Saturday's qualifying. The Mercedes driver is up to P19 by lap 4, but stuck behind a duelling Perez and Trulli.

Lap 5 and Alonso slides neatly past teammate Massa heading into Turn 1 for P4.

Vettel continues to extend his lead; by lap 6 the Red Bull driver has 3.1s in hand over Hamilton in P2.

Rosberg is still stuck behind Trulli, sparking memories of those legendary Trulli trains in the Italian driver's Toyota days.

The stewards have announced that no action will be taken on the Vettel-Button incident on the first lap.

Hamilton is losing time behind Vettel; the McLaren driver is currently around a second a lap slower than his rival. Button is now 0.8s behind his teammate, and getting closer. Lap 7 and Button gets past at Spoon.

Hamilton is pitting; there's something very wrong with his performance at the moment and the team are banking on the fact that it's his tyres. Sutil follows Hamilton into the pits.

Turns out Hamilton had a right rear puncture, which explains his loss of pace.

Vettel pits at the start of lap 10, handing the lead to Button. Schumacher and Liuzzi also pit.

The championship leader returns to the track in P6, and the current top ten is: Button, Alonso, Massa, Webber, di Resta, Hamilton, Petrov, Buemi, Kobayashi. But not for long – there's a run for the pits.

Button and Alonso pit together on lap 11; Webber follows, as does di Resta. Massa is leading the race for the first time in what feels like decades.

Massa has a sizeable gap at the front, but not enough to make this race his own.

Lap 11 and Buemi retires from the race with a loose wheel. Looks like it wasn't attached properly in the stop.

Vettel now leads from Button, Alonso, Hamilton, Massa, Webber, Petrov, Schumacher, Perez, and Sutil.

The gap between Vettel and Button has been holding steady around 2.6s for a few laps now; if Button's not able to get closer in the next few laps, Vettel will pull away as soon as the McLaren's tyres start to degrade.

Schumacher has been over-working his tyres, and is warned of heavy blistering at the front. But that explains why he has been lapping at around 0.8s a lap slower than his teammate.

The words of warning did not prevent Schumacher from slipping neatly past Petrov on lap 15, when the gap between the two drivers had narrowed to 0.2s.

Something special seems to happen to Kamui Kobayashi when he's in front of his home crowd – he reverts to the overtaking monster we know and love. This time, the Sauber driver past Alguersuari while the Spanish driver was looking the other way.

Maldonado pits at the end of lap 16, and the pitlane fills with smoke.

Massa and Hamilton are getting ready for a fight – there's 0.2s between them, and Hamilton doesn't seem to have the pace to defend. It's hard to see whether it's car trouble or driver error, but there are locking brakes, missed apexes, and driving not of the standard we traditionally associate with one of the grid's great talents.

But while Hamilton is struggling, Button is taking chunks out of Vettel: the gap between P1 and P2 is down to 1.6s by lap 18, and the McLaren driver is fighting for a chance at the win.

Further down the pack, Rosberg is still clawing his way up despite lapping significantly faster than his teammate. Nico is currently in P16, and looking to make a move on Barrichello.

Vettel pits at the end of lap 19, followed immediately by his teammate. Interesting tactics. Button inherits the lead, and Vettel returns to the action in P5.

The Red Bull looks to be a lot harder on its tyres than expected – the Red Bull pair are the only drivers to have pitted twice thus far, while Perez has yet to stop at all.

Lap 20, and Button pits for new rubber, handing the lead to Alonso. Button emerges from the pits ahead of Vettel, and we could be in for a more interesting race than any of us expected.

Lap 21 and Alonso and Hamilton pit, handing the lead back to Massa. Webber scores the fastest lap down in P6; the Australian driver isn't having much of an impact on this afternoon's running.

Massa and Hamilton touch in the final chicane of what appears to be lap 20 – we're only seeing replay footage – and it looks as though the contact

was Hamilton's fault.

Button is currently leading the pack, with Vettel chasing around 0.9s further down the track.

As we enter lap 23, the order at the top is Button, Vettel, Alonso, Webber, Massa, Schumacher, Hamilton, Sutil, di Resta, Kobayashi. But Sutil pits, putting Barrichello up into the potential points.

The Safety Car has been deployed on lap 24, apparently to clear debris on track in Turns 7 and 16. Isn't that what yellow flags are for?

Press room cynics are saying that the Safety Car deployment is to retrieve Vettel's lead, not the track debris.

As is traditional under the Safety Car, everyone and his dog heads for the pits in what is essentially a free stop.

The Safety Car continues to circulate until the end of lap 27, and racing restarts on lap 28. Button holds on to the lead at the restart, and the margin back to Vettel is up to over a second almost immediately – the McLaren pulls out half a second on the Red Bull in the first sector.

Button is delivering a commanding performance this afternoon, extending his lead on Vettel lap by lap.

Vettel pits at the end of lap 33, moving from P2 down to P11 and stuck in traffic. Pirelli think this is Vettel's final stop of the race. It will be a balance between losing grip while stuck in traffic and gaining positions while his rivals stop.

Alonso is now in P2, nearly 5s behind Button on track. Webber pits.

Within a lap, Vettel has climbed from P11 to P9, securing the single point needed to take the title this afternoon.

Hamilton pits at the end of lap 35, leading di Resta down the pitlane. Senna follows them in shortly afterwards.

Button and Massa pit at the end of lap 36, and Alonso inherits the lead.

The current top ten is: Alonso, Schumacher, Button, Perez, Vettel, Sutil, Webber, Rosberg, Massa, Hamilton.

Alonso pits at the end of lap 37, handing the lead to Schumacher. This might be Schumacher's first race lap led since his 2006 retirement, but don't quote me on that as I've not done any research.

Hamilton passes Massa on lap 38, and begins what should be a good charge up through the pack.

Lap 39 and Vettel is staring at the back end of Alonso's Ferrari. The championship is almost certainly his today, but he's not going to claim the title with quite the same style with which he dominated the season.

Lap 41 and Vettel and Alonso are still fighting. The Ferrari driver is doing all he can – within the bounds of the regulations – to keep Vettel in his rearview mirrors, and Alonso is not an easy man to pass.

Schumacher pits from the lead at the end of lap 41, and Button reclaims what looks like should be his win. Alonso is doing a great job keeping Vettel behind him, while Perez dishonours his teammate by overtaking Kobayashi at his home grand prix.

Alonso is 5.4s behind Button, with Vettel half a second further back. Webber is 4.5s behind his teammate in P4, while Hamilton has 7.5s of clear air in front of him.

We have 10 and a bit laps remaining, and it's unlikely we'll see much of a change on the podium.

Scratch that – both McLarens appear to be struggling with their tyres if their current speeds are anything to go by. Both Button and Hamilton are losing time to the men behind, and Alonso could challenge for the win if he could just shake Vettel.

And if Glock has anything to do with it, Alonso might lose the Red Bull on his tail. The Virgin driver was somewhat inefficient at being lapped by Vettel, and the 2011 world champion elect did a spot of fist-shaking when he finally made it past.

Rosberg has popped back up into position, arriving at the back end of a train of cars and fighting his way through.

Alonso has reduced the gap to Button to 3.7s, and could be in a position to challenge for the lead before the chequered flag falls in six laps' time. Alonso's tyres are one lap younger, but every little helps at this level of competition.

By lap 47, the Alonso-Button gap is down to 2.9s. But by the start of lap 48, it's been cut by a further nine-tenths to 2.1s with five laps remaining.

A lap later and the gap is down to 1.6s. Alonso is on a charge, and as hungry to take this one as he's ever been. Press room bets are now on an Alonso win this afternoon.

Further down the pack, Rosberg continues to charge along without much notice from the TV cameras. The Mercedes driver is now up to P10, with a slim chance of catching Petrov in the next four laps.

As the frontrunners cross the line to start lap 50, Alonso is only 1s behind Button, making the McLaren driver DRS-vulnerable. But Button fights back, and pulls 0.4s out on Alonso in the first sector of lap 51.



Lap 52 and the Alonso-Button gap is up to 1.2s. The podium will be Button, Alonso, Vettel, and the 2011 world drivers' title is as set as we all knew it would be.

It's the final lap, and Button celebrates by going purple. And an HRT nearly spoils the party by almost colliding with the McLaren while he's getting lapped.

Two-stopping Perez deserves special mention for his performance this afternoon. Sauber's rookie driver is becoming one of the best on the grid for tyre preservation, and is able to pull off impressive overtakes on rubber most other drivers would deem too old.

Vettel has taken the drivers' title as widely expected, and has become the youngest double (and back-to-back) champion in Formula 1 history.

#### Japanese Grand Prix race results

1. Jenson Button (McLaren)
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari)
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull)
4. Mark Webber (Red Bull)
5. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren)
6. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes)
7. Felipe Massa (Ferrari)
8. Sergio Perez (Sauber)
9. Vitaly Petrov (Renault)
10. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes)
11. Adrian Sutil (Force India)
12. Paul di Resta (Force India)
13. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber)
14. Pastor Maldonado (Williams)
15. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso)
16. Bruno Senna (Renault)
17. Rubens Barrichello (Williams)
18. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus)
19. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus)
20. Timo Glock (Virgin)
21. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin)
22. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT)
23. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT)

Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) RET

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## F1 Japan Blog – Sunday press conference at Suzuka

I'll be frank. I'm too tired to distil this into a conversation. Enjoy the press conference in full, with all of Sebastian Vettel's unedited verbosity. You can't blame a champion for getting a bit excited in his moment of glory.

Q: Jenson, coming into this weekend you said all you wanted from the rest of the season was to take another grand prix victory. Job done. Congratulations.

Jenson **BUTTON**: Thank you very much. I think this circuit is very special to all of us. We love this place, so to get a victory here in front of such an amazing Japanese crowd really does mean a lot. I need to say a big thanks to the team for the improvements we have had over the last few races and today they have been impeccable. Congratulations to them and congratulations to the fans. I think we put on a good show for them today.

Q: Fernando, a brilliant podium, a great strategic race and a fabulous battle with Sebastian. It looked like a lot of fun.

Fernando **ALONSO**: Yeah, first of all, congratulations to Sebastian. World Champion in this race. It was a fun race. From the start we didn't overtake any car but then the strategy was quite important, with a lot of tyre degradation, so we picked the right moment to stop and we had the pace today to fight with McLaren and Red Bull and finally, a fantastic podium. I think it is a good thing for the team after difficult races where we were not so competitive that we came back to a good level here, and this podium means a lot for the team, a lot of motivation for the remaining races of this year and, for sure, a big boost for next year's motivation.

Q: Sebastian, probably not the result you were hoping for today but you came into this weekend needing one point and with a podium you have done it.

Sebastian **VETTEL**: Yes, it is difficult to know where to start. Such a long year. We had a fantastic year. The good thing is it is not over yet. Today's race was not so easy. I think we weren't that quick on the soft tyres as we hoped to be and then it was difficult. We lost two positions. In the end, I think we had a very good car. It was difficult to get past Fernando. I think I got my move of the year in Monza, so I don't think he is letting me through this way twice. But phenomenal, strong result again today. To win the championship here is fantastic. There are so many things you want to say at this moment but it's hard to remember all of them. I am just so thankful to everyone in the team. We have got so many people here at the track but also at Milton Keynes working day in day out. Not only Friday, Saturday, Sunday, but also Monday to Friday, every day, pushing hard to build those two cars and to fight for a lot of points and to fight for the championship. We found ourselves in a very, very strong position and it is great to achieve the goal we set ourselves going into this year already now. There are so many people it is hard to name them all to thank, but I think one person that really stands out this year is the person I spend most of my time with during the year. It's my trainer Tommi Parmakoski. Also, regards to his family. I think back in Finland they have a great son with a great heart. He was the one not allowing me at any stage this year to lose the grip, start to fly, or think about things that are not in our control. Congratulations to Jenson, congratulations to Fernando. I think today we saw that it is extremely tight.

Tighter than maybe sometimes it looked this year. In the end, the top four cars were within not even 10 seconds and it is great to know that it is so tight but that we can come so strong out of it. They also know how to drive as well and are doing a fantastic job, but I think this year we have always been just this one step ahead. It is down to people like Tommi and other individuals, every single one is pushing more than 100 per cent to do his job and keeps us on the right track. There is no secret. It is step-by-step. I think in a way the hardest thing is after winning last year... we won the championship it was so close and we were so excited. To go out and do it again, even though you know how to do it, it doesn't allow you to forget all these little steps and as I said I could not have done this alone. I needed all the support I could get from the team, from Mark [Webber], from everyone outside the team working for me, so it is just as confusing as the first one I have to say. It is hard to find the right words.

Q: Jenson, everyone knows the affinity you have with Japan and its people. What's it like to win here on this incredible circuit with these fabulous fans and how much motivation does that give you going into the last few races of the year?

JB: It gives us, as a team, a lot of motivation. It is good, as Sebastian said, to see three different cars within, I think, about three seconds. It shows how competitive Formula 1 is at the moment. There are a lot of fans here. They are so supportive of the sport that we are in and I think we have all tried to do a little bit to help them, to plant a good memory in their mind as this has been a tough year for Japan. This is a special race and a very special crowd. I think we need to thank them for supporting us. But, lastly, it should be Seb that we talk about, as this guy has done a great job this year. However hard we have tried we haven't been able to touch him in a lot of races so congratulations.

Q: Jenson, a great race, and in the dry. Does that give you some satisfaction?

JB: I can't believe you just said that! I have won other races in the dry! No, it was a great race. The start was very good, maybe too good, and I ended up on the grass, which lost me a bit of time. Very interesting race as tyre wear was massive. It was a very exciting race and it wasn't just down to being quick over one lap. You really had to think through the race. I really enjoyed it out there. It is always a very special place to race, Suzuka, a fast, flowing circuit and it is unforgiving, so one little mistake and it is game over. This is one of the most perfect circuits in grand prix racing and also with one of the most special crowds as well. The Japanese people here have been so supportive of us and it is great to see so many fans here supporting this weekend and hopefully we have planted a small, good memory in their heads as it has been a very difficult year for them. To get the win here is one of my most special victories as I don't think I have ever won a race on such a high-speed circuit, so it means a lot to me.

Q: Going down into the first corner, over the radio, you thought maybe Sebastian should have had a penalty for that.

JB: Yeah, I did at the time. I am not going to lie. From my point of view I felt that he kept coming when I wasn't alongside him but I had half my car up the inside. I thought he was coming across more than I expected and didn't give me any room and I was on the grass but I am sure when I watch it back on TV, or maybe when I watch it back on TV, I will have a different opinion. But at that moment in time, yes, I felt that it was a little bit more than was needed. But it was obviously fair, as the stewards said it was fair, so that's it. Sometimes, when you get a good start and the guy in front doesn't get such a good start these sort of things happen. If we all get off the line at the same speed it is not normally an issue. We will put that behind us. But a great weekend. I felt very strong in the car all weekend and this is promising for the next four races. I know Seb has wrapped it up today, which is pretty impressive with so many races to go, but there are still a few races left and there is a lot of fighting to be done and a lot of wins to fight for, which I am very excited about.

Q: We saw the pair of them catching you in the final moments, but then you popped in the fastest lap. Were you just conserving tyres? What was going on?

JB: Well, I have been watching Seb drive all year and I have decided that is the way to go racing. Just cruise it and stick in a fast lap. That's what he seems to do at the end of the race, so I thought I would give it a go and it worked pretty well, so it was good.

Q: But were you conserving tyres or were you in trouble there?

JB: I was looking after tyres, also looking after a bit of fuel, so it wasn't the easiest few laps. The last five laps weren't the most enjoyable, I must admit, but we got it home. The car has been great around here. The Red Bulls are always so strong on these fast circuits, especially with the change of direction, so for us to win here really does mean a lot for us, as we have been fighting this for two years now. It is good to be up there with the Red Bulls. In a way, it is nice that the Ferrari is up there as well. A three-way battle at the end, four seconds between us or less, this is what racing is all about and hopefully it will be the same for the next few races.

Q: Fernando, among the euphoria of the winner and the new World Champion, that was a great race for Ferrari as well?

FA: Yeah, I think it is a good race, a good weekend in general for us. Trouble-free in practice and then a good qualifying performance, fourth and fifth, so in the top five and both Ferraris in front of Webber, so in general quite competitive here, the car. At the end, with a perfect race, good start, good strategy, good pit-stops, and a good pace throughout the race second feels much, much better than expected probably before the start at three o'clock. It is a good result and gives us some extra motivation for the remaining races knowing that it is going to be tough as the updates on the car will be minimal but in some races, some circuits, we are still competitive, so why not fight for victory in one of the remaining races.

Q: And what about those last few laps with Sebastian right behind you and Jenson just ahead?

FA: First, with Sebastian it was difficult to keep him behind as at that part of the race he was quicker than us. I tried to defend the position in braking for the last corners and into the first corner as well, where the DRS was active. After we had done this job we saw we were catching a little bit Jenson, so we tried in the last couple of laps but, as we saw later on, Jenson was taking care about tyres, about his car, so it was impossible to fight for victory this time. Also, we start fifth, so when you start fifth you have to recover always all through the race and you arrive two seconds behind the leader. If you start second or third that gap is already done maybe 10 laps before the end.

Q: Sebastian, was your approach any different today? This was one of your more difficult races; you saw two drivers come out ahead of you after pit stops which hasn't happened.

SV: No, which I didn't enjoy. I think we were a little bit too weak today on the option tyre, against those two guys at the end of the stints. I think in comparison to Lewis - I don't know what was happening to the end of his race - but in the first stint we were able to pull away. Then obviously I got informed that Jenson passed him - Jenson was seven, eight tenths quicker at that stage, which clearly is not because he found a short cut all of a sudden but he took care of his tyres better than the rest and is able to push harder at the end of the stints, and any time on the soft tyre, we had to come in quite early. On the hard tyre, I felt much much better but as you said, I came out behind Fernando, lost a little bit of time to the Force India when I tried to get past, which didn't work straight away and then I was sticking to Fernando quite well until the Virgin... I don't know, maybe he should use both of his mirrors, it was a bit dangerous. Fernando was right behind him, he pulled to the right, let him by, before taking the corner before turn eight and I knew that I wouldn't take any stupid risks but I didn't expect him to go back on line but he did so I lost quite a lot. I lost the connection which is obviously important. You get some lap time for free if you're always behind because you are in the DRS zone so it's easy to catch

up a little bit on the straight. Unfortunately I was never really close enough to pass Fernando. Their straightline speed was quite good, which we already knew on Friday. It was a fun race though, and especially seeing as we were closing in on Jenson, I thought here you go, now you see how it feels when the guys are catching up at the end of the race. It's not the most comfortable feeling. But obviously he had quite a bit in hand and he was able to react three laps to the end. I think this race has been a little bit the story of the year, even though sometimes the results look pretty clear. You see that in the races the cars are pretty close to each other. Ferrari played a major role today with Fernando, they looked much better than what people expected. It was a fun race. Obviously I would have loved to sit in the middle which, to answer your question, was the target going into the race. I wasn't targeting one point. If we targeted one point, I think the race would have been a bit different, but we targeted to do our optimum, which in a way today was third place, and that's what we got. But to win the championship here is pretty special and a bit funny at the same time, because it's as confusing as the first one. All of sudden, you're supposed to... yep, that's the moment, now enjoy. I think it will surely take a little bit of time but the season has been fantastic. I think with a less dominant car than last year we were able to do a very, very good job. We are very strong as a team. Every time it mattered, we made very few mistakes, especially at those times when it was critical, we were there, we were performing. I think everyone working for Red Bull Racing can be very proud today. Renault has done a fantastic job; very often they get forgotten. We have had no problems with the engine at all. They were sending a lot of support all the time, pushing very hard in Viry, back in France, close to Paris. Obviously this year I think it has been more about engines than in any other year, not maybe in a performance perspective as in raw power but playing around with engine modes. We had a lot of discussion midway through the season, exhaust blowing etc, and I think Renault has pushed very hard and a lot of our performance is down to them. It's hard to name one individual. In the end, I think the secret, if there was one this year, is that we could trust, one hundred percent, the guy next to us and that's for the whole team. I think what we have achieved so far in Red Bull Racing is just incredible and we obviously hope to enjoy the rest of the year. The target for the next race will be exactly the same as this race and the last race, but also make sure that we are fighting those guys in the future.

Q: Sebastian, could you describe your manoeuvre at the start of the race? Jenson said that it was not so fair.

SV: I just spoke to him. He expressed his feelings. Initially I wasn't sure where he was, I didn't really see him. I thought he was either on the right or he was far away on the left. I saw Lewis and I thought I had a good start and kept moving to the right, looking for him. By the time I saw him, I realised that maybe I was a little bit too far to the right and then he was backing off. Obviously no intention to put him in any danger but I think we can run with two wheels on the grass, can't we Fernando?

JB: Did you think I was Fernando?

SV: No, no, I said we can race with two wheels on the grass, and then I said Fernando. Obviously, as I said, I didn't want to put him in danger but I think we have to race each other hard and I thought it was a shame... at the end, I thought we were all getting together again and maybe have another fight. For a moment, I was thinking that maybe the victory was not out of my hands, which it looked like going into the last stint, but yeah, it was close. It would have been fun if it had continued for another five or ten laps.

JB: I probably would have struggled with another five laps.

SV: That's why!

Q: Jenson, I may have been mistaken, but when I saw you on the podium you were not really overwhelmed with joy. I thought that you were at the same time happy to win, but very disappointed to lose the title. Did I imagine that or is that the way you feel?

JB: I was really surprised to lose the title today, yeah! I think I had given up on that quite a long time ago. I was very happy on the podium, maybe just the way I express my feelings isn't as obvious as maybe I think.

SV: Maybe you were still exhausted, you had to run down from the pit lane.

JB: I had to run the whole pit lane. For some reason, I seem to do that quite a lot: parking in the wrong place and running down. I've never realised how uphill the pit lane is as well. Amazing. But no, I was very happy, ecstatic, this is a very special race to win, as Seb knows for the last couple of years, not just because of the layout but because of the history here and also, as I said before, the crowd here. So a very special victory; it's obviously not as big as Seb winning the World Championship today but winning a race like this does take a little bit of time to sink in. I remember when I won the World Championship, immediately it was a strange feeling, it was like: what am I supposed to feel right now? And it takes a little bit of time. It normally comes when you're on your own and you can really think about what you have achieved. I'm sure Seb's going to look forward to that tonight or about five or six in the morning.

SV: Oh no. Afternoon.

Q: Fernando, now Seb is the youngest two time World Champion; you've lost that title. What does it mean to you now?

FA: Really nothing special. I think now we will see who is the youngest three time World Champion.

JB: I'm feeling the odd one out here, I'm feeling uncomfortable.

SV: Did you notice that Michael is the youngest seven time World Champion - ever!

JB: Really? Wow. Is he? That surprises me. He's also the oldest racing driver in Fl.

SV: No. No. Not.

Q: One year later, Sebastian, what's going through your head? Last year was perhaps a surprise at that last race; is it any different this year?

SV: Every year... I think every race is different. I wouldn't say last year was a surprise. That's what we were fighting for and even if the odds weren't looking too good, we kept believing. Even the year before I remember very, very well the moment in Brazil, probably as well as Jenson does. It's not a nice feeling, knowing that you lose the title, so but it's always these important moments that you remember, the good and the bad and in particular the bad because I think you are able to learn so much from the times that you are being beaten in a way. But the funny thing this year is that next week there is the next race, so that's a bit difficult to understand. I think all year we tried very, very hard to keep our feet on the ground and always tried to focus on the next step, on the next race which, I think, in the end, if there was any, was one of the secrets. Last year, after the chequered flag it was all over, there was a long period of time when you weren't in the car again etc, so it's a bit different this year, and it makes it even more special in a way. So I'm very much looking forward to the rest of the season. We have a great car, a great team, and obviously we use everything we have to make the next step and do well or perform well at the next race. It does take some time to understand and I think those quiet moments that I will have, at some point, either tonight, tomorrow or the next week or weeks, for myself, but also with people who are very close to me, to take time and let things sink in a little bit.

Q: Seb, you've almost answered my question because I was going to say it's been a long time since we've had the championship won with four races left to go. Do you think...

SV: It's probably Michael, I think he won half of his championships...

JB: Bloody Germans!

SV: What exactly do you mean?

Q: Do you think in some ways we should read that your championship this year was easier than it was last year, and for all three of you, how are going to race now that the championship has been won? Will it be free-er, how is your attitude different now?

SV: I think that it's very likely for people to draw the wrong conclusion, to say that we had a very easy run this year. Things like this, they happen for a reason: I strongly believe that, not because things were easy for us. We had a very, very good car, no doubt, but we had an even stronger team, and as I said, a couple of times already, I think the car this year was less dominant than the car last year. Last year we had so many races where sometimes you may say we were unlucky but we made stupid mistakes as well. We did things which cost us a lot of time and cost us a lot of points in the end. A championship is not one race, it's a lot of races pulled together and I think that's where the difference came from this year. Obviously, after a very good start to the season, if you are on a good run, and you have this certain momentum and you're able to keep that momentum, by not allowing yourself to start to fly or think too far ahead, really just stay present and just stay at that moment and focus race by race, and not thinking anything else. If you are able to keep that momentum that way, I think it makes you very strong and if you are on that sort of wave, then things might come a bit easier to you but it doesn't mean that they are easy. So all in all, I think there was a lot to learn again this year, and hopefully that made us stronger for the remainder of the season, in which I think the approach will be very similar. Obviously a lot of the pressure has fallen away but nonetheless, there is a lot of pressure on us, because naturally we want to win, we want to beat those guys. We didn't do so today so obviously we are over the moon to wrap up the championship today but we didn't win today, so we've got another chance in the next races and we want to use those chances. It's about using the opportunities you have, rather than seeing what could go wrong.

JB: Hopefully (we will race) exactly the same.

SV: So you're always going to park just after the chequered flag?

JB: Yeah. I might not lift off next time you pull across at the start though.

SV: That means I'm on pole, so that's good.

Q: Fernando, during the race, in the car, did you really believe you could win, and is it really possible to finish second in the championship?

FA: In the race, I never thought about victory, if I'm completely honest with you. I only had a small possibility, maybe five or six laps from the end, when Jenson was dropping back a little bit and we closed the gap. Then I thought maybe if we were close enough maybe two laps or one lap from the end I could use the DRS and maybe have a chance, but I knew that it was difficult, but during the race, no, no time to think. And second place in the championship. It's nice to be second, better than fourth or fifth, but as I said on Thursday, I prefer a win and finish fifth in the championship than finish in second not winning one of the remaining races. Hopefully we can do one of those two things, either second or win a race but probably it will be difficult to win a race and will be difficult to be second so that's the worst combination, but it's very possible as well.

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