



Sunday press conference

While the list of drivers present at the post-race press conference in Monaco matched the list of post-qualifying attendees, that belies the tense nature of the race itself.

Present were Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), and Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull).

Q: Nico, congratulations, man – a home win for the home boy. How did it feel? You had Lewis very, very close to you all the race but you held on to your lead. How was it?

Nico ROSBERG: A very, very special day for sure. Lewis drove really, really well and pushed me massively hard, so the pressure was on all the way. But I kept it cool and, yeah, was able to win, in the end pulling a bit of a gap because I had the fresher tyres. So, fantastic and I'm very, very happy for the whole team, it's an amazing car they've built and given us this year.

Q: Congratulations, well done to the Monaco boy. Lewis, how are you? Tell us a little bit about what happened on the 56th lap? You got something in your eye?

Lewis HAMILTON: Yeah, just through the visor... but anyway that's not important. It was a good day and really good for the team to get a one-two.

Q: You had Daniel [Ricciardo] right close behind. How was it? You started second and finished second and how are things with your team-mate, I think people want to know?

LH: I had great pace, you know, obviously I felt I was very strong today but it's a very, very difficult circuit to overtake on...

Q: It's incredibly thrilling to watch, you were all incredible out there, the closeness of the cars...

LH: Thank you. Fortunately we didn't make any mistakes, so...

Q: Daniel, well done, man. Nice to meet you; Benedict. Tell us a little bit about your race. You were in third for a while, then the pit stops, tell us a little about your strategy.

Daniel RICCIARDO: Firstly, it's really nice to be up here on the podium in Monaco.

Q: It's your first podium here isn't it? Congratulations.

DR: Yeah, thank you. The start was not great, I dropped back to fifth actually. A bit of frustration but then we saw Vettel had a problem, so we were able to get fourth and then we saw Raikkonen had a puncture on one of the safety cars. So we sort of inherited third after a poor start...

Q: You got very close to Lewis. You were right on his gearbox at the end?

DR: At the end we really closed in. I believe he had an issue. We tried to put some pressure on but in the end third was the best we could do.

Q: Congratulations Nico – a two-time Monaco Grand Prix winner, only a handful of drivers have ever done that before. Fifth consecutive one-two finish for the Mercedes team and you are back on top of the Drivers' standings. Can you sum up what this win means for you today in the context of the battle with Lewis for the championship?

NR: Yeah, it's a special win, definitely, because Lewis has had the momentum with the results and everything and I really needed to try to break that momentum and somewhat I managed to do that this weekend. Of course taking the leading again in the world championship and winning here in Monaco, yeah, all in all really, really cool.

Q: Well done. Lewis, obviously the momentum is broken for the moment. We heard you on the radio quite a lot after the safety car and the pit stops, questioning and speaking about the strategy calls. Obviously you pitted together under the safety car. Had there been a thought that you might try to undercut Nico before that? Can you explain to us what the conversation was about?

LH: I don't remember to be honest. I don't. I think they saw a crash and normally under the crash we could have come in and I really should have come in but the team didn't call us in. We really should have pitted that lap.

Q: Fair enough. Daniel, your first Monaco podium. Can you describe your feelings about that and looking back across qualifying and the race is there any way you could have got a better result than the one you got today.

DR: To describe the feeling, it's really nice to be up here. Could we have done better? I don't know. I felt yesterday that we left a little bit of lap time on there. Where that would have jumped on the grid, who knows. After that, the race itself – the start was not good, not what I wanted. I actually dropped back to fifth and then Seb had his problems, still not sure what, but pretty evident he had problems when he slowed on the straight. Then Raikkonen I saw got a puncture under the safety car, so I got third and then pretty much was just trying to maintain the gap behind me to Alonso. Then when I thought there was enough or the right amount of laps left before the end to push and not really save tyres anymore, I did and went for it. We got close to at least one of the Mercedes at the end but you know what it's like around here, it's quite hard to pass. Tried to put a bit of pressure on but third was the best we could do but not a bad day.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello sport) A question for Nico and Lewis. We have seen that there is a pretty tense situation between the two of you and we also heard comments from Lauda saying you did not want to talk and apologise. Are you going to have a pizza together, a dinner, to sort the problems, talk about it and try to get the situation back to normal.

NR: It's fine. We've had discussions and the benefit we have is that we've known each other for so long. We always sit down and discuss it and then move on and that's what we're doing this weekend also.

Q: Lewis?

LH: I don't really have an answer for you there.

Q: (Oana Popoiu – F1 Zone) I have a question for Lewis. Niki Lauda said that in Barcelona you used an engine mode you were told not to and you had to apologise to Nico for that. Do you think that that mode would have helped you win the race today?

LH: No... today we were using all the modes. In the last race it was a mode that didn't really affect the outcome of the race. We were told that we had

to stay in a certain mode. Nico did it in Bahrain and I did it in Barcelona. In this race we stuck to the strategies we had to stick.

NR: I don't know what Niki is referring to but it's completely normal that we switch modes together you know, we always do that in the races. It's nothing unusual.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and National Speedsport News) Lewis, yesterday you told the BBC that you might handle the situation with Nico like Senna would. What did you mean by that?

LH: I don't know. I can't really remember to be honest. I think it was just a joke. Obviously I didn't.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) I think you said on the radio that you had a problem with your eye in the closing stages. What happened there?

LH: I've never really had it before. I kept making sure my visor was as closed as possible but I had quite a bit of wind coming in. I got close to Nico at one stage and all of a sudden I got a bit of debris in my eye, or some dirt, so I was driving with one eye, which is virtually impossible to do and so through the low-speed corners I was trying to open up my visor to clear it up but it was just making it worse. Fortunately, I think with five laps to go it cleared up so I was able to stay ahead of Daniel.

Q: (Vincent Marre – Sports Zeitung) in the last days Nico was mentioning that the previous races were not one-to-one races. What do you think Lewis about this race or this race weekend. Was it a one-to-one races.

LH: I don't fully understand the question.

Q: (Vincent Marre – Sports Zeitung) last day Nico Rosberg was mentioning that the previous races were not one-to-one races, relating to the weather, because you were winning the races and this time he's winning the race and I want to know if you think this weekend is a one-to-one race for you?

LH: I'm still not fully understanding it, but all the races have been very, very close but this weekend I think I had very good pace. I drove with all my heart and gave it all I could, fairly, and I feel like I drove fairly all weekend. So I leave today quite happy and I can go into the next race with even more energy and determination.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Lewis, it seems pretty clear to us that you feel aggrieved with the events that occurred yesterday in qualifying. Is this it now for you? Is it gloves off in your battle with Nico? And secondly, do you feel that you are getting full and fair support from the team?

LH: Generally, there is a fierce battle between me and Nico and it will continue that way to I'm sure quite late in the season. Nico's not had a single hiccup through the season so far. Obviously I had a car that didn't finish in Melbourne but otherwise it's still quite close, so I'm just going to keep my head up, keep pushing. I know the team are working hard for the both of us. The team can sometimes be in awkward positions, which they were yesterday, and their job is really to protect us both and that's what they did.

Q: (Graham Harris – Motorsport Monday) Question for Nico: you were being told to back-off and coast with fuel. How critical was your fuel?

NR: Yeah, the fuel was very critical and caught me off-guard a little bit because it was a major change that I had to make and especially with Lewis being so close behind, it was a tough moment because I had to change the driving style completely, use different gears, different lifting and coasting, everything different. But, again, the team managed that well and got me to do what I needed to do. And then, once I got into the groove again, it was OK and everything... it was no problem then. But it was still difficult.

Q: (Jussi Jäkälä – YLE) Nico, 31 years ago Keke won here, today you are double Monaco winning. Which do you think is prouder at the moment: you or your Dad?

NR: I don't know. I hope... of course my father is proud today and that makes me very happy, that I'm able to make my parents proud. Hopefully even my friends, for example, who all were here also this weekend and that makes it all the more special to have family, friends, everybody I know lives here and is at the track watching the race and that's even nicer.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) One question to Nico and one to Daniel. Nico, you said that you had to break the momentum, since Lewis is coming from four consecutive wins. Is this your most important victory so far? And to you Daniel, from what we have seen today from Red Bull, are you going to have the pace to challenge Mercedes in Montreal in two weeks?

NR: I don't know about the most important. For sure it was very, very important, yes, today because Lewis had the result moment and I needed to try and bring that to an end and managed to do that today, so that's great but, y'know, it's still early days and for sure it's going to continue to be a very, very tough battle.

Q: Daniel?

DR: I think, yeah, we closed up a bit here in Monaco which we knew would be our best chance up until now. This circuit definitely suits our package a bit better than previous circuits – we still didn't finish in front so, unfortunately, it's still not where we want to be. Montreal is still a street circuit but unfortunately the straights go on a little bit longer there so we're still down a little bit in that area, which I think everyone's aware of and we've made progress. Whether it will be enough by then, honestly, probably not but we are closing the gap so, that's all we can ask for, for now, and just keep chipping away at it and be patient. I'm sure a bit of perseverance as well and we'll get there.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Universo Online) Daniel, for sure as a driver you must trust in yourself but in any moment did you believe you could beat Vettel in the way this season you are beating him in qualifying and the race?

DR: I didn't really have any visions exactly on how it would go, what the race results would be or what the qualifying score would be – but I knew that I have some talent and obviously got a bit of experience now in Formula One. So, every year, even every six month period I feel I'm still growing and getting better as a driver as well so, I knew coming into the season with the team behind me and sort of a new opportunity, that I would be able to challenge Seb. Did I think it would be going, let's say, as well as it was now? I don't know. But I knew if I had everything underneath me I'd be capable of getting the results. So, fortunately the team saw that as well, back in September, I think, last year. So, it's coming good.

Q: (Barna Zsoldos – Nemzeti Sport) Lewis, after your victory in Barcelona, you said that Nico was faster than you in the race. Today he can even beat you. Is it a worry for you? And do you know where you should improve pace-wise.

LH: erm... not really. I was pretty comfortable with my pace this weekend.

Q: (Yassmin Abdel-Magied – RichardsFL.com) Daniel, you said yesterday that there was a little bit left on the table in terms of qualifying. Do you think that there was a little bit left on the table still in the race, and was there was there any point – you got pretty close to Lewis at the end there – when you were going to go for it and then maybe not – don't want to risk it? What was the thinking in those last few laps?

DR: Everyone was trying to do a one stop today; it's a bit of a weird one, you don't really push much of the race because, especially after the first pit stop, we still had a long way to go, so you're in two minds: do I push or do I just try and hold the guy off and get to the end. By the time we'd got 15/20 laps to go I knew the tyres were going to last so then I could actually start my race, so to speak, and then start to set some quicker times. We caught Lewis, the team said I was going to catch him, the pace was good so I knew I was eventually going to get on to him. Knowing it's hard to pass around here, I wasn't... I don't know. I was just waiting to see what happened but I wasn't just going to settle for third. Obviously in the end I did but if there was a clean move to be taken then yeah, I would have taken it.

Q: (Nicola Pohl – Bild) Lewis, what do you think was the reason why the team didn't call you in immediately after the crash? You complained over the team radio about that.

LH: I think it's just what we have a rule that the guy in front gets the first opportunity to pit first so I think that would be why.

Q: (Haoran Zhou – Formula One Express) Lewis, how did the debrief of yesterday's qualifying go because as we understand, you were not in the debrief room, while Rosberg was?

LH: I was in there. I went to the toilet and Nico did his big debrief before I got there which is unusual. Usually we do it when we're both in the same room but as I came up I did mine and fortunately the engineers had written down what Nico had said so I read it.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) Nico, have you been surprised that the team didn't call you in right after the crash of Sutil?

NR: No. Surprised? No, not really, because I don't think about that too much. I know I can rely on them to make the right call at all times so it's not something that I'm thinking too much about, the strategy and should I be boxing now or not, because I know that they're going to make the right call.

Q: (Christian Hoenicke – Der Tagesspiegel) Nico, do you think it was fair what Lewis said about you not being hungry as him because you were growing with boats and jets and all that stuff?

NR: I didn't hear Lewis say that and so I'm not going to comment because it's easy for you to just invent something and so I'm not going to comment on that, and even if something like that was written – which I don't know because I don't read the media – then still, between what Lewis says and what's written, so much can turn around so it's better I don't say anything and I know that Lewis wouldn't say something like that, especially not to the press, maybe to me if he feels like it but not to the press.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Nico, you may give the same answer to this question then, because there were some comments from yourself in one of the German newspapers or certainly a few of the German newspapers and you can correct me if I'm wrong, if the English translation was not correct but you remarked that when Lewis goes through a difficult period that he can crack. Do you think that that's what happened this weekend, that maybe Lewis did crack under the press yesterday in qualifying, and Lewis, any comment on that yourself? Do feel you're the kind of guy that doesn't crack, that you can hold it together in these kind of circumstances?

NR: Again, that is definitely very very far from anything that I've ever said and ever would say. Definitely not and I've known Lewis for many many years and he's always been strong, among other things mentally, so I'm definitely not expecting him to crack any time soon, that's for sure. It's going to be a tough battle which is going to be ongoing, but I would never say something like that anyways.

LH: Do I feel like I crack? No.

Q: (Ralf Bach – Sport Bild) Lewis, to clean the situation, did you tell the BBC in this interview where you said these things with the boat or didn't you say that?

LH: I was asked who was hungrier. I think if you ask every driver they will say that they're the hungriest and I said that what gives me the hunger is where I grew up in comparison to where Nico grew up. You know I've always been striving to come and live here. I used to travel around with Nico in his Dad's plane, I used to go to his boat, I used to go to his house, I used to have those experiences and that gave me those experiences and that gave me the desire to want that one day, which gave me the hunger. It was his Dad obviously who inspired me to be where I am today.

Q: (Ralf Bach – Sport Bild) So you did say it.

LH: Yes, but – as Nico said – it was taken out of context a little bit.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Universo On Line) Lewis, do you believe with a normal pit stop – not under safety car conditions – you would have had any chance to overtake Nico and get the lead of the race?

LH: It's irrelevant now, but obviously with the start, we got exactly the same start... there's only two opportunities in the race and the pit stop would have been the other one but the safety car came out at the perfect time for him so I didn't have the chance there. Otherwise, that was it.

Q: (Gloria Scola – El Mundo) The race has just finished: I was wondering what racing gives you, is it freedom of expression, a way to express yourself, adrenalin?

NR: First of all, we're here to entertain and hopefully give people a great time and a spectacle to watch, and especially in Monaco, it's very obviously because everybody's there on boats and houses and everything, and I just hope that we're able to put on a great show, that our sport is seen as the best sport in the world, the most fun sport in the world, the most exciting sport in the world and so that's a special feeling as such. And then of course driving my car through the streets of Monaco on the limit, battling everybody else, trying to win and then of course the win itself is the most special moment.

LH: I'm living my dream so it gives good energy.

DR: I get... honestly, freedom is definitely one thing. I remember when I first hopped in a go-kart as a kid, just being in control and not having anyone else in your space and then going at speed was a sense of freedom definitely. It's nice as well, particularly with everything that happens around F1, all the media and everything else – when you hop in the car, it's just you and the car and occasionally you have an engineer on the radio but it's just you so definitely a sense of freedom along with a wicked adrenaline.

Race report

Nico Rosberg took his second Monaco race victory on Sunday afternoon, with a commanding lights to flag win that was far from easy. Teammate Lewis Hamilton crossed the line in second place, giving Mercedes their fifth consecutive 1-2 finish, while Daniel Ricciardo was 0.4s behind in third.

Having got a great start off the line, Rosberg was able to keep Hamilton behind him, with the two drivers split by a margin that hovered around 0.8s for the majority of the afternoon. But keeping his aggressive teammate behind was not a simple matter for the eventual race winner: much of the middle section of the race was given over to increasingly harried pit wall instructions to Rosberg to manage his fuel, with the situation described over the radio as potentially critical.

A thinking man's driver, Rosberg proved able to not only manage his fuel, which by the final stint was no longer critical, but the hometown hero was also able to extend the gap to Hamilton while in fuel-saving mode.

For much of the afternoon – and despite two Safety Car periods – the Mercedes pair were in a race of their own, with the man in third place around 12 seconds behind. In the early stages of Sunday's race it was Kimi Raikkonen who was giving chase to the leading pair after an excellent start off the line, but after pitting under the second Safety Car the Finn was forced to return to the pits for another stop, having picked up a puncture along the way. That move handed third place to Ricciardo, who had already been closing the gap to the Ferrari ahead.

Within five laps of the Safety Car returning to the pits for the second time, Ricciardo had fallen 5.9s behind Hamilton, testament to the superiority of the Mercedes package even on a circuit where overall power is less important than anywhere else on the calendar. But it was the Australian's lucky

day, for Hamilton lost significant time in the closing laps of the Monaco Grand Prix. The Briton had a piece of grit in his eye, and spent much of the end of the race threading his car through the principality's needle-like streets with only one eye open as Ricciardo drew ever closer.

Further down the pack the race was one of attrition, with one man – Pastor Maldonado – failing to start thanks to problems with his fuel system. Sergio Perez was out on the first lap after being spun at Mirabeau by Jenson Button, bringing out the first Safety Car, while Sebastian Vettel managed five gremlin-filled laps before being called in to the pits to retire by his team. Daniil Kvyat retired on lap 10 with what appeared to be brake problems, while Adrian Sutil brought out the second Safety Car with a lap 23 shunt at the Nouvelle Chicane.

Things then stayed rather more peaceful until lap 50, when Jean-Eric Vergne capped off a miserable afternoon for Toro Rosso with a power unit failure. A scant five laps later Valtteri Bottas was the next to fall, also thanks to a power unit failure that saw the Finn stop on the hairpin. Esteban Gutierrez was the last of the retirees, stepping out of his car after a spin at Rascasse.

The volume of retirements contributed to the other big story of the afternoon, which was Jules Bianchi claiming his first career points – and the first for his team – after crossing the line in eighth place. A post-race five second time penalty for serving an early stop-go under the Safety Car put the Frenchman back to ninth, but the two points secured were good enough to put Marussia in ninth place in the constructors' standings, ahead of Sauber and Caterham.

Bianchi's result was not solely attributable to the race of attrition, however – it should be noted that the Ferrari junior driver delivered an impressive and mature performance, charging past Kamui Kobayashi for P13 and then keeping Romain Grosjean behind him over the course of the closing laps.

Monaco Grand Prix race result

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1h49m27.661s
2. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) + 9.2s
3. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) + 9.6s
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) + 32.4s
5. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) + 1 lap
6. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 1 lap
7. Felipe Massa (Williams) + 1 lap
8. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) + 1 lap*
9. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) + 1 lap
10. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) + 1 lap
11. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) + 1 lap
12. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) + 1 lap
13. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) + 3 laps
14. Max Chilton (Marussia) + 3 laps

Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) RET
Valtteri Bottas (Williams) RET
Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) RET
Adrian Sutil (Sauber) RET
Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) RET
Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) RET
Sergio Perez (Force India) RET

Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) DNS

* Bianchi was issued with a five-second time penalty after the race, and so finished in P9 on the official classification.

Saturday press conference

After a controversial end to qualifying for the Monaco Grand Prix, it was a decidedly short and definitely not sweet press conference that took place in the paddock on Saturday afternoon.

Present were Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), and Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull).

Q: Nico, congratulations – pole for the second year in a row but perhaps not exactly the way you wanted to achieve it, with that mistake at the end?

Nico ROSBERG: No, definitely not. I thought it was over once that happened, because I thought the track would ramp up and somebody else could beat the time but no, of course, in the end I'm really, really happy that it worked out in the end. To be on pole is fantastic, at home; couldn't be better.

Q: Coming to you Lewis. Nico's mistake, ironically, and the subsequent yellow flags meant that you couldn't improve on your lap. Your feelings?

Lewis HAMILTON: Yeah, it is ironic. But it's OK. I was up a couple tenths so it's OK.

Q: Daniel, coming to you, your best Monaco qualifying performance. Your chances for the race, your thoughts on the two gentlemen (beside you) who again seemed to find a bit more speed when it mattered today?

Daniel RICCIARDO: Yeah, I think all three of us don't seem to be too pleased with ourselves. I think we left a bit on the table. We fought the car pretty hard in qualifying and trying to find a bit more from it. I thought I was getting around it OK but coming up to Turn 8 I just lost the rear completely on exit and pretty much the lap was gone after that. Frustrated, I think we could have been much closer. So a little bit disappointed.

Q: Nico, your thoughts on what happened with Lewis and where your mistake left him. You're close friends, you're fighting for race wins, your fighting for pole, for world championships but there's no question that your mistake disadvantaged him

NR: No, definitely, of course I'm sorry for Lewis. I didn't know exactly where he was but once I was reversing I did see he was coming up. Of course that's not great, but that's the way it is.

Q: Lewis, your response to that? When you're last on the track there's always that risk isn't there, you're vulnerable to something like this happening?

LH: I don't have an answer to it.

Q: OK. Final thought then from you Nico. You won here from pole last year, your thoughts on what will definitely be a tough 78-

lap grand prix tomorrow.

NR: Yeah, well, very, very happy to start from first. It's going to be a long race tomorrow. Also there's supposed to be some weather coming in, so we're not sure if it's going to stay dry or not. Of course, [I'm in] the best place to start from and just need to try to get a good start. That's been our weakness recently but we've worked on it a lot. So I'm quite confident that we've got the starts sorted now, so that should be OK. And then, from then on try to take care of the tyres – tyres will be very important as always in the Monaco Grand Prix, take care of those and everything should be OK.

Q: So Nico, obviously there's only one real major talking point, tell us in detail what happened on the way down to Mirabeau?

NR: I just locked up, the outside front, I think it was, or the inside, I'm not sure, and that put me off line. I was still trying to make it but in the last moment I had to turn out because I was going to hit the tyre wall. It was close but I managed to go into the escape road.

Q: And what was going through your mind on that last lap? You, of course, had the advantage, having set the faster time first, so you knew you were up and you knew...

NR: ... Well that's the whole reason why I'm... I know that I have a banker, a really good banker in there so I just try to push that little bit more and went over the edge.

Q: Lewis, give us your thoughts when you were told over the radio, or you saw the yellow flags and knew that it was all over.

LH: Not really much.

Q: Can you elaborate?

LH: Not really much! I didn't really think of anything. The lap was done and that was that.

Q: You said you were a couple of tenths up though, so you must have thought you were on target?

LH: I was on target, yep.

Q: And your thoughts on where you go from here. Will you be wanting to meet with the team this evening. Anything unusual before the preparation for this race?

LH: I don't know, I'll have a look into the data and, y'know, look where I can improve tomorrow.

Q: Daniel, your thoughts. First time you've driven Monaco in a competitive F1 car. Tell us about that step-up in performance, being that close to the front and having a real chance tomorrow.

DR: It was definitely nice to... yeah, again, fight at the front on the field and around here it's a lot of fun, definitely. It's always nice when you've got a quick car but around here it does feel awesome. The last lap there, went for one last push and just didn't really get the grip back that I was hoping for and just couldn't improve on the lap I'd done in the first part of Q3. So, it was a shame because I think in the first part of Q3 we still had a little bit more in there and, yeah, a bit frustrated to be honest.

Q: (Haoran Zhou – Formula One Express) Lewis, how pleased are you with your first lap in Q3 and did you leave some time on the table: if there is, where exactly?

LH: Generally the lap wasn't too bad. Nico's been quick all weekend. And just working away at it, one step at a time. I remember starting the last lap and said 'this is it, this is going to be the lap'. Was two and a half tenths up and didn't get to finish it.

Q: (Leonid Novozhilov – F1Live) Daniel Ricciardo, what you can say about the Red Bull team's chances in this championship?

DR: The championship is – I think – a long long way away. Again, Mercedes have got a front row lock-out, I think we were definitely closer today. I felt we had a bit more of a chance there but yeah, I think the championship's still a long way away. Firstly I think we need to win a race and then think about a championship.

Saturday report

Saturday in Monaco saw textbook Riviera sunshine, with a cloudless blue sky and azure seas setting the scene for qualifying. With Lewis Hamilton topping the timesheets in FP3, chased by Daniel Ricciardo 0.05s behind, the afternoon session promises more tension than previous weekends.

Ricciardo and Red Bull teammate Sebastian Vettel were the last men out of the pits in Q1, waiting until there were 12 minutes left on the clock before leaving the pits. It was unfortunate timing, as it meant both men were out on track when Daniil Kvyat ripped the front wing off his Toro Rosso at the Nouvelle Chicane, and had to proceed with caution on their out laps.

Kvyat was able to return to the track before the end of the session, and was sitting on the edge of the dropout zone when the chequered flag fell.

It was a terrible 18 minutes for Marcus Ericsson, who first impeded Nico Hulkenberg on a flying lap before driving both himself and Felipe Massa into the wall at Mirabeau, taking them both out of action for the remainder of qualifying.

When all was said and done, the Q1 dropout zone was comprised of the driver pairings from Sauber, Marussia, and Caterham, with Esteban Gutierrez and Adrian Sutil very closely matched, split by a scant 0.004s.

The Mercedes pair were first to leave the pits in Q2, with both men shod in supersoft rubber. With the Silver Arrows making the move to the softer compound in this session, no other team will chance their luck on the prime tyre for the rest of the afternoon.

Half-way through the session and Nico Rosberg ruled the roost with Hamilton just behind. Ricciardo was half a second back in P3, while Ferrari teammates Fernando Alonso and Kimi Raikkonen were scrapping for fourth-place, both very closely matched. Vettel, on the other hand, was running in P15 having made an error on his first timed lap and backing off to try again. Take two saw the defending champion cross the line in P4, demoting the Ferraris in the process.

With Massa through to Q2 but out of the session, the last five slots in the dropout zone were filled with Jean-Eric Vergne, the Lotus pair, Valtteri Bottas, and Sergio Perez, with five minutes left on the clock. Jenson Button was in P10 by the skin of his teeth, and with all fifteen contenders out on track for the final minutes it's a traffic-heavy fight for a place in the top ten shoot-out.

Perez improved to P8, knocking his former teammate into the dropout zone, while current teammate Hulkenberg sat on the edge of relegation in P10. Hamilton knocked Rosberg off the top slot, one-tenth in hand.

When the chequered flag fell and all laps were complete, it was Hulkenberg, Button, Bottas, Grosjean, and Maldonado joining Massa in the dropout zone.

With no times yet through from Mercedes or Red Bull it was Kimi Raikkonen who topped the timesheets for Ferrari in the opening minutes of Q3.

And the expected straight to the top runs from Hamilton and Rosberg failed to materialise, with both men emerging in the middle of the pack after their first timed runs on used supersofts.

Rosberg's next effort saw the hometown hero take provisional pole with a 1m15.989s lap, while Hamilton was close behind with a 1m16.048s. Behind them was the Red Bull pair, with Ricciardo three-tenths slower than Hamilton and two-tenths faster than Vettel.

At the five minute mark, only Vettel and Kevin Magnussen were out on track, with the other eight all in the pits for fresh rubber before starting their final runs.

With three-and-a-half minutes to go, all ten runners were out on track, and the trick for teams was to manage gaps in the traffic. Hamilton appears to have started his run with a view to being the last of the drivers to cross the line, giving him a theoretical strategic advantage over teammate Rosberg. There is no indication that the pole-sitter will be anyone either than one of the Mercedes drivers.

Rosberg made an error on his final attempt, locking up and making use of the escape road at Mirabeau before continuing, but the yellow flags meant that Hamilton was forced to back off rather than go hell for leather with his own last effort, effectively handing pole to last year's Monaco Grand Prix winner.

Provisional grid

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m15.989s
2. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m16.048s
3. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m16.384s
4. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m16.547s
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m16.686s
6. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m17.389s
7. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m17.540s
8. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m17.555s
9. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m18.090s
10. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m18.327s

11. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m17.846s
12. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m17.988s
13. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m18.082s
14. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m18.196s
15. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 1m18.356s
16. Felipe Massa (Williams) NO TIME SET

17. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m18.741s
18. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m18.745s
19. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m19.332s
20. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m19.928
21. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m20.133s
22. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m21.732s

Thursday press conference

Perhaps fittingly for a press conference taking place in the world's best-known tax haven, the Thursday briefing in Monaco was all about money and the inequitable distribution of wealth in Formula One.

Present were Eric Boullier (McLaren), Federico Gastaldi (Lotus), Christian Horner (Red Bull), Marco Mattiacci (Ferrari), Claire Williams (Williams), and Toto Wolff (Mercedes).

Q: Let's start with Claire Williams. Claire a strong performance for the team in Barcelona but in some of the earlier races you maybe let a few points fall by the wayside. Where do you feel you are at and are you on the right track?

Claire WILLIAMS: I think we are in a really good position now. I think we all have to remember where we were last year and to make the performance improvement that we have over finishing P9 in 2013, I think the team have done a fantastic job to turn things around in the way that they have. We entered this season always wanting to get both cars in the top 10 in qualifying and then to score points in the race and we've pretty much achieved that, so I think everyone at Williams should be really proud of what they've achieved. I think you can always look back and go 'I wish we could have done a bit better' and we potentially could have scored a few more points but I think we should all be pretty pleased with P5 in the championship at this time.

Q: Thank you for that. Moving on to Federico. Quite a progression for you from Melbourne to Barcelona, in just two months, and a promising test after the grand prix, where do you feel your team is at in the development cycle and which teams are you targeting to challenge at this point?

Federico GASTALDI: Well, we have done, obviously, a progress from the start of the season but we're still working on it; we're not where we want to be. We want to be in front of our friends with the red jacket, as we were last year, fighting in that position. So that's our target pretty much - to go back to where we were last year.

Q: Thank you for that. Moving to Eric. Obviously you've had a few months now at McLaren; what have you discovered, what changes would you like to make and how will you manage the split development programme as the year goes on between the 2014 car and the 2015 Honda car?

Eric BOULLIER: Yeah, it's been a few months. Obviously it's a great team. It's an institution I should say. I did settle in very well. Obviously we are not performing at all where we should be or where we want to be, so there is obviously a lot of time to spend to go through as a company and find out to what needs to be fine-tuned or changed to make the team better. It's true that actually it was a last week debate about the transition between 2014 and 2015. It's a decision we have to do shortly shall we say because obviously as you know most of the teams switch their resources during summer and like usual I should say. This is where we will be but we have started already to work on next year's car.

Q: Christian, tell us about the opportunity that this race here in Monaco presents to Red Bull at this stage of the season and also the progress going on behind the scenes to catch Mercedes on a regular basis.

Christian HORNER: Obviously Monte Carlo is a unique track and it's layout, the nature of the circuit, doesn't put such a premium on straight-line performance, which has been our weakness this year. So we're hoping to give these guys [Mercedes] a run for their money this weekend. For sure

they're going to be strong again here. They've always been strong in Monaco. But we've had a solid day today, the drivers have been feeling their way into the circuit and working on the set-up and it's been an encouraging start to the weekend. Obviously when you consider where we were pre-season to where we've come to at this stage, we've come a pretty long way in a couple of months and hopefully if we can keep that rate of progress up then we will be able to challenge the two Mercedes drivers before hopefully too long in the future.

Q: Coming to you Toto, it looks like it's going to be another close one between your two drivers, Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg, this weekend. What does that battle look like from inside the team and how is it to manage?

Toto WOLFF: It is of course a nice problem to have, to have two cars up in the front battling with each other. They do it fair and square. We haven't seen any incidents up until now and I hope we can sustain that. Having said that we mustn't be complacent, because Red Bull... Ricciardo was very close today and obviously Monaco is a track where horsepower doesn't matter so much and straight line speed doesn't matter so much, you can see that the gaps have narrowed a bit today, at least from what you have seen in free practice one, so interesting times.

Q: Coming to you Marco. Welcome to your first FIA press conference. A rapid learning curve for you. Do you already have a vision of the kind of Ferrari team you want to lead.

Marco MATTIACCI: I would be extremely arrogant in saying that we already have a vision. Definitely we are having a picture, a quite accurate picture of the problems we have experience so far. It is clear the gap toward the leader of the championship. So we are clear what are going to be the next steps. I wouldn't say vision, we know that we need to have a continuous improvement every race and that's the way we are working. We have a lot of assets, as I have said, very positive people, drivers but definitely there is the need to improve dramatically.

Q: Okay, a second question to all of you. The current situation is that the teams have agreed to pursue cost control through technical and sporting regulations. How is this process developing? Claire, would you kick us off with that one?

CW: I think the most important thing with this consideration is that everybody is committed to ensuring that we can drive down costs in Formula One. So there is a lot of work going on behind the scenes with the full group of team principals and then within the Strategy Group as well and as long as we keep working hard then I believe we can drive costs down for the benefit for everybody in our sport.

Q: Federico?

FG: Same thing here. We are all working very hard together. It's good that all the teams are in the same boat. We are all trying to reduce the cost. It would be good for all of us to go into a different direction at this stage and try to make things easier for most of us.

Q: Eric.

EB: I think Claire said everything. It's true that as long as everybody has the same aim to go for cost reduction then we should achieve something which is reasonable.

Q: Christian.

CH: I think the key place to reduce the costs is in the Sporting Regs. That's where the biggest cost drivers are, so there is a lot of focus on that in the different groups. I think there is some constructive discussion. I would think so far we've probably saved about €10,000 but we're going in the right direction and hopefully through the process of the next month, before regulations are fixed for next year, we can come up with some significant savings.

Q: Toto, anything to add?

TW: Yeah, I think it's a very productive process. Obviously getting everybody under the same roof or agreeing to the same principal is very difficult because the teams have very different agendas from the very small privately owned team to teams representing multinational, global companies or a branding exercise. This is quite a difficult, painful process, but I think we are at the stage where we have recognised that we have to do something. And although we are only at €10,000 I'm hopeful that it's going to be more in the next couple of weeks.

Q: Marco, your thoughts on this process.

MM: I have had also so far two meetings and I think that definitely there is a very strong intention to reduce costs. Probably we need to be all aligned to make a productive and tangible step. Having said that I think we can do more, having always in mind that Formula One has to provide the best possible technology and entertainment and that's clear to all the stakeholders here at the table. But definitely we are doing some productive steps in that direction.

Q: (Livio Oricchio - Universo On Line) It's a question for all you? What's your view about the fact that Barcelona the pole position this year was 4.5 seconds slower than last year and the fact that pole position in GP2 would permit the driver to start in 14th position on the grid. And specifically to you, Mr Marco, did you invite Adrian Newey to work at Ferrari?

MM: First of all I think they are doing an excellent job. We need to recognise that Mercedes has the leadership because they have been working in an excellent way. Having said that is it good for the audience? Is it good to entertain the public? I have some doubts about that. But there are different avenues that we are discussing about that issue, as I said, you know to reduce costs and in order to deliver a better product in Formula One.

Q: And do you have a specific response to the Newey question?

MM: If I invite Adrian Newey to work at Ferrari? No.

Q: Let's get some other responses to the question about the four-and-a-half seconds in Barcelona. Eric, let's start with you?

EB: I think if the cars are slower obviously there is some technical reason for that and there is some aim with the technical regulations to make the cars slower. All the cars are shall we say aerodynamically less performing. We lost obviously the blowing at the back of the car. Tyres are more conservative than last year and obviously the new engine, power unit let's say, is different to manage, so I don't see any downside to be slower, because historically every time there was a big change of regulation the cars were slower and obviously this is to keep the excitement let's say within the engineering group to make sure you know that we can recover the speed over the next months years. I don't know how long it will take but I'm pretty sure we will recover some speed. Then the second question about the GP2 pace. GP2 should maybe go as well for a cost reduction programme, which will maybe make the cars slower as well.

Q: Claire, anything to add?

CW: I think everyone's really answered it, what I would like say. We're here to put on some great racing and this season has delivered some fantastic races so far, from the front of the grid to the back of the grid.

Q: Federico?

FG: Same thing; I agree. It's new regulations, we all agree to go through this and now we are working to try to give the best show. That's what we are here for.

Q: Toto?

TW: It's an interesting question and if you look at the timing screens you get a completely false picture. If you cut back the aerodynamics by 25 per cent, if you cut back the blowing, you have different tyres, you can expect the cars to go quicker. On the straight in Barcelona, the fastest car was doing 347kph compared to 318 last year. So in Monza I don't know what we will be seeing, but 380 maybe? So the point is we have lost downforce and this is the main reason the cars are slower.

Q: Anything to add Christian, finally?

CH: I don't think we'll be seeing 380 from our car in Monza.

Q: (Walter Koster – Saarbrücker Zeitung) Mr Wolff, Niki Lauda said Mercedes has not the intention to win all the races, this situation is not good for Formula One and the fans. I have this paper here in my hands. Niki feels a season like McLaren in '88, with 15 wins in 16 races, or Ferrari in 2004, with 15 wins in 18 races, but with all the wins this season Mercedes could have a new record in Formula One history. For me the words of Niki are a little bit strange. I hope he's not crazy. Do you share his view and agree with him?

TW: We can try, not to win all the races! I guess it's much too premature to talk about winning all the races, this would be super-arrogant. We have won five races so far. You can come back to that question or address that question once you have won 15. At the moment our agenda is to win the race three days from now.

Q: (Ian Parkes – PA) You've talked about the need to cut costs, you say you're determined to try and do that, yet following the meeting on May 1st at Biggin Hill, FIA President Jean Todt described the proposals on the table as "a joke". Another well-placed source has said to be that those proposals were "pathetic". Why is it that you're not doing more to cut the costs? Could it be that one of the agendas that was on the table at the most recent meeting was customer cars and perhaps you're prepared to see the demise of two of the lesser teams – maybe even more than that – to introduce customer cars from maybe next season or the season after.

CH: I think the problem with putting competitors in a room to try and find a way to save costs, when different teams have different models, different philosophies about how they go racing is very, very difficult. I think that is part of the challenge. I think everybody is unanimous in the fact they want to reduce costs but then obviously we're all driving our costs up through competition. So it's, in many ways... you're on a hiding to nothing in doing that and that's where obviously I think the promoter and the regulator need to get together and say "this is what Formula One is going to be," and then the teams have the choice of whether they enter the championship or not ultimately. On the subject of customer cars, it's obviously a thorny subject but if you were to look at... say for example, forget the existing teams, but new teams, to encourage new teams to come into Formula One then a year-old car would surely be the most cheapest, more cost-effective way of introducing a team into Formula One that hasn't got to have the investment in a design and R&D department, manufacturing, go through all the crash-test process, can just be focussed on being a race team while they build their infrastructure up. One would think that might be a logical way to help the small team and perhaps a new team coming into Formula One.

Q: Toto?

TW: How do you close the gap between a privately owned team, owned by a millionaire who enjoys going racing and a multinational global brand that tries to promote its products? It's impossible. So the question is: do we want to close the gap, narrow the gap of the cars and make the racing more tight, or do we want to really cut costs. I think it's super-difficult, you know? At first sight it looks very simple but then how do you want to police it? How do you want to look into Honda in Japan? How do you want to look into the various models of organisation? Why should Ferrari ever accept anybody looking into their operation when F1 is part of the road car business. It's just unpoliceable. At the moment it's unpoliceable. It doesn't function. So there are many agendas, many different models and we need to bring all that under one umbrella, and it's so complicated.

Q: Marco, anything to add?

MM: I agree with the gentlemen, it's a very difficult task. Because if we think to reduce dramatically the gap between a top team and an entry team... I think it's a moonshot. It is going to be a big price again from the racing, from the product of Formula One. I agree with Christian, the problem is supporting more the customer cars, is an entry level definitely but basically give them the possibility to have two, three years experience and to gain the knowledge and then to become competitive. So, this is a practical way, realpolitik, to move ahead – but definitely to imagine that all the teams can have the same budget, a budget cap, I don't think is a direction that we want to take.

Q: Claire, how do you feel about that?

CW: I couldn't really hear what Marco was saying, sorry, I've got background noise in here. But just from a Williams perspective, I think Christian summed it up well in that, you're in a room and you've got a whole load of very competitive people running their teams in very different ways around a table, trying to align around cost control. And this isn't a new conversation in Formula One but we've all got to remain committed to trying to reduce those costs, which we are. I think it's still early days in the process and a lot of people... we know what we're discussing but those conversations pretty much stay in the room. I just hope that we can, at the end of the day, whenever these conversations finish, we have driven down costs in Formula One. Everyone knows Williams' position on customer cars – we think it goes completely against the DNA of our sport. We're not signed up to it and we think there are other ways to drive costs down in Formula One before we have to have that conversation.

Q: Anything to add Eric?

EB: Not much.

Q: Federico?

FG: Not much, not really. Same thing. Teams related to the car manufacturers, they have a different engine to us but as Toto said we are here to make this happen. Yes, we have different agendas but the good thing the good thing again is that we're in the same boat. We just need to make sure we're on the same page.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) We've heard a lot today about closing up the gaps in competition, Toto, you were quoted a couple of weeks ago saying part of the reason for two teams winning the 14 last races is due to the spending war. If we do really want to close the gap between front and rear, is it actually possible when four of you teams represented here today share an incremental \$250million per annum?

TW: Do you think Dieter it's on our agenda to close the gap between the teams? I think it is not on my agenda. On my agenda is to win races and win the World Championship and each of these lady and gentleman's agenda it to be the most competitive. That's the first thing. To address the second question, it is also an income question. Obviously we know income is spread in different ways. Just or not right I do not want to comment but the fact is some of the bigger teams have an almost break-even operation due to sponsorship income, due to FOM income, rights income, so the question is: do you want to spend your money and in which way do you want to spend your money? I guess it's down to the team and this is why it's so complicated.

Q: Federico?

FG: Again, it's about being competitive, y'know? We obviously need to work on our budgets, each of us have different budgets to run the programme with but it's also about how the money is given to each team. So, were still working on it, it's not easy.

Q: Eric?

EB: It's always the same story. Let's say for the fans, for the show, for the show on the track, you would like to have, obviously, a different winner every weekend. As the team principal of McLaren I would like McLaren to win the 19 races. From that point, you understand we all have the same opinion, I guess, and this is where obviously you have to work, let's say, on the regulation again to make sure that you can achieve what we have, actually, in the last years. But to start a new era, a new cycle. I'm happy in some way that Mercedes spends that money because it makes obviously the car not too slow compared with last year.

Q: Claire, anything to add?

CW: I think it's up to... I don't want to comment on the division of money in Formula One. It is what it is, it's been that way in our sport for years and who knows if it will change or not? But then it's up to every team to go out and get their budget after they've been allocated their prize fund money, which is obviously what Williams has done for years. I think we've been a team that have proven you don't necessarily need a huge amount of money to win a World Championship in Formula One and I hope that we can do that in the future. It's about how you allocate your resources and getting the best talent for the budget you have. But I think Mercedes have done a great job this year and it's up to everybody else down the back of the grid to try and bring the competition to them.

Q: Christian?

CH: I think it's too easy to say 'you've got the most money so you're going to win the races', whether that's Mercedes this year or Red Bull or whatever. If you look at it, yes, two teams have won all the races in the last 12 months but Ferrari and McLaren have no less a budget. So it's down to the people, down to the skill and how you apply those budgets. It's the skill of a team, it's the skill of the drivers, it's the skill of a company how it's applying those resources to achieve the results that are there. I think that's the element of competition. That's the way it's always been in Formula One from the 50s all the way through to the present day. It's a brutal competition and it's survival of the fittest. Which is why so many teams - I think more than 200 teams - have passed through Formula One since the Formula One World Championship started.

Q: Marco, your perspective on this as a newcomer to the sport.

MM: Again I repeat myself. Formula One stands for the best competition, the best in class technology, best drivers, best organisation. The people, the team that can put together all these elements win. I think to dilute these values of Formula One, looking for some kind of equality I think could be something that could harm dramatically the product of Formula One. So, I think that absolutely we need to be careful to go down that path. As I said, we need to be cautious controlling the cost but we need to deliver that product that's made Formula One successful. So to be the best of motorsport.

Q: (Haoran Zhou - Formula One Express) A question to Christian. You always have some great numbers on your engine performance. You say you're losing eight-tenths on the back straight of Shanghai. Here, there are some of those zones after Turn One there is a big uphill and also the tunnel. Do you have some numbers for this race?

CH: Not yet, no, it's certainly closer and of course Renault are working very hard with Total as well to reduce the gap to Mercedes. We made a bit of a step in Barcelona and we feel that we're a little bit closer again this weekend but I think that our biggest test is going to be in two weeks in Montreal as opposed to around the streets in Monte Carlo.

Q: (Luigi Perna - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Question for Mattiacci. Are you confident you can close the gap to Mercedes during the season and when will be the moment to switch your efforts for next season's car?

MM: I think that we are confident as Ferrari that we are striving to improve every race and to be competitive. That's the thing that I'm absolutely sure. We can see little by little that we are going in the right direction. As I said, Mercedes has done an impressive job and an impressive leadership but I think, what are we doing? We have two great drivers and a team that is really, really focussed on closing the gap.

Q: When will be the moment to switch your efforts to next season?

MM: It's too early to make this call.

Q: (Sven Haidinger - Sport Woche) Question for Toto. Of course we all know that Mercedes is in Formula One for marketing reasons and for coverage, so do you prefer a one-two finish, a boring race or do you prefer your drivers to race wheel-to-wheel. What do you prefer?

TW: Well, if it would be a Christmas wishlist, I would like to repeat Bahrain, having close wheel-to-wheel racing for all fans, for Formula One and nevertheless be very competitive up at the front.

Q: (Oliver Brown - Daily Telegraph) Question for Toto and Christian. It's been a season dominated by the duel between Nico and Lewis up front. It seems a few years since Formula One has had a great team rivalry. I just wondered if you felt that Formula One needs a consistent and compelling rivalry to provide the best possible entertainment.

CH: I think if you look back in recent past, if you look at the rivalry that we've had with Ferrari, the World Championship going to the wire in 2010 and in 2012, it wasn't settled until the final race. I think that's a utopia situation. I think that Mercedes are doing a super job at the moment and they have a rivalry within their own team and it's down to the rest of us to do a good job to try and catch them up and put them under pressure. But I think it is healthy for the sport, there does need to be rivalry. Sometimes we live in a too politically correct world and the rivalry is healthy in sport, whether that be between teams or between sportsmen.

Q: Toto?

TW: Christian covered it all.

Q: (Silvia Renée Arias - Parabras) Question for Mr Federico Gastaldi: I would love to know what are your personal feelings after these few races in your new role in the team?

FG: Help! My personal feelings; I've been around enough. Obviously the start of the season has not been easy for our team but we need to work and understand how to progress so we have already shown some improvements in Barcelona which has been quite positive for all the team - for the drivers to understand where we are going, so we have to keep working.

Q: (Fulvio Solms - Corriere dello Sport) Mr Mattiacci: in the last years, Ferrari was often close to winning the championship. Now it looks like this aim has returned on a medium to long term. Can you say how long is this term in your plans?

MM: There is a lot of work to be done. I don't want to give any deadline, definitely it's a medium term but we are going to come back competitive. This is for sure. We are working 24/7, were going to come back competitive, that's for sure.

Q: (Renan Do Couto - Warm Up) Question for Mattiacci: Marco, I would like you to put yourself in the position of Luca di Montezemolo with Stefano just having resigned. Marco Mattiacci: would you look at yourself and hire you to be the new Ferrari team principal and why would you, or why wouldn't you?

MM: The only place where I want to focus my energy at the moment is in Marco Mattiacci, so far away from me to put in the heads on the shoulders of someone else, so I'm not going to answer that.

Q: (Dieter Rencken - Racing Lines) I'd like to come back to the other question: Christian, first of all, it's about a hundred teams that have gone under in the last 70 years, not two hundred. But apart from that, whilst Formula One has always been a meritocracy and yes, the top teams have always earned more, never in the past have four teams shared an incremental amount of this value, even if they finished last in the championship, which effectively what happens now and that's the point that I was trying to make. Can we ever have a fair competition as long as four teams share such exorbitant amounts of money?

CH: I knew I was going to get that question, because Dieter only asks difficult questions. Look, I think that's more of a question for Bernie. Our job, as individuals who represent our teams is to do the best job we can to represent the companies that we work for, so of course you're going to cut the most aggressive deal that you can, and it's down to the promoter to decide who he values and who he's going to distribute his money to and how he's going to distribute that. He's chosen to distribute it the way it is, the shareholders have all agreed with that and that's the way it is, but if you take into account the team finishing tenth in the World Championship is actually earning more than Red Bull were when they came into the sport in 2005,

finishing seventh or sixth in the World Championship. So the revenues have gone up, the share is of a bigger pie and has obviously been developed over the years, but it's very difficult to put us on the spot to answer those kind of questions because our interest is obviously to represent the teams and companies that we do as best we can.

Q: (Vincent Marre – Sports Zeitung) You were just speaking about the importance of Formula One to be a show. In the second practice, before the 31st minute, we haven't seen a car driving, so do you think maybe the FIA could impose a rule, maybe imposing the cars to do three laps in 15 minutes or something like this? It would be the same for everybody. Are you for or against that idea?

EB: Nice to start. Well, it's true that it's not nice for the fans. I disagree with your comment – F1 is not a show, F1 is first of all a sport and a team sport. That's very important. Yes, at the end there is a show on track but this is a difference for me and this is why as well: because it's a sport, because we want to be competitive, when you know – because today we have technology which tells us the weather forecast for the weekend – we have more or less a dry weekend, you don't want to take the risk to crash your car during the session, so in the end we had to make a choice.

CW: I think Eric probably answered it. I don't have anything to add.

TW: We need to be careful not to go from depression to manic and back into depression and have a shortened view. Yes, we've had a boring session but does it mean that Formula One is boring over the season? I've heard different comments after Bahrain so I think you need to look at the whole and say is there anything we can optimise in wet sessions when the whole weekend is predicted to be dry? How was it in the past? I guess it was the same.

CH: We were cost-saving in the second session!

Q: (Oana Popoiu – F1 Zone) Eric, with a change to Honda next year, how much can McLaren still afford to keep fighting to improve?

EB: I think the regulations have actually been done in a great manner because the pick-up points you have on the chassis and the back of the engine for the gearbox are the same, whatever engine you want to fit in your cars so I accept that maybe a re-packaging of cooling – it's not a big big job, let's say, to go for another engine manufacturer. So I think the transition between this year and next year is very similar to other years.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Christian and Claire have already given quite opposing views with regard to customer cars. Could I get the thoughts of the other four gentlemen around you, what you feel about it and in particular to Marco, I'm led to believe that Ferrari are in discussions with Gene Haas about potentially supplying a customer car for them to get on the grid from next season, which I think is what Christian was alluding to at the start.

MM: As I said, a few minutes ago, we strongly believe in customer cars. I think that if there is a way to guarantee an entry level that is less expensive than probably a top team budget it is a customer car, to give more support, probably, that's another way to go, to go different supporting integration with customer cars but we believe in it.

EB: Well, it's true that it's a way to go today for a company or team to join F1 and I tend to agree with what Christian said before. The danger in that, as well it's true that even if you need a massive investment now to create your team from scratch, you also need to protect the teams which have been investing for many years and all the teams have obviously been doing the same so I think there is a solution which could be – as I said – customer cars under certain circumstances and obviously giving some protection to the Constructors.

FG: Nothing to add really. We are in a different league; obviously we are not car manufacturers so we have to think in a different direction.

TW: Well, I have a clear view: it's the Formula One Constructors' championship but not the Formula One Customer championship. The entry level is high because this is the pinnacle of motor sport: we don't want to do GP2 and make it very easy to come into Formula One. This has value if you are participating in Formula One, that has value, you need to have infrastructure and it's like in any other business where the entry level is high because the field is so competitive – or the companies are so competitive so we believe in being a constructor. Having said that, the rules for the future nevertheless could be loosened up a bit so in order to... what you need to provide to compete in Formula One is probably left to bodywork and other parts and it's a direction we've been heading to for a couple of years. I think this is a sensible step in order to guarantee a competitive field with enough cars. If we really run into a situation where the number of cars on the grid drops to a critical level – whatever that critical level is, 20 or 18 cars – I think then measures need to be taken, whether it is a third car, whether it is a customer car. Again, you open up a bunch of questions: what is a customer car, do you want to run cars to last year's regulations, do you want to run them on balance of performance, like in GT racing? I don't think this is Formula One so the devil lies in the detail.

Q: (Jacquelin Magnay – The Australian) I'm interested in your strategy about sponsorship and where do you draw the line. I've noticed here that Marlboro has a very strong association with Ferrari through Philip Morris being a sponsor. Is it appropriate for your sport to have such strong links with tobacco advertising in 2014? I'm interested from a strategy point of view from the organisation, if that's something you've discussed as well.

MM: Yes, at the moment we have an excellent relationship with Philip Morris. They are doing an excellent job in terms of social responsibility. It is a partnership that has lasted for many years. It is crucial, it is fundamental to attract sponsors in Formula One because this definitely means more financial support for all the teams, at the same time getting integrated and connected with different areas and different audiences that probably Formula One doesn't reach today so it's more than welcome to work more deeply on that level.

EB: As McLaren, we obviously establish ourselves as a brand first and obviously we have a similar business model to my 'red' colleague who is also selling cars. Sponsorship today has obviously drastically improved and obviously you're selling a brand and depending on the prestige of the brand, you can obviously adjust the price and today we are obviously a high value or highly regarded brand. Also we are developing some technology and technology business which improves the returns of the sponsorship.

CW: I think sponsorship is really difficult. It's getting harder and harder to go out there and bring sponsors into any sport. There's so much competition for marketing dollars these days but Williams is an independent team, the majority of our income has to derive from sponsorship so we're working really hard in the market at the moment. There are definitely some sectors that we wouldn't necessarily want to be partnered with – I won't say what they would be – but we've done a great job commercially over the winter: as everyone knows, we've brought in Martini to the sport which is fantastic, not just for Williams but also for Formula One as a whole but it is a difficult business, but we're continually out there trying to bring in new sponsors to keep Williams alive.

CH: I think the regulations on tobacco are very clear now, what can and can't be done – and it's mostly what can't be done. I think Formula One obviously has moved on and if you look at Red Bull alone... Red Bull is not only a shareholder, it's a sponsor of the team but we've also brought in 12 other major partners. There's obviously a title partner in Infiniti so we go from the automotive sector through the clothing sector with the partners that we have access to communications partners such as AT&T. There is still a huge amount of interest in Formula One. If you look at the viewing figures outside of the World Cup and the Olympic Games, Formula One is the most globally covered sport in the world, so it does offer a tremendous return and that's why we've justified the amount of partners that we have.

TW: I would agree. I can't really comment on tobacco sponsorship.

FG: I think sponsors are very very important these days for the team, for the sport so are tobacco companies welcome? Apparently they are, obviously, so why not other companies from either tobacco or alcohol, joining the other teams?

Thursday report

Lewis Hamilton topped the timesheets for Mercedes on Thursday morning in Monaco, although he was unable to repeat the feat in the afternoon session, when top honours went to Ferrari's Fernando Alonso.

The morning practice session was marked by minor errors from much of the grid, as drivers had to relearn their way around the Monaco street

circuit while driving cars whose relative lack of downforce and rear-end grip meant that walls and barriers were somewhat closer than they had been in the past.

Experienced drivers were far from immune, with Alonso spinning at Mirabeau not long after Max Chilton and Adrian Sutil had done the same. But the Ferrari driver recovered from his mis-step and carried on, while both Chilton and Sutil brought premature ends to their sessions with their Mirabeau efforts. It wasn't the best of sessions for Sauber, who also saw Esteban Gutierrez finish early after a near-miss at Ste Devote.

The afternoon session was a much quieter affair, thanks to heavy rain and hail that started falling during the lunch break, soaking the track and making it impossible to run for the early part of FP2.

It took more than half an hour for the first timed laps to appear on the board, and when they did they were hardly representative of the known pace of the cars. Only in the closing minutes were the Monaco streets dry enough to make slick runs a possibility, and as a consequence times were changing faster than the display on a fruit machine.

After topping the morning session Hamilton was second in FP2, trailing pace-setter Fernando Alonso by four-tenths. Vettel ended the afternoon in third place, while Ricciardo – who ended the morning just behind the Mercedes pair – was only able to manage ninth.

Given the track conditions, which were not representative of those expected in qualifying, but which are likely to be replicated during Sunday's race, not much about the true pace of the cars can be read into the FP2 times. A dry qualifying is likely to see Mercedes claim pole for Sunday's wet race, and with 2014's reduced downforce and twitchy rear ends coupled with the ever-present walls, the Monaco Grand Prix may well turn out to be something of a demolition derby.

FP1 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m18.271s [32 laps]
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m18.303s [31 laps]
3. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m18.506s [37 laps]
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m18.930s [31 laps]
5. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m19.043s [33 laps]
6. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m19.467s [31 laps]
7. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m19.494s [31 laps]
8. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m19.666s [29 laps]
9. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m19.789s [29 laps]
10. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m19.856s [38 laps]
11. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m20.033s [35 laps]
12. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m20.118s [33 laps]
13. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m20.207s [33 laps]
14. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 1m20.241s [38 laps]
15. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m20.260s [36 laps]
16. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m20.517s [25 laps]
17. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m20.736s [18 laps]
18. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m20.914s [37 laps]
19. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m21.310s [27 laps]
20. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m22.063s [40 laps]
21. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m22.492s [38 laps]
22. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m25.817s [7 laps]

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m18.482s [15 laps]
2. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m18.901s [12 laps]
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m19.017s [15 laps]
4. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m19.351s [14 laps]
5. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m19.421s [9 laps]
6. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m19.668s [9 laps]
7. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m19.712s [10 laps]
8. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m19.721s [16 laps]
9. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m19.779s [11 laps]
10. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m20.230s [16 laps]
11. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m20.394s [8 laps]
12. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m20.622s [13 laps]
13. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m20.811s [8 laps]
14. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 1m20.977s [7 laps]
15. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m21.467s [8 laps]
16. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m21.700s [6 laps]
17. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m21.924s [6 laps]
18. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m21.937s [13 laps]
19. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m22.683s [13 laps]
20. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m22.862s [11 laps]
21. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m23.164s [6 laps]
22. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m45.509s [4 laps]

Wednesday press conference

The wonky scheduling of the Monaco Grand Prix weekend – with Friday a much cherished day off – meant that the FIA drivers' press conference took place one day earlier than is usual.

Present were Jules Bianchi (Marussia), Valtteri Bottas (Williams), Romain Grosjean (Lotus), Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari), Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), and Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso).

Q: Jules, can I start with you? Obviously it's been quite a tough start to the season for you. What do you put that down to? Is it

adapting to the car, is it bad luck or a combination of those things?

Jules BIANCHI: Yeah, obviously it's been a very difficult start. The first few races have been pretty tough for me and the team but actually the last one especially was pretty good for me, so I am happy with that. So I will think about this only now and be focused for the next races coming now.

Q: Tell us about your experience and thoughts about this unique race track here in Monaco. You had a good result here back in Renault 3.5 a few years ago, does that junior experience help in the first few years in Formula One?

JB: Yeah it helps a lot for sure to race in Monaco before your first year in Formula One. Last year has been really difficult for me. I had some issues in qualifying, I had engine failure and then in the race again some issue with the engine to start with and a brake failure to finish with, so it was not the best race I could have but I'm pretty confident now that I can do a good race this year.

Q: Coming to you Valtteri, you're seventh now in the Drivers' Championship and well ahead of your team-mate. You had another good result in Spain. Do you feel that you and the team have moved up a gear now?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Yeah, since the start of the season everything's been positive if we compare it to the year before. All the time during this year we've been able to make progress, we've been bringing some updates, which always gave us a little bit. That's what we aim for, for that to continue for the whole season. We are definitely keeping up at least with the development. We just need to keep pushing really, because everyone is going to improve so much.

Q: You said in the build-up to this race that you feel confident this year at Monaco. I wonder how much of a handicap it was last year for you that you'd never driven anything around this circuit? Can you tell us a bit what it's like to drive this place with absolutely zero database when you're driving a Formula One car.

VB: Yeah, definitely it was really tough last year, first time, immediately with a Formula One car but, you know, you just need to adapt to it, you need to build the speed up step-by-step in the practice and definitely going for the race this season I know the track now well, so it's much easier to approach the weekend and build from practice one onwards. I definitely feel very confident for this weekend and I really think we can fight as a team for some really good points.

Q: Nico, winner from pole here last year. Can you tell us what a win around this race track means to a Formula One driver, what it did for you personally and for your confidence?

Nico ROSBERG: For me personally it was a very, very special experience, because it's my home, it's where I've grown up. My whole life has been centred around Monaco. So to win here, yeah it was great. And not only that but also it's the race to win. It's the most challenging race to win and the most prestigious race to win, so really that was awesome.

Q: With what happened in Spain, losing the initiative in the championship to your team-mate, how are you feeling at this point, going into this race? Do you feel the strain or do you feel an impatience to get that lead back again?

NR: I'm not too focused on that. Of course I would prefer to be ahead than behind but it's very, very close and there still a long way to go. So I'm just focused on this weekend here, looking forward to it, because I know that I have a fantastic car at the moment and I expect the car to be very, very quick also here in Monaco. The gap – they might be a lot closer to us this weekend and we need to wait and see if we are the fastest and the chances are we will be, so I look forward it and hope to have a fantastic weekend again.

Q: Jean-Eric, like Jules you've had a difficult start to the season. You got four points in the opening round but since then you've been in a position to score more points but then you've had non-finishes. What's been going on?

Jean-Eric VERGNE: Yeah I think I've been pretty unlucky since the beginning of the season, started well in Melbourne and then always in a position to score some good points. But that's how it is: it's part of the sport. I'll just keep on smiling and hopefully the bad luck will go away and get tired of me. I'm just hoping to finish the race and have a good car and that's all I'm hoping for. So it will come.

Q: You won here in your junior career I believe and last year this race was the start of a real turnaround in your season. What are your thoughts on the venue, your prospects for the weekend, and also I noted that you said that a driver must arrive in a humble state of mind at the beginning of a weekend in Monaco. What do you mean by that and what happens from there?

JEV: Well, I think this track is really difficult for sure. You want to stay far away from the walls and at the beginning the walls always look really close, a lot closer than in the end of the weekend. This is a particular track where even the first session, the first PL, is really important for the confidence over the whole weekend, so you really have to build up your weekend in a good way.

Q: Romain, coming to you, first points of the season obviously in Spain and also fifth on the grid, followed up by what looked like a very encouraging test for Maldonado and Pic in Barcelona. Can you sum up where Lotus are now and what level of optimism there is for this next phase of the Championship?

Romain GROSJEAN: Well, if you look at the trend from Melbourne, we've been improving every time, going to Q3 for the first time in China, going to Q3 and being fifth on the grid in Barcelona. I think we were looking good in the race to keep the Ferrari behind but I had a small problem. It's good that all the work has been done, and the fact we understand more and more our car, it's going in the right direction and, of course, if you are fifth on the grid in Monaco, the race is even kind of easier to defend your position. You never know what you are going to get when you come to Monaco. It's such a specific track. But I do hope we get the same kind of car we had in Barcelona. Then we can be well placed in Q3 and score some more points.

Q: Looking at your record here over the years, Monaco has not been a very happy hunting ground for you, has it? In Formula One or the junior categories. Why is that, do you think?

RG: I think that's not fair to say. I've been on pole position here in GP2, won the race in GP2 – but on the other side if you have a look at crashes, I have a good record and few corners I know too well. To be fair, last year I completely missed my weekend and wherever I would have been, it would have been the same story. So, just try to not do that again. You have to respect the track. Every mistake is more obvious than everywhere else – but I've always been quick so I'll try to keep that in my pocket but stay away from the rails.

Q: Kimi, another Monaco winner, do you consider a win here to be more important than other races? What did you feel when you ticked that Monaco win off your bucket list?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Obviously it's been pretty OK many times for me the race but then it's not always from your side that the things go wrong here. There's so many things that can affect your result in the end. Previous years haven't been the most best again but hopefully this year can be a bit better and hopefully we get some good points but obviously it's too early to say how the car will be. Everything is different from last year so we have to just go open-minded and try to do the best that we can.

Q: Was Spain something of a turning point for you in terms of being able to extract closer to the maximum potential from the Ferrari? What made the difference there for you? And also, can you say anything about your analysis of the strategy in that race afterwards?

KR: We've been pretty good in other races also but obviously had some problems in the race or in practice and always messed up the complete big picture a bit. But obviously it was a bit better last time around. To be honest, if we finished where we finished, I think sixth and seventh, it's not at all where we want to be as a team, so we still have an awful lot of work to do. We improve things little-by-little but the other teams are also going forward so it's not a simple thing to fix and be in front suddenly. We know how it works and we know how much things have to improve but we keep working hard and for sure one day we will get there.

Q: (Aron Day – FormulaSpy.com) Kimi, you've driven the V10s, the V8s around Monaco. Do you think the new cars will be more difficult to drive?

KR: It's difficult to say before we drive. I think if your car is normally good, it doesn't really matter where you go. You know how it behaves and it will be OK. Obviously a bit less grip this year and maybe some cars are a bit more hard to handle but we have to see how it goes on the first practice and see what it is. But I think we've improved a lot since the winter and it should be OK.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – Gazzetta dello Sport) Nico, Lewis says he should be dominating you more. Does it mean the time of smiles is getting over slowly? Are we going to see a harder battle between you and him?

NR: I don't know what he said so I'm not going to... I didn't hear it myself so I'm not going to comment on such things. But, in general, it's been a tough battle up until now and I expect it to continue like that. Of course now he's had the result rhythm in a couple of races but it's been very close. I just need a tiny bit to turn it around. I'll start with trying to do that here in Monaco.

Q: (Vladimir Rogovets – SB Belarus Segodnya) To all of you: what is your favourite braking zone in Monaco?

JB: Well, I think after the tunnel, that's good, I like that.

JEV: Last corner, there is nearly no braking. I don't know.

VB: Yeah, I think the tunnel as well, because that's one of the places it could be possible to overtake, so let's say that. Yeah.

RG: Casino. It goes quickly up hill and when you get to the top you just have to brake. It's quite a nice feeling.

NR: Same, up the hill, it's very very difficult because it's a very very fast corner and you're trying to carry the speed in and if you get it wrong and you're going too fast, it's very easy to lose the line.

KR: No, I don't really have one favourite one. Any of them. You can choose

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Kimi, are you going to carry on with the James Hunt-style design of your helmet here?

KR: No.

Q: (Vincent Marre – Sports Zeitung) To all six of you: if there is one day race that we have now in this calendar that you would like to change into a night race, assuming there is no technical issue, which one would it be? There must be one.

VB: This one would be cool, I think. It would look nice.

JEV: Yeah, I think this one as well under lights.

JB: Same, same thing. It would be really nice to race in Monaco at night.

RG: I don't know; why not Melbourne?

NR: Japan, so there's no jetlag.

KR: I cannot hear the question. I understood by their answers but I'm happy how they are, we can always dream about things but we don't make the rules, so there's no point.

Q: (Haoran Zhou – Formula One Express) Nico, last year you controlled the race all the way until the last few laps because of the fear of tyre degradation. This year's tyres have more endurance, and also your car is quite good on tyre management. Are you going to be able to push more in the race, according to your simulation?

NR: Well, last year, before Monaco, it was really really bad, our car with the tyres so in Monaco it was all about just trying to make the tyres last for the race but this year the tyres are more durable and also we have a better control on tyres, as a team, so it should be a faster race if I'm at the front.

Q: (Pierre van Vliet – Fli.com) Nico, four pole positions for Lewis so far: do you plan to change your approach to qualifying? Here, you know that you dominated him last year: what do you plan to maybe change something in qualifying?

NR: No. Of course three of those qualifying were in the wet; in the dry it's 1-1 and it's supposed to be dry on Saturday so I'm confident I can make it happen so I'm not changing my approach or anything.

Q: (Ben Edwards – BBC) Nico and Kimi: we lost a legend of Formula One, Sir Jack Brabham, this last week. Obviously his exploits were before you guys were born but can I just ask if you had any contact with Sir Jack Brabham, if you have any thoughts about his career and also if you'd been born in a different era, would you have ever considered going down that kind of route that he did, of building his own car? Kimi, you've set up teams: Nico you have an interest in engineering. If you'd been born in that era, could you have seen yourselves go down that route?

KR: Obviously I read and I was so sad to hear that he had passed away. Obviously these days are different than the days that they used to race and they could do different categories, different races. It would be very nice if they would be able to do different things at the same time and different races and try different things more. But the problem is everything gets so much more expensive these days and obviously people are more scared that you get hurt that they try to limit everything that you do. It's a shame because I think it would be more fun for everybody and all sports would also benefit from it, and F1. It would be nice to do stuff like they did.

NR: It's an amazing achievement that he did at the time, to win in another team but also in his own team, in his own car that he built. It's extremely unlikely to ever happen again but you never know, but it's a record that is definitely going to last a long time.
