



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

**Press Information**

**2015 Japanese Grand Prix  
Friday Press Conference Transcript**

**25.09.2015**

**TEAM REPRESENTATIVES – Jonathan NEALE (McLaren), Yasuhisa ARAI (Honda), Luigi FRABONI (Ferrari), Paddy LOWE (Mercedes), Christian HORNER (Red Bull Racing)**

**PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Arai-san, Suzuka is Honda's home grand prix. How do you feel to be back home here and are you getting pressure from within the company and from fans?**

**Yasuhisa ARAI:** So, it is great to be back home, our home. Suzuka is such a special place for us and for Honda's 200,000 employees and associates and many fans. They supported us and they want success [from] our team. So it is a little bit big pressure I have got. But there is a very good feeling, not only for Honda but McLaren-Honda.

**You've had two very difficult weekends, in Spa and Monza, with updated power units, and even in Singapore you had issues when you were expecting points. Realistically, what do you expect from the race here in Suzuka?**

**YA:** You know I think Suzuka is the most difficult circuit in the world – for the driver and also the machine, power unit, so it is not so easy to get a good place but we will do our best as a team.

**OK, thanks you very much. Let's move on to Jonathan Neale. Jonathan it's been a difficult year for McLaren, with most of the focus on Honda and the power unit but how happy are you with your side of the team's performance?**

**Jonathan NEALE:** I think we've difficult made steps to improved the McLaren racing organisation over the last 18 months. We're not where we want to be but we can see progress. We see progress on the chassis; we see progress in aerodynamics. It was frustrating that we didn't score the points that we should have done in Singapore; at this game you don't expect a double DNF, so that was massively frustrating, But we're definitely moving forward; we have a lot of work to do as a team and a very busy winter [ahead].

**OK, let's move to what happened yesterday, when Jenson Button was in this press conference. He said he was exploring "plenty of opportunities"; those were his words I think. Is one of those with you and if so how are the talks going?**

**JN:** With me personally?

**It's up to you – if you are starting a team that's fine!**

**JN:** I get the sense from the media there was a big anti-climax yesterday and there was a lot of discussion about where Jenson was at. Jenson is a fantastic guy, a world champion and a big part of the family at Honda and McLaren – he's been with us for six seasons – and we're contracted with him, we want him to stay, we like him very much. But if your driver doesn't really want to be in the seat we have to respect that. I really hope that we have done enough between us to continue those discussions with him and have the confidence to have him with us, and that's what we'd like.

**Thank you for that. Let's come down to the front row and move on to Luigi Fraboni from Ferrari. Ferrari had a really good result in Singapore but in very different conditions to here in Suzuka. What do you expect from the race this weekend?**

**Luigi FRABONI:** Yea, of course, here is completely different. Let me say that we were very pleased with the great weekend in Singapore. We are looking forward to what is going to happen here. Today, of course, it was wet so it is difficult to say. We know that things are a little bit different but on the other side we are waiting to see what is going because for sure on our side we have improved and we are confident we can do a good job here.

**How happy are you with the engine performance and do you think there are other tracks this season at which Ferrari can challenge?**

**LG:** Well, of course, on engine performance, because I did all the last year's season and I know what it mean. This year we did a big improvement and I think I have the opportunity to say thanks to all the guys at home because it was really a fantastic job. I had today in Maranello... after Singapore I was pleased to see the face of all the guys that are working in the department because it is a good motivation for us. During the season we have some improvement and we are happy about what we are doing and I think we can do even more and we are also completely focused on the project for next year. About the other tracks, I think that we think that in every track that we will play our cards and do our best, because I think that the pack is competitive.

**Q: Paddy, have you worked out what happened last time out in Singapore – and maybe more importantly, are you confident it won't happen again?**

**Paddy LOWE:** I keep getting asked that actually. It's not a simple answer at the end of the day. One of the things we're very clear on is that, even if we got everything right in Singapore, that doesn't necessarily mean we would have been at the front. We've got some strong competitors, the two gentleman on my sides here [Horner, Fraboni] came to Singapore with very strong packages. So, there are things we didn't optimise for that circuit. It's a very unusual circuit and, in fact, it was our weakest one last year as well in qualifying. So we've definitely learnt some lessons from that. We still have a lot more to learn but our focus now is on this race, which is a very

different track so some different things to apply and get right – and we don't take for granted, again, that we will be strong here but we'll do our best.

**Q: As the season progresses you switch more of your resource towards the 2016 season. How far advanced are you in that process given that you're leading both the Constructors' and the Drivers' Championship by some points.**

**PL:** It's fairly normal. All the teams have to migrate their resource through the year, more and more to the next year. Slightly different this year because we have an extra month – apparently – next March with the current provisional calendar but I think probably we're not unusual. Everybody will have moved pretty much to next year by now, so we're almost all there but still a few more things to do.

**Q: Christian, where are you with Ferrari and with Renault?**

**Christian HORNER:** In Japan actually! Where are we with Ferrari and with Renault? Well, our situation with Renault, there's obviously a lot of column-inches that's filled. All I can really tell you is that there's some positive discussions going on behind the scenes with Renault. I think both Red Bull's position and Renault's position is fairly clear in what we want to achieve and hopefully that should be concluded within the coming days. As far as anything else, it's purely speculative but of course we're having various different conversations.

**Q: How real is the threat to quit?**

**CH:** Well, Dietrich Mateschitz, he doesn't talk very often but when he does you have to sit up and take notice – and I think he's somewhat disillusioned with Formula One at the moment. He's been very consistent in that statement. It's my job to try and find a solution. We have a big commitment to Formula One, a big workforce, a very talented team and I'm doing my best to try and ensure that we find a competitive engine to power the team next year – but of course if that's not the case there is a risk because Red Bull's position is different to teams such as McLaren or Williams or Ferrari. Formula One has to provide a return. A marketing return globally. And, in order to do that, you need to be able to not be restricted in terms of the tools at your disposal.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Kate Walker – Motorsport.com) I've got a question for Christian, Paddy and Jonathan please. Over the last couple of weeks we've had a lot of speculation about the future of wind tunnels in Formula One. I was wondering: can any of you three see a future without wind tunnels? And, if you can, what safety concerns do you have about that hypothetical future?**

**JN:** I think the answer is: I think it's possible. The progressive march forward of supercomputing and the software and CFD and the ability to run sensors on the car use the car more as a full scale wind tunnel is definitely a direction that's happening. I wouldn't like to predict a pace or timescale on that. I know there have been discussions recently about the proposal to eliminate wind tunnels from the process. We are fairly neutral about that. I personally don't have concerns from a safety point

of view. I think there are plenty of other ways of validating that what you have works.

**PL:** I think there will come a day when we will stop using wind tunnels all on our own – because new technology becomes superior. I think the timing of that is a long way off. Many, many years. At the moment CFD is a great compliment to the wind tunnel process – but only when it has the ability to be calibrated against the tunnel on a regular basis. I think I'd have to disagree with Jonathan there to some extent, that there is an overriding safety demand. We've seen other formulae in which cars become unstable at high speed. We must make sure the cars are fully validated from that point of view and the wind tunnel, at the moment, is the only reliable way of doing that.

**Christian?**

**CH:** I guess what you've got to remember is that they're both simulation tools ultimately and a wind tunnel to feed and to run is extremely expensive compared to, in comparison, CFD. I think the strategic discussion to have is at some point CFD will become strong enough and powerful enough to replace the wind tunnel. At what point is that? I think the Strategy Group are having responsible discussions about what the time frame, if that scenario happens, is. Because we all have big investments. Every team in the pitlane has multi-million pound investments in this technology and to unravel yourself from that isn't an overnight scenario. So, I think we all need to get on the same page about it, take away competitive advantage or differences. And if we do that by looking far enough down the road, then a road map hopefully can be achieved.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Jonathan, by my calculations in 2013 McLaren Racing lost about £12m. You haven't yet published 2014's results but I would estimate it to be probably double that because you lost your title sponsor, plus your results went south. This year's even worse. If we add all these together, we are probably looking at a figure of fifty or sixty million pounds over three years. How much longer can a team actually sustain this sort of loss?**

**JN:** Well you're right. I don't want to make light of that financial situation, Dieter, but the reality is McLaren Racing is part of the McLaren Technologies Group and to some extent that's a source of strength for us, it's not something to be taken lightly or be complacent about. Of course, if we finish way down in the Constructors championship, that has an impact on prize money for next year and of course that will be part of our focus, as I say, but we are fortunate in having a technology group on which we can at least shelter for some of these difficult times. But it's not something that we can sustain indefinitely.

**Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Luigi Fraboni, I would like to ask you about the fifth engine that you are supposed to be using in Austin. How will be the characteristics of the engine, I suppose it will be the engine that you will use next year?**

**LF:** Well, at the moment we are happy with the power unit that we have. We are continuing to develop the engine on the dyno. We have four tokens to play so if

there is the opportunity, and we saw that this was to do then can introduce a fifth power unit but at the moment there is nothing defined especially for Austin.

**Q: (Koji Taguchi – Grand Prix Tokusyu) Arai-san, if next year any other power unit company doesn't have enough capacity to deliver a power unit, does Honda have any chance to give their power unit to other teams?**

**YA:** I have had lots of the same question. We don't have any offers right now. I think that for Honda and for the other power unit suppliers it is a very difficult time to prepare for next year, to supply other partners. And also, Honda has a strong relationship as a works team, McLaren-Honda. We don't have any plans.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Christian, you spoke earlier on about your big commitment to Formula One and when I say your commitment, I mean your team's commitment to Formula One. But there is obviously talk about possibly withdrawing from Formula One. Over the last two years or so, you've actually justified Red Bull's position on the strategy group and as a CCB team etc on the basis that it had given a commitment through to 2020. So how does this square with the threats to withdraw? Are there financial penalties which you are prepared to carry or will Red Bull just walk?**

**CH:** Well, as Bernie Ecclestone would say, circumstances change and circumstances now are very different, obviously, to when we entered into that agreement. Our intention is to find a solution and there's an awful lot of work going on in the background to try and find a solution. Some of that is out of our hands but rest assured that every effort is going in to ensure that Red Bull will be here until 2020 and hopefully beyond, but there's some big questions that obviously need answering.

**Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Another question for Luigi about the technical possibility to support two more teams, Red Bull and Toro Rosso, for next year?**

**LF:** Well, honestly I'm not involved in all this stuff so the only thing that... this kind of decision is taken by our president and by our team management, so at the moment I cannot tell you anything of this. For sure they have all the information that they need in order to have the right collaboration for next year.

**Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Is it technically possible?**

**LF:** I think it could be, yes.

**Q: (Kazuki Kasahara – Car Watch) I would like to ask Jonathan and Arai-san: in the 1990s and 1980s, McLaren-Honda had a special feature, a Suzuka version. Do you have any special features for this Suzuka?**

**JN:** Special feature, that's a tough question. The short answer is no, other than it's a great opportunity for us to spend some time here at a fantastic race circuit but also behind the scenes together, getting our engineers and people together, looking at what we have to do to put ourselves in a competitive position. We have the guys from Exxon Mobil here as well so for the Esso and the Mobil 1 brands there's a good chance for us to get together with the guys at Honda and really give that a push.

Everybody's working very hard, but we don't have any unique feature on the car that's special for here yet. We will wait until we're winning before that starts.

**YA:** As I answered before that this is a very special circuit for Honda but unfortunately the current regulations cannot apply such kind of special feature. But my heart and Jonathan's heart has a passion, very very special for Suzuka.

Ends