



Sunday press conference

With the F1 world still waiting for news of Jules Bianchi after his accident, the post-race press conference in Japan was a very subdued affair.

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

Q: What a race we just had ladies and gentlemen, a very tough one at the office for these gentlemen. Brilliant drives everybody. Lewis, your 30th win, my goodness me, how did you enjoy that?

Lewis HAMILTON: It was great. What a day it's been. It's been a very difficult weekend. Today, to be raining so much, it was very difficult, tricky conditions. We hope that Bianchi is OK. But we had a great crowd this weekend, as every year.

Q: Tell us about those hot laps, 15 or 16 laps before the end there. You were putting in some hot laps, a second or second and a half quicker than anyone?

LH: Yeah, I really got into a groove. In terms of feeling it was very reminiscent of Silverstone 2008.

Q: Tell the fans what you really thought when you went off at the first turn when you were really pushing hard early in the race?

LH: I was pushing to get by Nico and I had the DRS open and I forgot to turn it off. When I went into the corner the rear end stepped out. It was very, very close but I saved it.

Q: Well, a brilliant win. Nico, you did everything perfect, great pole position yesterday and then great drive. You were doing all the hard work, acting as the brake, because being out front is difficult isn't it?

Nico ROSBERG: It's been a good weekend for us as a team. Of course it's great for us as a team to get a one-two. And you fans have been absolutely spectacular again this weekend, it's very, very special to drive here and to really get an impression of the whole atmosphere here. Congrats to Lewis for winning today, of course with my thoughts at the moment with our colleagues Jules, because it seems quite serious, so I really wish him all the best.

Q: As we all do. Unfortunately, we don't have any news about that at the moment. But brilliant drive and congratulations Nico. Seb, unbelievable drive, you made things very exciting with the Williams drivers, getting on the inside and then the outside. How did you enjoy that today?

Sebastian VETTEL: As they both touched on it was very, very tricky. Took a while to get the race started, waiting for the conditions but then I think it was very good fun. Concentration has to be very, very high when it's wet; it's so easy to do a mistake. In the end obviously we pitted, decided to go for fresh tyres, lost one position only. Obviously I got lucky to have the safety car coming before, so I'm quite lucky to be up here. Great race, we seemed to have great at some times as well. Overall, very happy and last but not least best to Jules Bianchi.

Q: Lewis, an excellent race, the right result for you in very difficult conditions.

LH: Yeah, absolutely. It's been an interesting weekend. Obviously a great result for the team. I think we're all very concerned about our colleague, Bianchi. Don't really know what to say. But again, to have the result, this has been a great weekend with the car: qualifying obviously wasn't perfect for me but generally the car was absolutely fantastic through the race and once I was passed Nico I was able to really manage the gap and enjoy the ride. Obviously didn't finish the way we would have hoped but really, my prayers are with him (Bianchi) and his family.

Q: A great overtaking manoeuvre round the outside of Nico going down into the first corner; tell us about that.

LH: Fairly straightforward, really. I had a lot more pace than Nico. This is not a very easy circuit to follow but fortunately I was able to get quite close and particularly in the last corner and I think perhaps he had a small oversteer moment out of the last corner and I didn't. Obviously the DRS enabled me to get alongside. I was fairly confident with the balance of the car so I put it there and stuck it out. And after that it was really about trying to... you know, the whole approach changed after that because I was attacking, attacking and after that, I kind of took different lines and managed it differently. But it felt very reminiscent of a time years and years ago, of 2008, and it was a great feeling in that respect.

Q: And you had a couple of excursions but they didn't really seem to hurt you at all.

LH: Yeah, I only remember one of them but yeah, I went into turn one with the DRS open and there's so much less downforce when that wing is open. You've got to remember to close it again and then I started to turn and brake and it was still open, so the back end stepped out. It was very very close but yeah, kept hold of it, didn't really lose too much time so fortunate.

Q: Nico, we heard you talking about a lot of oversteer, is that what the problem was throughout the race?

NR: I was definitely not happy with my balance but I think we had pretty much the same set-up so Lewis must have had the same oversteer. I just wasn't happy with that and tried to figure out a way to reduce that and found some improvements then with the pit stop, put down the front wing so that was a bit better but still not good so just need to look into that. But all in all, Lewis just did a better job today and deserves to win. OK, second place is damage limitation and taking everything into consideration, it was very very difficult conditions out there on this track and everything so seven points lost to Lewis... you know, there's worse than that.

Q: Sebastian, a late stop and we weren't awfully certain if we'd see you or Daniel in here; it was a bit worrying with that late stop.

SV: Yeah, obviously we didn't know what happened. The safety car came out and I think we were aware that Adrian went off in turn seven and obviously it was difficult to see what happened after that. From a racing point of view, the safety car comes in and we saw that there was quite a good gap and so we decided to pit and lost only one position. Obviously, as it turned out with the red flag, we thought initially we were not on the podium, but as the rules are similar to... I think a little bit of confusion. Five years ago in Malaysia I think we had a similar scenario and we found ourselves back in third. Obviously it was great to be on the podium, this is my favourite track, it's for sure very nice in those tricky conditions. In the end, I don't think it really matters. I think the most important thing, as we're all probably thinking, is that we hope the best for Jules, obviously currently not in the best shape but we hope that we get some very good news very soon.

Q: (Michael Schmidt - Auto, Motor und Sport) Question to all three of you: you were out in the last few laps on intermediates as well when the accidents happened. How slippery was it and was it already too wet for intermediates at that period of the race?

LH: For me personally it wasn't. There was more and more rain coming and you could see the circuit... you started to see more reflections and so you

could see that it was increasing - the amount of water that was on the track, but it wasn't... I didn't notice any difference so I was still able to maintain the same pace. I would imagine that we would probably have been able to finish on those tyres since there was only ten laps left. Yeah, but the tyres performed quite well today.

NR: Yeah, it was fine but the thing is that we have so much more downforce than some other people, so I can imagine that maybe for them... because it was starting to get a little bit more difficult for us and maybe for them, with so much less downforce, it was already on the limit of needing to go to full wets. That's very possible and I myself was a little bit surprised to hear that other people were already going for full wets but I guess that must be the explanation.

SV: Yeah, it was borderline. At some stage, towards the end, just before the safety car, it started to rain a little bit less with a little bit less intensity. Also when the race was stopped it was just a drizzle and a couple of laps before it was getting quite bad, that's why we decided to pit and we decided to go for intermediates again. I think the problem, in general, is that once there is a lot of water, visibility is very poor and once there's too much water, the inter doesn't work any more and the extreme wet only has a very very narrow window where it works because also, with a lot of water on the track, water drainage on the extreme tyres is not as good as it probably should be, so that's why I think the window is narrow and that's why other people probably decided to pit. For us, I think it was borderline but for sure, the better your car, the better - Nico explained it well - the better it is for you.

Q: (Frederic Ferret - L'Equipe) Nico and Lewis, do you have any kind of explanation of the difference of balance and settings for the car and the difference during the race between the two of you?

NR: We had pretty much the same set-up, so I'm sure the balance was similar for Lewis and I just struggled more with it I suppose: a lot of oversteer and I don't like that.

LH: Yeah, we had pretty much exactly the same set-up so as Nico said, maybe he took out some wing later on in the race. I didn't really have any problems with the balance of the car. It was oversteery but it was manageable.

Race report

It was a subdued podium for race winner Lewis Hamilton at Suzuka when the Japanese Grand Prix was cut short following a serious incident involving Marussia's Jules Bianchi.

The Frenchman collided with a recovery vehicle at Dunlop on lap 44 of the shortened and rain-soaked race. While information on his condition is currently unknown, Bianchi was unconscious when loaded into the ambulance that would take him to the nearest hospital, and reports are that his condition remains serious.

Shortly before the accident - which took place one lap after Sauber's Adrian Sutil span and came off at the same corner, leading to the presence of the recovery vehicle hit by Bianchi - the Marussia F1 team took to Twitter to debate whether or not track conditions were wet enough to necessitate a switch to the extreme wet tyre compound.

Prior to Bianchi's crash track conditions were worsening as heavy rain began to fall from a sky already darkening with dusk after an hour or so of relative dryness. But at no point during Sunday's race was the track dry enough for slicks, and the main strategic point of the Japanese race was the timing of each man's switch from full wets to intermediate rubber and whether or not he chose to go back again before time was called.

The race began under the Safety Car, and before two laps were completed conditions were declared bad enough that the race was red-flagged and all cars called to the pits. At 15.25 racing resumed, with Bernd Maylander leading the field out of the pits and onto the track, where he remained at the head of the pack until racing resumed on lap 10.

Jenson Button made one of his typically borderline yet genius tyre calls, diving into the pits for intermediate tyres right behind Maylander. It proved to be the right decision, for when the rest of the field - barring the leading Mercedes pair - made the same call on laps 11 and 12, Button was running in fourth place, inheriting third when Bianchi stopped for intermediate rubber.

It was at the end of lap 13 that race leader Nico Rosberg made the same call, and Hamilton inherited the lead until his own stop at the end of lap 14. When the Briton emerged from the pits it was in the wake of his teammate's car, with the two men split by 2.3 seconds. The race was on, and the next 15 laps saw the gap between the pair open and close like an accordion, with Hamilton closing up in the middle sector and Rosberg pulling away in the final sector.

By lap 24 track conditions had improved enough that race control enabled DRS, and it was on lap 29 that Hamilton slipped around the outside of Rosberg at the first corner to take the lead of the race, a position he held until the premature finish.

What was remarkable about the overall performance of the cars in the race was the speed of the Red Bull pair, with both Sebastian Vettel and Daniel Ricciardo lapping considerably faster than either Mercedes for much of the afternoon. The gap between the teams was more attributable to the Red Bulls being stuck in traffic after their early pit stops than the representative performance of the car, although Hamilton was able to lap more quickly once ahead of Rosberg, and eventually set the fastest lap of the race.

The flip side of the coin was Williams' poor pace. While the cars were very slow in the early stages of the race, and easy pickings for the charging Red Bulls, they were no faster as track conditions improved.

Japanese Grand Prix race result

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1h51m43.021s
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) + 9.180s
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) + 29.122s
4. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) + 38.818s
5. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 1m07.550s
6. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) + 1m53s.773s
7. Felipe Massa (Williams) + 1m55s.126s
8. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) + 1m55.948s
9. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) + 2m07.638s
10. Sergio Perez (Force India) DNF
11. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) + 1 lap
12. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) + 1 lap
13. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) + 1 lap
14. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) + 1 lap
15. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) + 1 lap
16. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) + 1 lap*

- 17. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) + 1 lap
- 18. Max Chilton (Marussia) + 1 lap
- 19. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) + 1 lap

Jules Bianchi (Marussia) RET
Adrian Sutil (Sauber) RET
Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) RET

* Pastor Maldonado dropped from P15 to P16 following a 20-second time penalty for speeding in the pit lane.

Saturday press conference

After a tense but not close-fought qualifying session for the Japanese Grand Prix it was three familiar faces who lined up for the official FIA press conference on Saturday afternoon.

Present were Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), and Valtteri Bottas (Williams).

Q: Nico, after the disappointment of Singapore, how important was this?

Nico ROSBERG: I'm not thinking about Singapore any more. I'm here, Suzuka, here to try and win and so yeah, it was a great day today. Of course, it's only one step on the way but really good. It was a real pleasure today because the car is so amazing to drive and on this track which is one of the most spectacular to drive in qualifying, low fuel, the tyre grip and everything. It was really cool.

Q: Your thoughts on the weather tomorrow: how prepared are you for that?

NR: As prepared as we can be. We're expecting it, we're expecting it to be wet. The last experience we have in the wet was Spa where our car was really really quick, so I'm very very optimistic actually. Even if it rains, it could be even better for us.

Q: And what's it going to be like with a strong wind as well?

NR: I don't know. For sure, the more windy it is, the more difficult it is out there, because the cars are very sensitive to wind but it will be fine.

Q: Lewis, we're used to seeing tiny margins between the two of you but it's a relatively large margin this time. Tell us about what happened in your Q3?

Lewis HAMILTON: Not too much, really. Nico was extremely quick today. I did the best I could. My guys did a fantastic job to rebuild the car after I binned it so a big thank-you for their hard work. Yeah, just today, wasn't really feeling it. Don't know why. It was still fast but Nico was fantastically fast today. But tomorrow's the day when you get the points so I'm looking forward to all the different tricky weather that perhaps will come.

Q: And you mentioned a little bit of a vibration at one point as well...

LH: Yeah, I generally had that throughout the whole run. I don't know if that was following the incident but maybe it was just the tyres imbalanced maybe but it didn't get in the way of the result.

Q: And was it difficult to have to get back in the car and immediately be on the pace after this morning's accident?

LH: No. That's the way it is, that's what we're trained to do.

Q: Valtteri, much better qualifying position for you, obviously compared to last year, your third third place this year as well, best of the rest, and 0.4s behind Mercedes. How does that sound?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Not too bad, I think. They looked really really quick yesterday and even this morning so it was nice to get a little closer. They still have some margin and they're going to be really quick tomorrow as well. But I think we need to be happy as a team, third and fourth, that was the goal today.

Q: And how is the Williams going to be in the wet?

VB: We know that we might struggle a little bit more in the wet but there now seems to be also a bit of a margin behind us so hopefully we can still fight for a podium if it's really wet. But I think like everyone and for the fans, it would be really nice if we could really have a good race so that the rain would not be too much. Let's hope for the best.

Q: Nico, how important is pole going to be tomorrow? People have always said it's very difficult to overtake around here: is that more or less the case in the wet weather?

NR: Well, for sure it's better to be first and second, so it's some sort of an advantage but I don't yet know how much. If it's dry, then it's more of an advantage, maybe if it's wet a little bit less so but I'm still definitely happy to be on pole.

Q: Your eighth pole position of the year so far and obviously a really good one around here, you really seemed to enjoy that one.

NR: Yeah for sure. Today was a good day, I just felt very comfortable in the car, I had a good balance. Our car is just unbelievable out there today.

Q: Are you basically going to be relying on the FIA to run the race depending on the weather conditions? Is there anything the driver can do?

NR: I'm not really thinking too much about tomorrow. I'm sure they're going to try and take the best decision for everybody, especially for the fans who are also coming out to watch the race. I'm sure it will be OK.

Q: Lewis, when it comes to weather we're expecting tomorrow, have you already set the car up for those conditions because obviously it's going to be in parc ferme?

LH: No, because we set it up for qualifying today.

Q: So not for the race itself, not with a wet set-up or a huge amount of wing?

LH: No.

Q: Valtteri, what can you do for the expected weather?

VB: Well, yeah, if the weather is like it's expected to be, first of all I really hope we can have a race but it could be difficult, but it's going to be difficult for everyone. In mixed conditions, a lot of things can happen. The main thing is that as we're now starting with both cars from a good place the aim is to try and get all the points available for us to take. The main thing is to score the points.

Q: Nico, finally, what's that run like into the first corner because it looks incredibly quick: we've seen people go off there in the past, that's where Lewis went off this morning?

NR: It's a very exciting corner, for sure, because it's a bit difficult to feel the limit, as you're coming towards there, and you just have to give it a guess and give it a go. It's a good corner.

Q: Especially when you're got 21 cars behind you.

NR: Yes indeed. That's a bit easier then.

Q: And finally, tell us a bit about the downhill start?

NR: It's not much different. You just have to keep a little bit of brake pressure on so that you don't roll off the grid, so you don't get a jump start and then it's fine.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) To all three of you: the big rumours of the day are Sebastian Vettel leaving Red Bull...

NR: That's not a rumour any more.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) It's not a rumour, right. Sebastian leaving Red Bull and probably going to Ferrari.

NR: That's a rumour.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) What do you think about this?

NR: I don't know. It was a big surprise. I find it good for the sport when there's a bit of movement and there's a bit of excitement. I think that's all good. A bit of a change, change is always good. And interesting.

LH: Has nothing to do with me, so...

VB: Yeah, not much to do with me. I guess it's nice to see a bit of change but it doesn't change very much for me.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Lewis, on your last lap, I think, you locked the brakes at the hairpin. Was that a crucial moment when you lost out to Nico?

LH: No, I don't think so. I don't think I lost any time with it. I just wasn't quick enough today.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) And one to Valtteri: how much have the upgrades on the car helped; would you have been in the same position with the old spec?

VB: We probably would have still been in the same position but with not as good a lap time, so we definitely made gains since the last race. It's positive to see the whole year, actually, always when we plan for some updates and we put them on the car and it always works so that's a good sign for the future and those updates should also help us in the future races this year. That's a good thing.

Saturday report

Nico Rosberg topped the timesheets at the final practice session for the Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka Circuit, chased by teammate Lewis Hamilton. The Briton crashed into the barriers at Turn 1 in the final minutes of FP3, but was able to hold on to second on the timesheets, having led the standings for much of the morning.

When the pitlane opened for qualifying on Saturday afternoon it was to sunny skies and a warm track, with air temperatures of 24 degrees and the track hovering around 40. Despite tearing the left front wheel off his Mercedes in the morning, Hamilton was in the mix in qualifying, setting an initial timed lap of 1m33.611s, giving him an 0.06s advantage over Rosberg in P2.

With more than half a second in hand over the nearest competition, the Mercedes pair were safe from elimination in Q1 and made for the garage while those at the back of the pack fought on. The usual suspects from Caterham and Marussia were joined in the dropout zone by Sergio Perez and Marcus Ericsson as the clock counted down to six minutes, while Pastor Maldonado and Adrian Sutil hovered on the edge.

In the end - and after some shuffling between Sutil, Esteban Gutierrez, and Romain Grosjean - it was the driver pairings from Lotus, Caterham, and Marussia who were eliminated in Q1.

As the first to put times on the board it was Perez and Sutil who topped the timesheets at the start of Q2, although they were quickly dethroned by Valtteri Bottas, whose first effort of 1m33.801s was quickly thrown into stark relief by Rosberg and Hamilton, who were 0.032s apart with Rosberg ahead, and nearly a full second faster than Williams' star Finn.

With the first round of timed laps complete it was Fernando Alonso who was behind Bottas, with Felipe Massa in P5 and Kevin Magnussen in sixth. Sebastian Vettel and Daniel Ricciardo were in the dropout zone with Jean-Eric Vergne, Nico Hulkenberg, and the Sauber pair, with Sutil 3.7s slower than pace-setting Rosberg.

Secure in the top slots on the timesheets, Hamilton and Rosberg stayed in the garage as Q2 drew to a close, with all other runners out on track and fighting for survival in the last two minutes.

Vettel crossed the line in 1m34.784s, safe from elimination, while Ricciardo followed in his wake with a 1m34.466s, knocking his teammate - for now - further back towards the danger zone. Despite their best efforts Sutil, Hulkenberg, and Gutierrez were all sunk, knocked out alongside the Toro Rosso pair and Perez, leaving the driver pairings from Mercedes, Williams, Ferrari, McLaren, and Red Bull to fight for position on the first five rows of the grid.

It was the Williams pair who were first out of the pits in Q3, with Bottas leading Massa. The first time on the board was the Finn's 1m33.329s effort, with Massa coming in second with a 1m33.527s. Rosberg bested them both with a 1m32.629s lap, while Magnussen was fourth across the line with a 1m34.437s effort.

Hamilton claimed provisional P2 with a 1m32.946s lap, 0.317s behind Rosberg, while Alonso was 1.229s off Rosberg's pace in provisional P5. Ricciardo managed provisional P7 with his first lap, 1.874s slower than Rosberg, while Vettel was 2.137s off the pace in provisional P9.

First runs out of the way, it was back to the pits for fresh rubber and round two for all but Raikkonen, Ferrari's Finn still yet to set a Q3 time.

When the chequered flag fell all runners were still out on track with the chance to complete timed laps, but nothing changed at the top of the order. Improvements from both Mercedes drivers kept Rosberg ahead of Hamilton with the Williams pair giving chase and Alonso in P5, lining up alongside Ricciardo.

Provisional grid

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m32.506s
2. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m32.703s
3. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m33.128s

4. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m33.527s
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m33.740s
6. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m34.075s
7. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m34.242s
8. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m34.317s
9. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m34.432s
10. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m34.548s

11. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m34.984s
12. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m35.089s
13. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m35.092s
14. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m35.099s
15. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m35.364s
16. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m35.681s

17. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m35.984s
18. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m36.813s
19. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m36.943s
20. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m37.015s
21. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m37.481s
22. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 1m35.917s*

* Pastor Maldonado qualified in P17 but following a 10-place grid penalty for using his sixth ICE of the season will start in P22, and will take another 5-place grid penalty next weekend in Sochi to make up the total of ten places lost.

Friday press conference

The technical press conference on Friday afternoon in Suzuka was a veritable assembly of engine men.

Present were Yasuhisa Arai (Honda), Andy Cowell (Mercedes), Pat Fry (Ferrari), Paul Monaghan (Red Bull), Jonathan Neale (McLaren), and Remi Taffin (RenaultSportFI).

Q: Arai-san, if I can start with you please. What's the current state of the Honda project? Is Honda on target with development?

Yasuhisa ARAI: First of all, thank you very much to sit in centre. I am glad to be here again after Shanghai. Our progress is right now almost on schedule and I hope that in the year 2015, March we will make [a good start] together with our partner, get a good start on the grid.

Q: Would you like to run the power unit in a McLaren before the end of the year? Is that feasible? Are you allowed to do that?

YA: Everyone asks this to me! McLaren and Honda work together to design and create an experimental test vehicle to check the power unit system but unfortunately we don't have an actual test plan but I hope if possible we will drive just before next season.

Q: You can't say any more than "just before next season"?

YA: Just before next season. End of the season and next season, during that time. That's my hope.

Q: What lessons have you learned from the efforts from the other power unit manufacturers? Are there particular areas that you've noticed they've had troubled with?

YA: I've learned very small things because most of the data we don't know. So, very difficult to learn on the track.

Q: You've seen the failures that they have had. Are there particular areas you have concentrated on?

Jonathan NEALE: If I may, just to help my partner here, as Arai-san says it's very difficult at arm's length to focus on any particular area. Honda and McLaren have a lot of work to do together in a short period of time and I'm sure if you were to ask - I don't want to put words in the mouth of either Andy or Rémi here - but if you were to ask them what it felt like for them at this time of year before they were starting with the V6 engines, they'll know what we're going through at the moment.

Q: Thank you for that. If I can come to the back row now: a couple of questions for all of you. First of all, what is your state of development at this stage for 2015 with your engines? Rémi, if I can start with you?

Rémi TAFFIN: It's all about on plan. It's basically now a few months we are working on that and we now have got a few examples on the dyno, so it's a work in process. I think we are going in the right direction. It's always difficult to know if we'll hit all our targets but that's where we are at the minute.

Q: Andy?

Andy COWELL: We've been doing lots of development ever since we froze the specification of this year's engine in February, so we've been doing lots of development on research engines and using this year's engine as a prove-out but our final specification of engine won't be complete until the early part of next year, because for all of us we're in the development phase until the.

Q: Thank you. And Pat?

Pat FRY: Our development is very similar to Andy's really. As soon as the engine was frozen we've obviously been developing as hard as we can and trying to improve the power unit in all areas. There is a huge amount for us still to do. Very little of next year's spec engine actually exists, which I expect to be the same for everyone here. It will all finally be coming together at the start of January.

Q: Can I ask you your feelings about unfreezing in-season power unit development and where is that discussion actually going? Rémi?

RT: Where is that discussion? I think at the moment it is at the upper level than the one we are here and what I think about it, or what Renault thinks, is that it is not going to really change the way we are working. As Andy says we are developing our engine for next. There won't be many parts that will be looking like the one from this year. Whether we will be able to put all the parts, all the development into one engine for Melbourne is difficult to say. Of course we will push as much as we can, because the more we put for the first race, the more performance we will get for the whole season. If we've got a slot at some point in the season to introduce some more development, they will be on the shelf, because obviously we just keep on working all through the year. It's not really decisive in how we achieve our development. We will just take the opportunity if it is there.

Q: What are your feelings about this Andy?

AC: I think it would be a change to the way we are structured. We froze the performance specification of this engine in January/February of this year and started working on a 12-month development programme and if you've got one introduction point or two introduction points, it is a change. And often it is the prove-out - taking that performance specification into something that is reliable enough to do five race weekends - that's the costly

aspect, because you've got to have several sets of bits and often you have to go back around, because fatigue failures occur and you've got to redesign and go again. The regulations were put together several years ago with the opportunity to do an annual performance update. If we change to a mid-season as well as a start-of-season update, we all just need to consider that carefully. I think we all acknowledge that it would affect the financial situation. Perhaps the engineering directors would love the opportunity but the finance directors would have a furrowed brow at the thought of doing it. It needs to be discussed and considered carefully.

Q: Pat, what does Ferrari think of this?

PF: I think we are continually developing all through the year. It's not like we're targeting a fixed point, we're developing as quickly as we can in every single area – some parts of that will be ready in January and some might not. But even then we don't stop, we'll carry on developing all through the following year. I think the changes that are being discussed still stay within the technical regulations and the number of tokens that you are allowed – it's exactly the same number – it just gives you the opportunity to upgrade in one extra point, mid-season. I think for us the cost implications are not huge. As I said we would be doing all that development work anyway and also trying to improve the reliability of bits, so it doesn't make a huge difference for us from that point of view.

Q: Jonathan, we've heard the state of the engine development for next year. What's the state of the chassis development?

JN: Well, as Arai-san has said, we've been developing an experimental vehicle to support the engine and transmission integration. We continue to develop the car on the circuit this year, aerodynamically. And while we are not comfortable with where we're at, we're much more confident about the direction in which we're taking the team and the progress that we're seeing on the track. The gap to Mercedes still looks pretty eye-watering at times, so we've got a lot of work to do. The changes that Eric and I have made to the organisation, I'm happy that that's going in the right direction. We've just got to get out heads down now and get on with it now. It's going the right way.

Q: We remember in the past McLaren and Honda would be pounding around here for weeks on end... not possible these days.

JN: Well the world has changed a bit since that time, not least of which the engine regulations, chassis regulations, aerodynamic restrictions – it's an energy-constrained series. All of these things, I think, have been good for the sport. They have their challenges, the rate of development, or the rate of aerodynamic development has definitely been restricted by the amount of wind tunnel time that's available – not so sure that that's actually restricted the amount of aerodynamic cost because the reality is that a unit of time in capacity is worth so much more at the moment but that's probably a wider discussion – but we are very optimistic that the steps we're taking in the organisation are the right ones and we will be a competitive team.

Q: And finally – and I'm sure you're expecting this one – when are going to hear about the drivers? What are the criteria for choosing the drivers for next year?

JN: That's a really interesting question and I think it depends on who you ask. I'll give you my view. We have two very good drivers in the car who have been working incredibly hard this year, not always with the easiest car but with an improving car nonetheless. Having a world champion in the team is fantastic from a development and a confidence part of view, and having the Viking charger is also a joy to work with and good for us. In terms of setting our stall out for the future, then in our longer range, longer term conversations both with the shareholders and with our colleagues in Honda, then we have an eye on what's happening in two, three, four, five years' time. Where does the team want to be? In the short term, I read the same magazines that you do. I look with interest and note that everybody's in contracts – but this is Formula One and anything can happen at a moment's notice. I'm never surprised by what Formula One will throw up.

Q: Paul, Sebastian in particular is on five units of certain parts of the engine. Is there any way you can manage that? Is there any way of managing how you take those penalties if there's going to be a penalty? He says there's going to be a penalty. How do you manage that?

Paul MONAGHAN: As carefully as you can, with the minimum damage to the team's performance. Obviously we have a few people breathing down our necks for second place in the Constructors' title, so we have to keep ourselves in a competitive situation. I think on a race-by-race basis we review where we are, what we've got, how far we think we can take it? When is it least damaging to take any penalty? And we'll have to make that call in the near future.

Q: Unless it springs up on you before hand...

PM: We'll deal with it if it does.

Q: You are entering into a much closer relationship with your engine manufacturer Renault. How is that coming along, what are the benefits of that?

PM: I think we've always had a close relationship with Renault. Don't forget we've got four Drivers' and Constructors' titles with them. I think a closer collaboration will only benefit both parties. So if we can bring some additional skill-sets to the party to complement those which Renault possess, we'll get a better package out of it, not just the power unit but its integration into the car, and ultimately our performance. That's our aim, and that's what we'll do.

Q: How far advanced is that?

PM: It's taking shape at the moment and I think a few early projects are starting to bear fruit looking towards next year. We hope to pick up a few more and, as Rémi said, when all the pieces come together, then we'll see how big a step we can make with it all.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Arai-san, there are rumours today saying that Alonso has signed with McLaren-Honda. Can you confirm this, and if not, how desperate or hungry is Honda to have Alonso in its car next year?

YA: [to JN] Should I answer? McLaren-Honda know this idea, what driver should be used to drive our car. There is many rumours but my understanding that Formula One driver is just 22 drivers in the world. All of the drivers, I have great respect and so of course not only McLaren-Honda but also the other teams want to keep the good driver. Not only McLaren-Honda but also the team, everyone keeps the good driver. We don't decide yet.

Q: (Kaz Kawai – Fuji Television) Pat, we've all heard that Steve Clark has won his job back. Do you have any idea when he's coming back or have you been told by your boss when he's coming back in?

PF: I think that's all being negotiated and sorted out at the moment, so I'm sure we'll know in a few days.

Q: (Kate Walker – crash.net) Pat, we've heard some stories today about the movement of technical staff from Red Bull, possibly moving to your team. Does this mean that Seb has signed for Ferrari as has been rumoured?

PF: Technical team... we have had a few people join in the recent months but in terms of drivers, it's got no link to drivers whatsoever.

Q: (Sumie Dan – The Hochi Shimbun) Question for Arai-san: I understand that your new engine power target is over 600hp. Did you achieve this target now?

YA: Sorry, I never said the number of our target. Where did you get such kind of a number? But of course our target is very clear. This season, the Mercedes is top of top so next season we shall achieve that same competition or power. Everyone understands that and wants to exceed that power. Lots of work.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) To Andy, Remy and Arai-san if he would like to comment as well: obviously any change to the engine freeze situation requires regulation change. Given Formula One's present governance process, that means that the teams would actually be voting for that rather than the engine suppliers. How much of a frustration is it that your destiny is not ultimately in your own hands?

RT: Difficult to answer or difficult question, I don't know, but I will give one. That's the way it is, as you say, that's the regulations so obviously we have to follow that, and again, as I said a bit earlier, it's not going to be changing the way we are working so whether we are going to have a change or not, we're just pushing like elves to try to get back to where we should be, so at the upper level and whatever we will get for next year... it will just be a plus, I would say, if we have this change. I would not say we are frustrated.

AC: Yeah, I would support Remy's comments. It's not frustrating, that's how Formula One is set up and one of the great things about Formula One is that the boundary conditions do change and you do well if you can adapt quickly, if you can react quickly, change your organisation, not slow down but accelerate and make sure that you're in a strong place. And that's what we'll do. So as soon as we've got any change to the regulations, we'll all react, we'll all take the race on and we'll all see who's done the best job when we get to the first race.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Andy, I must come back to your comment earlier on that it's got to be very carefully managed, any changes, and yet you won't have any input into that process and that's really what I'm getting at. How would you ensure that it is carefully managed?

AC: You're asked your opinion, so collectively we've got lots of years experience developing engines, KERS systems, ERS systems and we've all got a clear breakdown as to how many people we've got, how much we spend on material, how loaded our dynos are so based on a different set of criteria, different set of regulations, we can all work out what the consequences are, what the opportunities are and do we want to take on those opportunities or not. So of course we're all consulted on that and regulations are often a compromise, not everybody is completely happy but as soon as the regulations are clear and fixed, you react, you respond quickly, motivate the staff and you go racing into the first race with those regulations as we've seen at the start of this year.

YA: Just a small comment from the engineers and many fans, they and we want to keep the competition so in a season, to develop the many parts and to keep the competition is very important, just from engineering and fans' side.

Q: (Kate Walker – crash.net) Arai-san, when you first announced your engine development programme, you said that there would be the possibility of supplying more than one customer team from 2016 onwards. Have you already entered into any negotiations or discussions with potential customers?

YA: Not yet, because no one knows of our potential. Of course, we prepare many cards but no one has checked my card.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Mr Arai, what is your target for next year, realistically. What level do you think your power unit will be able to perform at and do you think that you have been doing enough at this stage, to convince a top driver to join your team?

YA: Our development progress is still on plan but we need to be careful to achieve top competition power within five months, so I need more time but finally our target, the McLaren-Honda target will be to keep a good position to compete in the championship. That's our target.

Q: (Ken Kawakita – Weekly Playboy Magazine) Arai-san, we've seen at the debut this year, a lot of engine manufacturers facing problems in testing as this whole system is so complicated and integration of the whole components is a colossal issue. And as far as we've heard, you start properly testing from next year with only one partner. That means that the information and data that you can gather from that is quite limited. Do you think this could be a disadvantage for your engine programme? Do you have any concerns about this situation?

YA: I don't think so. Our partner is very strong and I think one of the best teams. Of course that means just one team's data, but maybe that's enough, I think. So we already discussed with our partner and set a target and already we have agreed whether the target is good or not. Then finally, maybe in March 2015 we will be in a good position.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Paul, obviously Adrian has started moving out and moving on within the group. What will the restructure look like? Who will be appointed in what positions, come next year?

PM: As I understand, a group of four will step into the void created by Adrian's step-back. That's Rob Marshall, Dan Fallows, Pierre Wache and myself. So we all get a dose more responsibility. Adrian hasn't left, he will still be involved in the F1 programme and that's how it will be divided up.

Friday report

On Friday morning in Suzuka it was Nico Rosberg who led teammate Lewis Hamilton on the timesheets by a margin of 0.151s, chased by Ferrari's Fernando Alonso. In the afternoon the Mercedes' pair's fortunes were reversed, with Hamilton leading Rosberg by two-tenths when the chequered flag fell.

The big story of the morning was the Toro Rosso debut of Max Verstappen, who acquitted himself well despite a selection of mechanical errors running the gamut from third gear struggles to his Renault power unit giving up the ghost in the closing minutes of the session. When all was said and done, Verstappen's best lap was a scant 0.4s off his highly-rated future teammate Daniil Kvyat.

The only incident of note came thanks to Caterham's Roberto Merhi, whose innocuous spin at Spoon led to a near miss for Valtteri Bottas.

While FP1 was a fairly quiet affair, FP2 was rather chaotic, with crashes and failures from Kamui Kobayashi, Jean-Eric Vergne, and Daniel Ricciardo. The Red Bull star hit the wall at the last corner, tearing off his left front wheel in the process. But the Australian was top of the timesheets at the time of his shunt, his 1m37.186s lap giving Ricciardo a 0.092s advantage over the then second-placed Kevin Magnussen.

Not long after Ricciardo's shunt, the red flags came out when the pit exit was closed, the marshals having left the stricken RB10 slightly further up the road from its original crash site. Footage of the car's recovery was something of a comedy of errors, with marshals struggling with the guide ropes as the RB10 swung from its crane.

Next to shunt was Esteban Gutierrez, another man to struggle at Spoon before hitting the barriers and ending his afternoon prematurely. For a man keen to impress future employers - or fight for his Sauber seat, depending on your source - it was an ignominious end to the session.

But Vergne had an even worse end to his afternoon, having managed to get back out on track late in FP2 when the Toro Rosso mechanics fixed his earlier power loss issue, but then ground to a halt on the exit of Spoon with what looked to be a recurrence of the same problem. With very little time on the clock, the red flags also heralded a premature end to the day's crash-heavy running.

F1 times (unofficial)

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m35.461s [27 laps]
2. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m35.612s [26 laps]
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m36.037s [19 laps]
4. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m36.576s [25 laps]
5. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m37.187s [19 laps]
6. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m37.327s [24 laps]
7. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m37.466s [27 laps]
8. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m37.649s [24 laps]
9. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m37.686s [26 laps]

10. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m37.714s [26 laps]
11. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m38.012s [22 laps]
12. Max Verstappen (Toro Rosso) 1m38.157s [22 laps]
13. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m38.324s [10 laps]
14. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m38.582s [9 laps]
15. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m38.851s [21 laps]
16. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m39.046s [19 laps]
17. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 1m39.097s [26 laps]
18. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m39.318s [18 laps]
19. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m40.031s [18 laps]
20. Roberto Merhi (Caterham) 1m41.472s [24 laps]
21. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m41.580s [10 laps]
22. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m41.757s [15 laps]

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m35.078s [28 laps]
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m35.318s [27 laps]
3. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m36.279s [24 laps]
4. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m36.409s [28 laps]
5. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m36.436s [24 laps]
6. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m36.529s [19 laps]
7. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m36.637s [26 laps]
8. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m36.714s [31 laps]
9. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m36.943s [27 laps]
10. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m37.186s [3 laps]
11. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m37.219s [19 laps]
12. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m37.504s [16 laps]
13. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m37.563s [31 laps]
14. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m37.700s [18 laps]
15. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m37.786s [8 laps]
16. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 1m37.798s [27 laps]
17. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m38.010s [25 laps]
18. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m39.365s [9 laps]
19. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m39.069s [22 laps]
20. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m39.306 [20 laps]
21. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m39.333 [24 laps]
22. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m42.760s [3 laps]

Thursday press conference

With silly season in full swing the opening press conference at Suzuka focussed on driver rumours and the Friday morning F1 debut of the sport's best-known youngster.

Present were Jules Bianchi (Marussia), Jenson Button (McLaren), Romain Grosjean (Lotus), Nico Hulkenberg (Force India), Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham), and Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull).

Q: Kamui, as we're at your home race, can we start with you? Last time we saw you here you were on the podium. Just tell us what that was like for you to be on the podium at your home grand prix?

Kamui KOBAYASHI: Well, first of all, thank you for this special seat! I think in 2012, my first podium ever, in Suzuka, it's a great memory. After 2012 I break for a year and then come back in 2014. It's a very difficult situation right now but still I'm back at Suzuka. Of course, I think we have a lot of rumour before coming here but at least we can announce that we are here and we will race this week. I'm very happy about that.

Q: Indeed. In terms of the likelihood of being on the podium, it's perhaps a different story this year, but what do you say to those who have supported you. You've got a huge amount of fans here and of course it's a fantastic grand prix in terms of the home crowd?

KK: Yeah, I really appreciate all the support. I'm here because of only fan donation and these donations are very important for me and we show how the Japanese supporter is always supporting Formula One, also myself as well. Next year, Honda will be back and I think this will be helpful for all the Japanese fans and also maybe other Japanese companies as well. This could help one day. At least I'm here for this year and I think it will be really exciting and still it's only Thursday so many fans try to get [things] signed and it's still very nice to see for me.

Q: Thanks very, I hope you have a great weekend. Jenson, you sometimes say that this is a home grand prix for you as well and I remember being told you're very much a Honda driver as well, which we'll talk about in a moment, but first tell us what you feel about this race. You've finished 14 out of 14 Japanese Grands Prix, plus one win, it's a remarkable record.

Jenson BUTTON: Yeah, I think the one win stands out for me as a result, rather than just finishing 14 races. Winning here in 2011 was a very special victory for me and also being chased down by Fernando and Sebastian at the end of the race was a proper climax. Really stands out in my Formula One career.

Q: But a little bit of a shadow on the horizon at the moment, in that we don't know which way your career is going. What do you know? What can you tell us? Is it likely to be decided fairly soon?

JBu: I... I don't know! As you know I can't discuss anything to do with the contract.

Q: It's the same with your team-mate?

JBu: Exactly.

Q: So, what are your hopes for the grand prix this weekend?

JBu: I hope that we can race on Sunday, that's the first thing, I think. With a typhoon coming this way it's always very tricky. Hopefully it will miss us. It's going to be a mixed weekend in terms of weather: tomorrow there's a good chance of rain as well. I think it's really just thinking on your feet and staying on top of all the different weather forecasts. But this is a circuit I think we all love. It's fast, it's flowing, there's a lot of support here from the fans, not just for Japanese drivers but for every driver in Formula One as a whole, so it's always great coming here and I'm looking forward to getting out there tomorrow.

Q: Nico, if I can come to you next. Since the summer break you've been beaten by your team-mate at every single race. What's changed? What's happened there?

Nico HULKENBERG: I think obviously race weekends didn't go as flawlessly as before and for one or other reasons we didn't always achieve our maximum on my side of the garage but nothing too concerning I think. Obviously Hungary was a mistake, technical issues in Monza, unlucky in Singapore, so there is always a story behind it. But overall, if we put it together we are still a candidate for points and still looking competitive.

Q: And your team principal is full of praise for both drivers, so what does the future hold?

NH: We'll see. I think there's not much to report at the moment but everything is looking quite positive.

Q: OK, Jules, just rate your season so far, how do you think it's gone?

Jules BIANCHI: After the break it was a bit more difficult for us. In Spa I had an issues and in Monza we were not so competitive and then Singapore was a difficult race again. I think overall it was a good season and I'm quite happy. Now I hope we can do some good results again.

Q: You've sort of served your apprenticeship, if you understand that expression, at Marussia. Do you think you have achieved all you need to achieve there to continue in Formula One and to move up?

JB: Well, you can always do better for sure but it was a good season for me. I'm still trying to do my best in the next races we're going to have and we will see. But for sure I have no regrets.

Q: Romain, also rate your season so far if you would.

Romain GROSJEAN: Kind of missed the podium. It's a tough season for all of us. We started a little bit on the back foot and it takes time to recover but things are going slightly better since Singapore. I think we have seen that the car was a little bit more competitive and hopefully it will be the case until the end of the season. There are a few updates coming. Even though they are small pieces it makes a good difference in how you prepare for the future. I think the key now for Lotus is to get on top of issues to prepare as good as we can for next year.

Q: The frustrations clearly spilled over a little bit in Singapore, as we heard on the radio messages. How difficult a season has it been for you?

RG: Well, the season is difficult. Of course part of the frustration... part of that radio message was frustration from the beginning of the year. When you're racing in Singapore it's certainly one of the toughest tracks to race, qualifying lap, you give 120 per cent of everything you can, you take every single risk to get close to the walls without kissing them too much and the straight line your engine cuts – so I wasn't very happy with that. I think it was clear. But we've found the issue with Renault, they solve it for the race and things were going better. I think it was just the fact that it was hot, humid and trying to get 100 per cent of everything and suddenly you get issues on the straight line where it's easy not to lose time.

Q: Sebastian, you've obviously had a remarkable record here, you've been on the podium the last five years plus the wins as well. And you've just had your best result of the year in Singapore. Has a corner been turned? Is it the new chassis? What's made the difference?

Sebastian VETTEL: I think it's all the small bits coming together. Obviously we hardly ran the first half of the season, we had lots of issues in winter to overcome and then a lot of issues on my side in the first half – which is never great to get the right feeling and get things lined up the way things should be lined up. I think now we had a little bit more consistent weekends, a bit more time to look at all the stuff and I think it's coming our way – but there's still huge potential which I feel we are getting closer but there's a lot of work ahead of us to make sure we extract it in the next couple of races as well.

Q: You know the podium here very well – is there the possibility to be back on it?

SV: I think there always is. Yeah, there's some discussions on the weather. Kamui just gave me a brief update on the Typhoon. I think chances are a bit 50:50 but there's always a chance to do well, race well. This circuit suits me, suits our car so I think we should be a little bit closer this weekend again. Whether we are as strong as Singapore is difficult to say. It's a different nature of track – but a track I definitely enjoy and an atmosphere that I really enjoy, so I'd love to be on the podium, yes.

Q: But there is a little bit of a shadow hanging over a lot of drivers at the moment with the possibility of penalties. How do you approach that?

SV: Well, I'm one of them! Yeah. The rules are as they are but surely at some stage we have to take some penalties, which penalties those will be is not entirely clear yet. We're waiting for some parts, we're hoping that we get as far as we can but it's inevitable to go for an extra engine on my side – which is already ten positions after qualifying. Potentially there is more waiting for us – which is only a consequence of the poor season we had, first half of the season, in terms of reliability. But that's something we knew back then. Now we have to figure out what is the smartest plan, let's say, and the smartest track to come up with a penalty.

Q: (Anne Giuntini – L'Equipe) Question to Jules. Considering the many rumours developing at the moment, if it would occur that a seat would become available – vacant – at Ferrari, would you feel ready to go there? And why?

JB: Well, yes of course I feel ready. I have been working for that since I'm in the Academy, end of 2009. So, now I did nearly two seasons in Formula One. I think I have good experience and I feel ready for that, for sure. It looks like the logical step for me if something happens like this. Obviously at the moment both drivers have a contract so it's not the question but if there is the opportunity I feel it would be good for me and I feel good.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Jenson, is it for you McLaren or nothing more for the future?

JBu: In Formula One I'm hoping you mean. It's the best option.

Q: (John Westerby – The Times) Question for Sebastian. We have a 17 year-old driving here this week. I wonder if you could compare when you came into F1, perhaps with the cars in particular. Does this mean cars are easier to drive now than when you came into the sport?

SV: I think one of the biggest differences is that I was able to drive myself from the hotel to the track – which I think he isn't. He doesn't have a driver's licence. I think Formula One has changed a lot, especially this year so it's not a secret cars got slower. Different to drive to previous years, probably a little bit more technical but less demanding in terms of the corner speeds we are taking. Especially on a track like this. But, y'know, I'm as excited as you to see him running. Obviously he was only done half a year, three-quarters of a year in Formula3. I think he has a remarkable record in go-karting. So, yeah, I think he has the potential. On the other hand, you need to give him time, as much as he needs. When I was 19, joining Formula One, the first time. Of course, you always feel ready and you don't say no if somebody gives you the opportunity to race or drive a Formula One car – but you have to take your time to get used to all the things. Not just the car but also working with the team, which is completely different in Formula One to all the other categories.

Q: (Daniel Johnson – The Telegraph) On that topic, Seb, you have a number of the records for youngest race winner, pole position, World Champion, I think. From what you've seen of Max so far and he's part of the Red Bull family as it were, do you think he's set to take those records from you?

SV: Well, I think records are there to be broken. Obviously he starts quite a bit younger than all the rest of us but it's hard to say, but one day I think there will be somebody to break these numbers and one day there will be somebody again to break the numbers again, so I think that's normal.

Q: (Anne Giuntini – L'Equipe) Romain, it's the usual question yet I would like to know how can you keep motivated during such a hard season, to keep going?

RG: Well, because you wake up in the morning and you're still a Formula One driver. It took me quite a long time to get to Formula One. I lost it once, at the end of 2009 and when I came back in 2012, I realised... you know, when you lose something, you realise how much you like it. So even though it's a tough season, I still have mechanics that give 100 percent of themselves and I still love what I'm doing. Of course, it's much more fun to fight at the front and for victories but it's still a very good job.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sebastian, even if you say that your future next year is with Red Bull, your name still comes up a lot and it comes to Ferrari and Fernando, who might possibly leave. Anything to say to that?

SV: Well, I think there has always been rumours over the last couple of years, especially around this time of the season. I think probably more for Jenson: he already has 17 teammates for next year. I have been one of them, a couple of weeks ago, maybe next week I will be again. It's not really in my head. As I said, coming from back... coming from the back at Singapore we made some progress and I hope that we can carry that momentum into this race and that's really where the focus lies.

Q: (Ben Edwards – BBC TV Sport) Just a quick question for everybody following on the Max Verstappen question: what was the most powerful car/engine that you drove when you were 17 years old?

JBu: I'm trying to think. It was a long time ago now. At 17, I will still be racing in karts, I was racing in – as it was then – Formula Super A. I'd driven three Formula Ford cars before that, when I was 14 so 30 horsepower, I guess.

KK: I think I did Formula Renault but I think that's it, and I don't remember how much horsepower.

SV: I think I did a test, when I was 17, in ChampCar in America so around 750 horsepower.

NH: Same as Jenson, karts.

JBi: Yeah, I was racing go-karts. I think I did a test in Formula Renault, so 180 horsepower.

RG: Technically, in horsepower, I think it was my mother's Subaru. On a race track, for the record.

Q: (Daniel Johnson – The Telegraph) Kamui, obviously your home race gives you lots of reasons to be cheery and look forward to the weekend but back in Oxfordshire, the team is going through its own troubles at the factory. I wonder if you could summarise what the mood is like in the team, has that affected it at all or is it as usual?

KK: Well, first of all, I won't get the same information to the boss because I think that our boss is flying over here, so we are waiting what happens really. I think it's very difficult to say. At the moment, I think we can still communicate with the UK so I think it looks as if the company is OK but I don't know the rest really. Unfortunately.
