



AUTO+ CONFERENCE

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RACING THE MEXICAN WAY

Carlos Slim Domit on how Mexico has developed a generation of winners

PLOTTING THE RIGHT ROUTE TO THE TOP

Giving young drivers access to the right series at the right time, in the right place was the message to emerge from day two's opening session

Day Two's first plenary session centred on motor sport's attempts to improve access to competition for young drivers and methods of developing motor sport careers once they are involved.

To begin the session, FIA Deputy President for Sport Graham Stoker outlined how the federation is helping to grant access to motor sport beyond karting via the streamlining of the junior single-seater racing ladder.

He added that the FIA's commitment to grassroots development has been bolstered by increased funding from the FIA Foundation, with its President Tim Keown taking to the stage to encourage ASNs to make funding applications, particularly for projects related to motor sport safety.

The session then turned to a panel of racing experts, all of whom put the accent firmly on access, training and affordability.

GP2 racer Alexander Rossi congratulated the FIA's Single Seater Commission on streamlining the racing ladder, saying that for drivers making their way to the top level one of the main pitfalls is choosing the correct series in which to race and balancing that choice against available budget. A clearer, more affordable route would make that choice simpler for young drivers.

Emerson Fittipaldi, President of the FIA Drivers' Commission, agreed, saying that plotting the racing path of his grandson Pietro, who is currently competing in the FIA European F3 Championship, had been a complex process and that the creation of a measurable path to the top will be of great benefit to young drivers. He particularly praised the new F4 category, saying that it has the right characteristics to become a globally raced formula.

The two-time F1 champion added that while the Drivers' Commission's number one priority is the improvement



(Top) CAMS President Andrew Papadopoulos, FIA Driver's Commission President Emerson Fittipaldi, SAFEISFAST.com Ambassador Gil De Ferran, Mazda's John Doonan and (bottom left) Michèle Mouton, President of the FIA Women in Motor-sport Commission.

of safety in motor sport, it also holds the improvement of access to motor sport as a major goal.

He said one of the major challenges facing motor sport is the popularity of computer gaming among youngster adding that motor sport must embrace it as a tool for bringing kids to racing and then translate their enthusiasm for virtual racing into real-world competition.

John Doonan of Mazda's US motor sport programme outlined how the manufacturer has specialised in driver development through its Road to Indy ladder taking in karting, US F2000, the Pro-Mazda Series, Indy Lights and eventually Indycar racing.

He pointed to the programme's success in providing 55 full funded drives to 48 drivers in recent years and added that 23 of the drivers who raced in this year's Indy 500 had been through the programme at some point in their career.

Andrew Papadopoulos, President of CAMS, then outlined how the ASN had developed its new F4 Championship, which begins in Townsville this weekend, saying that ASNs had a key role to play in developing motor sport worldwide, particularly in highlighting the value a home-grown champion at international level can have in growing domestic motor sport.

BUILDING MEXICO'S RACING REVOLUTION



As part of yesterday morning's focus on driver development, Carlos Slim Domit gave delegates an insight into the philosophy behind the highly successful Escuderia Telmex programme, which includes racers such as Sergio Pérez in F1 and Memo Rojas in Sports Cars.

Slim said the programme has been founded principally to develop championship-standard drivers on a continual basis, rather than waiting in hope for a title-winning talent to emerge.

He added that one of the major challenges with the programme had been

in persevering through the bad times, citing the prospect of Pérez testing for the Honda team in 2009 only for the team to pull out of F1 on the eve of the test. Perseverance he added had led Pérez to the Sauber F1 team, a test and then a podium-scoring career with the Swiss team and with Force India.

He then described how the programme functions as a valuable business development opportunity, with the firms associated with the scheme existing in a space rich with B2B possibilities.

He expanded on this by outlining the importance of gaining visibility for the programme and businesses through public engagement via television, print and a new media.

Finally, he pointed to the social responsibility aspect of Escuderia Telmex, with its drivers taking part in the Drivers for Road Safety initiative, which has seen them visit 66,000 school children to reinforce the message of road safety.

CONFERENCE Q&A

KATHERINE LEGGÉ & BETH PARRETA

The sports car star and the motorsport manager explain the philosophy behind all-female team Grace Autosport

Q Explain the thinking behind the Grace Autosport team?

BP: Grace Autosport started as an idea to put a team of women together to race the Indy 500. [Being motor sport director of FIAT-Chrysler] I got a call in late 2014 from a colleague Adrian Sussman who was formulating the idea with Katherine asking what I thought.

I thought about it for a few days and said we could do a lot more for women in motor sport in general and that it was a great foundation to get more women

involved in engineering careers. It started from there and it has just got bigger and bigger.

One of the things I'm proud of is that there have been men and women at the table from the beginning, making sure we are doing this the right way and that it's authentic and it's the right women who are involved. This is not meant to be one race; it's going to be a lot more than that.

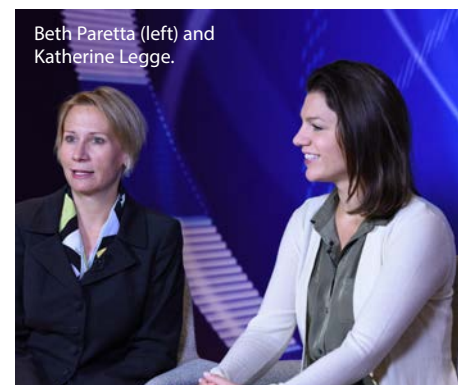
Q Have you identified the women you would like to work with?

KL: Together we have quite a lot experience. We know the key women and we have hand-picked some really great, experienced women. The reason that Grace will be a success is that we've gone out and got all these accomplished women who are at the top of their field, and we've put them together to showcase something much bigger than any of us individually.

BP: The reaction has been so positive, not only from women who are already in racing but young women who are going off to college saying 'this is my dream and I'm so excited to learn about your team and can I possibly work for your team someday.' It's exciting to be that beacon.

Q Katherine, when you started racing, a female racer was a rarity and now we're talking about fielding a female-led team at the Indy 500. How have you seen the role of women in motor sport change?

KL: When I started there were very few women drivers across the board, but the role of women in racing has changed massively. There are now quite a few women drivers but what we're trying to do is showcase women engineers and mechanics, which we're lacking at the moment. We need to get more at grassroots level – more mechanics, more PR people, we just need to make it accessible to them.



Beth Parretta (left) and Katherine Legge.

SINGLE SEATER LADDER THE NEW AUSSIE RULES

With Australia's new F4 championship starting this weekend CAMS President Andrew Papadopoulos outlines its importance

Q This week's conference, which has a theme of development, coincides with the start of the first Australian F4 Championship, so the timing couldn't be more perfect. Where does CAMS see the benefits coming from F4?

A We believe it's the right way to go. The development of F4 in Australia is about building an entry-level single-seater category for our karters to get into. For us, it's extremely important that it's the same regulations, the same cars all over the world. Our young drivers can leave our shores and have an equal chance of success in their future as any other driver, as they will all have left the same platform. In the past, from our Formula Ford, it was very hard to get out from our non-wings and slicks category into European wings and slicks, because there was a lot of learning to be done while overseas and that's not appropriate.

Q How important was the specification of the formula in determining your decision to embrace it?

A One of the main reasons we got involved is the design and the safety element of new monocoque chassis. For mums and dads that want to put their kids in the sport they want to see that while we can never guarantee 100 per cent safety we can greatly minimise the risks by putting appropriate measures in place. The new Formula 4 chassis is just way above any other entry-level series.

Q What advice would you give to other ASNs that are considering setting up a Formula 4 championship?

A There are various ways of doing it. We're not a very big single-seater country, we're more saloon and touring cars, but we felt that if we ran it, as CAMS, we could limit the costs, which is something we are very keen to control for the first level into motorsport. We could also have a greater say in how the

(Top to bottom) CAMS President Andrew Papadopoulos, and Australian F4 car in action and series patron F1's Daniel Ricciardo.



category is run. Germany has a different model and they are doing extremely well – to have 40 cars on the grid is fantastic. The model has to suit the country taking it on. But we would be quite happy to talk to any ASN that wants to explore F4 – we'll help them along.

Q You have Daniel Ricciardo as a patron of the series. Does his presence help in bringing drivers to the category?

A He's an idol. He's one of the guys, as Mark [Webber] before him that kids aspire to be. Daniel has been a great help. We run the Daniel Rookies for the young drivers coming through and he has been a great inspiration.

Q Does F4, a new single-seater category attract more kids to karting?

A I think so. Mick Doohan, who is president of the Australian Karting Association has commented to me that there has been a bigger uptake in karting. Formula 4 has broken the gap that used to exist in many areas between karting and single-seaters. There now is a next step. There used to be 'career' karters before but now I do believe there will be less of them. And I think we will see more new blood coming through at a younger age.



(Clockwise from left)
IMSA President Scott
Atherton, Paul
Pfanner, Racer
Magazine and COTA
CEO Jason Dial.



SPORT IN THE AMERICAS PUTTING FANS FIRST

Thursday's second session focused on motor sport's 'American Way', a racing culture in which spectators are at the heart of the action

One of the over-riding themes of the FIA Sport Conference 2015 in Mexico City has been the strength of fan engagement and access in motor sport in North and South America.

Guests from across the Americas have spoken at length about the efforts that American motor sport goes to in encouraging fans to engage with the sport, and to get close to the action and stars. Many of the speakers from the US spoke not only of their first experiences with the speed and sound of

extraordinary race cars, but also of their first encounters with their racing heroes.

Whether it's staging fan-friendly driver introductions where drivers walk along a platform through the crowd, such as at Daytona International Speedway, or the many autograph sessions and festival atmosphere of Gasoline Alley at Indianapolis, motor sport in America actively promotes a culture of inviting fans to 'get amongst' the action. It's a culture some feel is lacking in some categories in other parts of the world.

During yesterday's plenary session on key successes in the Americas, speakers talked of the way series in the region welcome fans to all parts of a race; whether it's the paddock, up close to the garages and cars, or at meet and greets with the drivers.

Scott Atherton, International Motor Sports Association (IMSA) President, says his organisation has gone to great lengths to ensure the sports car championship is open to its fans.

"It comes down to one word – accessibility," he said. "For a typical Tudor Championship sports car event, you buy a ticket and you're automatically in the paddock.

"Thirty minutes before the start of the race everybody that's there is invited onto the grid.

"Many would say that's insanity, how could you possibly put your cars at risk, how could you put your drivers, your teams in that environment. After the first couple of times they tried it the teams embraced it fully.

"The fans are so respectful; the most common thing you see is people on their cell phones saying 'you won't believe where I am right now'. And it works; we have them for life at that moment."

Paul Pfanner, founder of US magazine RACER, believes a culture of inclusion is central to American motor sport.

"The thing that American motor sport does best, in my opinion, is it welcomes people to participate, to engage, to become involved and to become fans," he said. "It's really good at that.

"These things exist elsewhere in the world, but they're really programmed into the culture of American motor sport. "There are all these pathways where you really can become involved. That's the engagement premise, and welcoming [fans]; and almost an invitation to young people."

How the start of this year's Mexican Grand Prix might look.



GRAND PRIX OF MEXICO RACING IN MEXICO

*Federico Gonzalez Compean
of grand prix promoter CIE
speaks about Mexico's return
to the Formula One calendar*

Q There are a little over 110 days to go before the new Mexican Grand Prix, how is anticipation building for the event?

A There is a lot of excitement. After

23 years of absence there is a lot of excitement, not just in Mexico City but all across the country. People are counting the days and we are almost ready. We are 80 per cent finished with the construction, so we feel confident. We are focusing now on the experience people are going to have at the grand prix. It's not only about the race, it's about the experience and what people are expecting across the whole weekend. How we can get the city to embrace the race and the whole adventure of Formula One coming back to Mexico City.

Q Are you surprised at how quickly the race sold out?

A Yes. With the series we own, the Mexican NASCAR series, we sell about 100,000 tickets per year and with this one we almost sold that in the first issue of tickets. The challenge we have now is to sustain that. We can't be like 'OK we're done for the next five years'. We are conscious that we have to focus on continuity. However, what we bring to this experience is coming from a background of entertainment promotion over 25 years and we sell 8 million tickets a year. We think this is great opportunity to add value to the

experience of motor sport events and we think we can bring a lot of new fans to the grand prix.

Q The race is one weekend of the year; what's your business model for sustaining activity at the track year round?

A I think we have to choose. We would love to have MotoGP, as Mexico is also big on motorcycles but I think we have to choose two or three more races. We have people approaching us but we have yet to make that decision. What are those events? The usual suspects! It's possible that we will rent the circuit to other promoters. Our model will be based on four events that we promote and then maybe we would allow a different promoter to bring an event for a weekend and we would help them. We would operate the race for them – we would do security, ticketing and so on, as that's our background.

Q Do you think the new circuit can become a hub for Mexican motor sport?

A Absolutely. I think the venue will help more promoters and series to grow, with the help of the new race, the facility, the track and with the help of Formula One, which does have a real 'halo effect'.

MOTOR SPORT SAFETY THE ROAD TO SAFETY

F1 Race Director Charlie Whiting and former Indycar Medical Delegate Steve Olvey talk about some of the latest safety developments

Q Charlie, here at the conference we've heard a lot about the continual push for safety, particularly the high-speed cameras in Formula One. Tell us about some of the work that's going on?

CW We work very closely with the teams and I have to say they are very cooperative.

Whenever we come up with a new idea, it's always easy to talk about it and get things done very quickly.

We develop all sorts of things, such as the in-ear accelerometers that all the drivers have worn for a couple of years, higher and stronger cockpit sides, standard side impact structures, it's an ongoing thing.

One of the biggest challenges we will face in the near future will be to provide additional frontal protection in the event of an object coming towards them.

Q Steve, we've seen a number of concussions in recent months in motor sport, such as in Fernando Alonso's testing accident, is that a concern?

SO I'm very concerned about concussion. Ten to 15 years ago we used to say, when a driver walked out of a car, 'oh, he's just had a concussion, he's OK'. Now we know from things that have happened in hockey, soccer and American football that repeated concussions too close together are very detrimental and can cause severe illness.

With kids that are getting into go-karting, one of the problems is a likelihood of concussion. One of the important things we need to learn how to do quickly is get those diagnosed.

We miss a lot of concussions because the symptoms often don't show up for 24 or 48 hours, so we need to make the diagnosis early and we need to treat the kids appropriately and not let them back into competition too soon, as that causes the repeated insults to the brain and disease later in life.

Q One of the key things recently in NASCAR and in Indycar has been accidents due to cars racing very close together – things that fans find exciting but which carry a high level of danger. What's your view on that balance between danger and entertainment?

SO I wrestle with that balance myself, because the races are exciting, but they're more scary than exciting.

I've talked to two or three of the Indycar drivers and I understand what they're saying and I agree with them: if you make the rules so that it bunches everybody up, because the lesser guys, can run with the big boys, this makes a very dangerous situation.

In Fontana, California they were going over 200mph, side by side, and all it takes is one slip-up from one of these drivers who is not as accomplished and that can set off a chain reaction. Then it's a crapshoot.

All the things that we've done become unpredictable. What we do is look at things that are predictable and have happened in the past. We were very lucky in both in Daytona and Fontana this past week that nobody was seriously injured but it could have easily gone the other way.

FIA Institute President Prof Gérard Saillant, F1 Race Director Charlie Whiting (top right) and (bottom right) former Indycar Medical Delegate Steve Olvey.





GALA DINNER A MAGICAL NIGHT IN MEXICO CITY

Last night's Gala Dinner, hosted by OMDAI, took delegates to the historic heart of Mexico City and the Ex Convento de San Hipólito. The historic 16th century former hospital saw Jean Todt pay tribute to the efforts of OMDAI and its President, José Abed, in hosting this year's Sport Conference by presenting Mr Abed with a Certificate of Appreciation from the Federation. A similar presentation was also made to the Nepal Automobile Association. The club had been due to be presented with its certificate at the Asia-Pacific Congress in April but the tragic earthquake in the region made that impossible until now. The festivities then began in earnest with a spectacular sound and light featuring acrobats after which delegates enjoyed a sumptuous dinner.





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