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Press Information

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DRIVERS – Daniel RICCIARDO (Red Bull Racing), Fernando ALONSO (McLaren), Carlos SAINZ (Toro Rosso), Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes), Nico HULKENBERG (Force India), Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Nico, if we can start with you. First of all, congratulations on winning Le Mans, a great achievement, especially at your first attempt. How was it?

Nico HULKENBERG: Yeah, it was quite amazing obviously. A very intense and long week. I flew from Montreal to Paris and then straight to Le Mans. But yeah, to come there, first attempt, and to win it with my team and my team-mates has just been incredible. You know, very emotional moments and a great experience that I don't want to miss obviously, so very proud about what we've achieved there.

In Canada we saw a performance lift for Force India, scoring points again and also for yourself. There's a B-spec car coming relatively soon. So how optimistic are you, looking at the future?

NH: Yeah, quite, to be honest. I think, like you say, recently we've made good progress, we had a car in the points four of the last five grands prix, so we see signs that it is getting better. In Silverstone we'll get some new parts and major upgrades, so I really look forward to those. I'm quite we can have a really strong second half of the season, which hopefully then will make up for the first bit, which wasn't quite to plan.

Thank you very much, Nico. Daniel, coming to you, Canada was a very difficult weekend and you left not knowing what the problem was really. There has been talk about chassis, replacing [it]... Have there been any solutions implemented and did you identify the problems in Canada?

Daniel RICCIARDO: Yeah, we understood quite a lot post-Canada. I think a lot of it as well was... I probably came in there quite in a way emotional from what happened there a year earlier and probably just hoping for too much. So that already probably set the target too high from the start and it sort of spiralled into a poor weekend, for obviously some other reasons as well. We come here now with let's say a fresh approach on it all. I have a new chassis. I think we've got any variables that were maybe there in Canada and ready to have a good weekend. We know the track doesn't really suit everything for our performance right now but hopefully have a good weekend here in front of the home fans.

There's also been talk about you replacing engines and taking penalties here at a track that is probably not the best for you guys. Would this be the most sensible option this weekend?

DR: It's likely. We're definitely looking into it. I think we'll have a decision probably by this evening as to what we'll do this weekend. It's likely we'll take a penalty here. If it's not here it's in the next few. We have to see as well what chance we have coming up in Silverstone and Budapest. Wouldn't be a surprise if we see it here but probably a few hours away from a decision.

Thank you very much Daniel. Moving on to you Nico Rosberg. Monaco last year seemed to be a turning point in your championship challenge and this season seems to be shaping up the same way. Is that your impression?

Nico ROSBERG: I don't know. I don't think so much about the past or things like that. For me it's now. Lately, yeah, it's been going OK. Of course, Canada not such – I lost out there. But I'm feeling good, feeling good. It's great to be here; I won here last year, so arriving here very optimistically, we have a great car, so it should be a great weekend.

Speaking about the car, Lewis recently said he's feeling much happier with the 2015 car than he was with the 2014 car. What's your impression?

NR: Pretty much the same. It's very similar, you know, because not much has changed in the regulations, so it's just ongoing development, so it's very similar.

Thank you very much Nico. Moving on to Carlos now. Carlos this is a home race for the Red Bull family but probably not the best suited to the Toro Rosso's strengths, but neither was Canada and there you finished very close to the points, you finished ahead of the one of the Red Bulls. How do you see this weekend panning out for you?

Carlos SAINZ: Yeah, it should be another quite difficult weekend. Probably not as difficult as Canada because Canada was really not playing to our strengths because there were not really any high-speed corners, it was all either slow speed or a long straight. Here we have a couple of really quick corners that we know that our car is quite strong over there. We are also bringing a couple of upgrades that should also make us a bit quicker, and from there on expect another tough weekend, but maybe not as tough as Canada.

We're almost half way through the season and how do you rate it so far, because it's been a pretty good start?

CS: Yeah, I must say I am very happy with how things have gone in the first seven races. I think it has been a great achievement by all the team, especially with all the small problems we are having. The car is very, very competitive; it's a great car to drive. Also the team is helping me a lot in all the areas to improve. I keep learning; every single time I go out in the car I enjoy, I learn. I'm very happy with it. Also there were a lot of new tracks for me, something like four or five new tracks, so it's been a good first part of the season for sure.

Thanks very much. Moving on to you Seb: a pretty promising performance in Canada, despite the penalties on the grid. Given the package you have at the moment, and also considering a good grid start, a positive start, how do you see this weekend panning out and do you see yourself challenging for victory here?

Sebastian VETTEL: I think ideally we always try to fight for the win. I know that we have a strong package this year, a strong car, so if everything goes normal then we should be a little bit further up again, especially on Saturday this weekend. In general, looking forward to the weekend. It's a great place, a great venue. I think all of us really enjoy coming here. But we also have to be realistic [in] challenging the Mercedes. We know that first of all we need to have a flawless weekend, a perfect weekend and maybe hoping for them to have a little bit of a struggle. But in normal circumstances it is quite difficult to beat them as they are still the favourites going in and there is still quite a big gap.

Canada, again despite the penalties, seemed to be a pretty enjoyable race for you, with all the overtaking moves, the fights on track. How good was it to have to battle through the field?

SV: For sure it was more entertaining than the races before. It's normal when you come from the back. Obviously first of all you go through cars that are slower than you. In general, obviously it was busier and at the end once I had my position I think I could extract a little bit more the pace of the car. But overall it was quite exciting and it was a good recovery, valuable points. We avoided all the risk in the opening lap which is always a bit messy if you are in the back of the field, but fortunately it all worked out and as I said we could get good points.

Thank you very much. And last but not least, hola Fernando there at the back. You were involved in one of these very exciting fights on track [in Canada]. For you personally, as a racing driver, was this one of the highlights of the season so far – these battles, not giving up, fighting as much as you could?

Fernando ALONSO: Probably that's a little bit too much, you know to be one of the highlights. I think it was nice to battle a little bit but it was for half a lap, what I could do, so I prefer to do a little bit longer than that. I am enjoying the starts, the first laps. In Barcelona I think I was P8 in corner three. In Canada I also was ninth or eighth in corner six and then slowly you are losing positions on the straight with our lack of speed, so that's a little bit a not ideal situation but at least the starts and the first lap I'm enjoying it.

We're coming to a track that they say is a little bit similar to Canada, maybe a little bit less extreme than Canada and Canada was a very difficult weekend for McLaren-Honda and for yourself as well. Do you think that this weekend could be a lot different, in terms of that you are bringing upgrades and still working on the car and identifying the problems as well?

FA: Well, it will be another weekend where it's going to be tough, where the results will not look good especially because there are probably some penalties to pay, so I think it's going to be a test weekend for us, very important, there are some updates on the car, so hopefully we go out of this weekend with some answers and there is the test next week as well. Important days ahead for us. I'm quite optimistic with the things that are coming to the car and for the near future but as I said in terms of result it will not change too much this weekend or probably it will be even worse.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Peter Farkas – Auto Motor) A question for all the drivers. We have been hearing a lot about lift and coast since Canada and Mercedes issues a press release in the last couple of days trying to explain what lift and coast was and they stated that from a driving point of view it was not easy to do lift and coast because you have to find a different braking point because of the different speed that you were arriving at the corner. Could you please, as a driver, shed some light on how difficult it is to lift and coast and to find your braking point and also a question specifically to Nico Hulkenberg: Nico, how much lift and coast you have to do at Le Mans?

NH: I think to do lift and coast in Formula One is quite easy – you just left off and coast down. The difficulty is to do it efficiently and to lose as little lap time as possible. Like you say, when you do it your braking point varies, so it's quite difficult for us to judge, you know, where the actual braking point has moved. To get close to that target, I think that's the art, that's what makes it difficult. In WEC we also have quite a bit of lift and coast. They have different fuel regulations, they're even tighter than here in Formula One, so fuel management is quite crucial there.

Fernando as one of the most experienced drivers can you please explain a little about lift and coast?

FA: Well, as Nico said, there's not much secret – you lift, you coast to the corner, you brake. We are professional drivers, so we should know where is the point of braking, depends on the speed we arrive. There are other implications on fuel saving – the state of charge, the battery you may have at that point of the race, how much deployment you have on the straights in terms of the K deployment, so yeah, we drive maybe eight or ten different cars in a weekend. We drive low fuel, high fuel, maximum deployment, no deployment, fuel saving, new tyres, old tyres, so there are a variable of four or five seconds in the car during different stages of the free practice, qualifying or the race, so that's the biggest difficulty, but we are professional drivers, we are ready to do that.

Seb?

SV: Nothing to add.

Nico?

NR: Well, lift and coast is the most efficient way to save fuel, they did it even in the 80s. I remember my dad racing with Alain Prost at McLaren and they had to save fuel because everybody was running out of fuel at the end of the race, so nothing has changed there. Just that it's become more professional now and more accurate and more detailed. That doesn't mean... still even if we're doing that, we're driving at the absolute limit of the car – it's just a different kind of driving style, y'know? And even that driving style is very challenging, and you're still pushing like crazy, you're just driving a different way. That's it.

And Carlos, as one of the new guys, Can you explain what your experience is with it?

CS: Yeah, for me something quite new. I have not been used to that... never in my life. And personally, it's not a thing I really like, especially because I have to do it from very early in the race, probably after the first lap you have already the engineers telling you to lift and coast. I remember Australia was very big, Canada was again very big. You have to adapt and you have to be quick – but probably the amount that I was doing in the last... these two races was probably a bit too much for my opinion. But it's something that I have to do, something that I have to learn and I will adapt.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Question to you Nico. You're the only driver here Nico – in fact the only driver in Formula One – who's been able to drive with two completely different tyre brands over consecutive weekends, different in terms of philosophy, construction etcetera. Can you, from a driver perspective, give us the difference between the Pirellis you use here and the Michelins you use in Le Mans please?

NH: Yeah, it's obviously a different tyre but it's also a completely different car – so it's a bit like comparing apples and pears. I think here we have more tyre degradation, which makes racing exciting and stuff, and in Le Mans the tyres obviously have to last a lot longer. The race is 24 hours and not just 300km, so it's a completely different game – but otherwise it's difficult to just take the tyre, isolate it from the rest of the car and the differences and compare that.

Q: (Ralf Bach – Sport Bild) Question for five guys – apart from Nico Hülkenberg – and one after especially for Fernando. Could you imagine in future to take part as well in Le Mans? And for you Fernando, how do you rate the victory of Nico – because I have learned you have been very close to a Porsche deal as well for this year.

FA: Yes, I considered to race in Le Mans. In the future – and when in the future I don't know – I just said it was very close this year, so maybe next year. I don't know.

Daniel?

DR: Yeah, it would be fun. I watched quite a lot of it actually, about 18 hours. I'm a fan! Yeah, it was cool. Racing is what we do, it's fun, it's nice to have a weekend off but when I was watching it I was obviously thinking it would be nice to be racing as well, on this weekend off. So, if we could manage to do more, like they did in the old days as well, there was drivers jumping from categories. Fortunately Nico's made us all look good and I think he's made it all seem possible for us now. So, maybe we'll get the praise from our teams to venture into these things for the future.

Nico, have you considered racing at Le Mans?

NR: No, not really. At the moment I'm pretty focussed on this year so I haven't thought about that.

And you Seb?

SV: A little bit along the lines of Daniel. I think it's great to watch, especially as everyone has the impression that, a 24 Hour race, people tend to take it easy because the race is so long and so many things can happen, but it was great to see the guys were actually flat out from the first lap. For all of the race, basically. So, I think as racing drivers that's what we're after, to push every single lap and for a long time, obviously that means more fun. So, might be something in the future to think about. Obviously massive respect for what Nico did.

Carlos, it might be a long way on the horizon but would you consider it?

CS: Or not, who knows! If an offer comes, why not take it. For sure, its professionally one of the most prestigious races in the world and, to participate in that, after participating in F1, it would be something mega. Of course, I'm more than open. Anything that has four wheels and a steering wheel and an engine I would like to drive – so whatever.

Q: (Istvan Janos Simon - Auto Magazine) Daniel, last year you came here on the back of a great win in Montreal with high spirits to Austria, to Spielberg, to the home of the Red Bull Racing team. Now, after a year it's a completely different atmosphere within the team I guess. Could you talk to me about this morale of the team? How do you prepare? What is different compared to last year at the same time – for you and for the team?

DR: I think that now it's... yeah, we're in a different position this year. Obviously a massive high. I think sitting at this press conference last year... I think it's just reassess and re-evaluate our, or my, let's say, expectations for what we're capable of at the moment. And yeah, obviously I experienced some of the lows in Canada and then after that weekend I looked back on it all and said 'OK, we have to, unfortunately for now, lower the bar and just try to not really look at the big picture of getting a podium or getting inside the top five, it's just making sure we can just maximise our weekend for now and try and bring the team forwards as quick as possible. I know there's lots of updates coming, some have worked more than others – but obviously we're still pushing, we're still trying. Like all things, they do take time, I think. You hope it turns around quicker but that's the nature of the sport sometimes. Just learn to be a bit more patient I guess, and just make sure at least that I'm maximising my weekend. Obviously Canada wasn't a good weekend, so just try and get back, let's say, on the front foot this weekend and whatever position it puts us in, we'll accept it and just try and keep the head down and more forwards.

Q: (Silvia Arias – Parabras Magazine) Fernando, you said this weekend maybe going to be worse in terms of your performances. The car performances. Did you expect it takes so long to get the right performance – or let's say, a good one. And how do you keep the optimism in this case?

FA: Obviously the position we found ourselves in winter testing was not ideal. Probably we expect a little bit more – but it is the way it is. I think the performance has been always improving race after race. I think here it will be the case as well. The thing of this weekend is just the final result. We don't know if it's going to be good enough to make us happy – because probably with the penalties we will start a little bit already at the back and pay some extra penalties. So that will be not ideal. In terms of performance, we expect a lot from the car in the next month or two months. So we will see how we end up before summer and how we end up at the end of the year. That will give us some hopes for next year, let's say. It's the way it is. Why I remain optimistic? Because I see a lot of things inside the team, I see the group of people we have, I see the programme that we have in terms of chassis and in terms of engine. I see the resources, I see the talent of the team, so it's a question of time when we will be competitive. Hopefully we will make it very short, that period of learning that we are having at the moment – but I'm optimistic.

Q: (Barna Zsoldos - Nemzeti Sport) Daniel, Carlos and Sebastian; from next year, we will have a new super licence system which is based on earning points. For the GP2 title, you will get 50 points, for a European Formula Three title you will get 40 points and for a Formula Renault 3.5 title you get only 30 points. Do you also feel that success in Formula Renault 3.5 is worth less than the other two categories?

DR: I never raced in GP2 and I know when I was doing World series it was the old spec car so it wasn't even as fast as they are now and I thought that was already a very good stepping stone. I thought that car taught me a lot to - let's say - prepare me well for Formula One and now I believe it's... I see it's quite a lot closer. Yeah, I would say it should be closer than that, we should get a bit more points than... did you say Formula Three is getting more points? OK. Judging on the speed of the car, obviously, and let's say the lap time and whatever, I think the field is good in World series so I would expect it to have at least the same amount of points as Formula Three.

SV: Well, I think all three of us gained our experience in Formula Renault 3.5 or World series. Obviously I also drove the old car but I thought it was a great car, a great championship, you're the main event so everything happens around you, so you get a lot of time on the track which obviously is very important. I think it should be appreciated more, probably if you express it in points but equally I don't see the reason why young drivers have to score points. I think it's clear when someone is ready, someone has the talent to make the step. It doesn't matter where he comes from, from Formula Three, from Formula Renault or GP2 so I guess it's just another thing implemented to help confusing.

CS: Judging by my experience last year and my experience this year, I just can only say that 3.5 prepared me very well for Formula One. It's a very quick car, especially the last spec, very very quick, has a lot of downforce and I felt that when I stepped up to Formula One I was ready so probably more points would have been – in my opinion – I would give it more points, for sure.

Q: (Gerhard Kuntschik – Salzburger Nachrichten) This is a question for all the drivers in manufacturers' teams: are you dealing with the history of your manufacturers and are you interested in vintage cars and would you like to try some of these in the near future?

NR: Yeah, very interested in the history. I like to watch the videos and read the books and everything. I'm really into vintage cars also, a big fan. Actually yesterday I drove a 300SL roadster from Stuttgart all the way to Schaffhausen in Switzerland which was awesome. It was such an incredible experience to drive those old cars and how advanced they already were back in those days so I always like driving them, yeah.

SV: Yeah, almost a dream came true in this regard this year (to join Ferrari), great to see the history. I think it's a very very special brand in racing in particular. So there's a lot of cars from the history, especially old racing cars and it's nice to see that they try to keep most of them intact and ready to go, so if there's some time, hopefully I'm allowed to do a couple of laps around Fiorano in some of the old cars.

FA: Yeah, obviously I've been lucky, feel privileged to drive for McLaren-Honda, for Ferrari, for Renault to some extent. Definitely when you see all those cars and some of them are the cars which you watched on television when you were a kid so definitely it's nice to see the history behind a team or behind a manufacturer and also to drive those cars is always a little gift when you have that opportunity and we enjoy every minute.

Q: (Joe van Burik – NU.NL) Daniel and Fernando: you have both voiced your frustration regarding the performance of your cars, most notably in Canada. Does this encourage you to look around for other opportunities?

DR: Yeah, I expressed some frustration in Canada and I think – as I said – it was a bit of a spiral effect from year one, from probably the best day of my life to obviously a tough weekend. Yeah, I let some frustration out but as I said, I got back after the race, back home to Europe and - let's say – assessed the weekend. Unfortunately, sometimes, you have to be a bit patient and for sure I'm set now with Red Bull and I would love to try and get back on the top step with them. Yeah, just got to be patient and just try and work out with them as a team and hopefully let out some frustration on track if I need to in a good positive way. But yeah, for now obviously my target is to get back on top with them and then we will see. The future is long but short term that's where I look.

FA: Same.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Seb, you said that the gap to Mercedes is still very high at the moment. Are you confident that you, Ferrari, can reduce it in the second part of the season, considering that you are introducing upgrades in the second part of the season, as are Mercedes, or will it be more difficult?

SV: Well, first of all I think you have to see that it is natural that from track to track it might vary a bit but I think we've already done an incredible job. If you look at winter testing and where we are now, I think we consider ourselves to be quite a bit closer. Yeah, obviously it's not that easy to make the gap smaller and smaller because Mercedes is a strong team and obviously they are improving as well. They introduced a new spec of engine in Canada so they're also making progress but our target for sure, is to make bigger progress to finally close the gap, so for sure, we are hoping that in the second part of the season, we are starting to get closer – closer than we are now.

Q: (Peter Vamosi – Vas Nepe Kiadoi) To all the German drivers but mainly for Sebastian as ambassador for the ADAC: who do you think could be the next German driver in Formula One? It seems that right now the juniors are not represented in Formula Three or Renault 3.5. Mick Schumacher is one who seems to be coming to Formula One. Can there also be other names?

SV: Well, obviously you've mentioned the Formula 4 championship. Obviously that's not the closest to Formula One so short term I think it's always tricky. Obviously there's a couple of German guys around and I think it's completely normal to have sometimes more, sometimes less drivers from your country represented in Formula One. I remember a couple of years ago I think when I joined, when Nico joined there was a period when we had six German drivers on the grid so obviously we were quite lucky because we had young drivers and experienced drivers. Now, at that time, I remember there were no French drivers and the French press was desperate because there weren't any French drivers on the grid. They asked the questions: what is the secret, why are there so many German drivers? So I think it's natural that it goes up and down. If you look at the grid now, there's a couple of French drivers for quite a couple of years now. I think that's normal and then you need to give everyone time. I think if you talk about guys that are now 15, 16 years old, obviously it could turn around quick. You can, obviously, drive a Formula One car at the age of 17 but if you look at it in a normal way, it takes quite a couple of years from there where you

need to develop yourself. I think it's wrong, now, to give you a name because it's wrong to put pressure on any of these young drivers but I think there's a couple around. It's true that maybe it's less if you look at the number compared to ten years ago but as I said, I think it's completely natural if you then look further down the road to go-karting. Still in Germany, there's one of the strongest championships in the whole of Europe with the German kart championship for juniors and for seniors. Seniors are considered guys from 15 years to probably 18 years old so I'm not worried. There's a lot of attention for the guys, great championships to start from. As I mentioned, go-karting and then Formula 4 as a platform and then on to Formula Three Euroseries, so there's plenty of stuff to do.

NH: Not much more to add.

NR: Well, Pascal Wehrlein, our test driver for example, he's surely the best candidate short term.

Q: (Zsolt Godina – Fana Media) Nico Hulkenberg, could you please tell us about your new package?

NH: It's a couple of new parts. As you can imagine; it's going to be quite a lot: front wing, floor, side pods so you'll see it, it's going to be quite different, I would expect.

Q: (Manuel Franco – Diario AS) Sebastian, Daniel and Fernando: what is your opinion about Carlos Sainz's start of his first season in Formula One?

FA: Probably I'm on one side but yeah, I think it's been perfect so far. It has been surprising everybody, not so much me because I have known him for many years and he's showing his talent now in F1 with sometimes competitive cars, sometimes not but he's always putting in some top performances together with a strong teammate as well, so that's very positive in the first year, no mistakes. He will be the future of our country so I definitely hope the best for him.

DR: Yeah, not much to add really, he's obviously doing very well. I won't give him too much of a big head because he's sitting pretty close to us. In a way, obviously, it's a bit of a compliment to the Red Bull programme. I think they've got a bit of a gift for selecting some drivers that have turned out to be pretty successful and Carlos and again also his teammate Max, they've obviously started off very well in their rookie year. Dany my teammate now, obviously just having his rookie year last year, showing good signs. Carlos is definitely on the right path. Obviously it runs in the blood with his family as well.

SV: I think he's had a great start. I think he has all the ingredients, he's quick and he's willing to learn. I remember when he was probably in a not so nice role as one of the support drivers for us at Red Bull Racing, the last couple of years. Until last year, he was pushing very hard and he's willing to learn and he's willing to make progress and I think that's very important if you want to make it.

Ends