

F1 Spain Blog - Sunday press conference

The 2013 Spanish Grand Prix entered the F1 history books as the first time a race at the Circuit de Catalunya has been won from fifth on the grid. The post-race press conference was - understandably - something of a tribute to the homegrown race winner.

Present were Fernando Alonso (Ferrari), Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus), and Felipe Massa (Ferrari).

Q: Fernando, how much did this crowd... we saw you go off to see the crowd... How much did the embrace of the crowd help you today?

Fernando ALONSO: Well, hello everybody. Definitely it was a fantastic emotion and it really helped. You feel the support from everybody, every single member of the team taking care of every detail because we want to do well here, in front of our fans, so many people supporting Ferrari. So, we did it, we're happy for that but we don't want to stop here obviously.

Q: How much today mean for your confidence that you can go on to win this championship?

FA: Nothing really changed. We know that we have five races only, some up and downs. Some races we had a good race with no problems and we more or less finished on the podium in all of them. Some races we had some mistakes, some mechanical problems as well that we don't want to repeat. We know that we have a car to fight with the top and if we do well we can fight for the championship. If we don't do good enough maybe we don't fight but we want to do so.

Q: Kimi, four points off the championship lead at this stage and you're coming in under the radar so to speak, because nobody is really giving you enough credit for what you're doing at the moment. How do you respond to that?

Kimi RAIKKONEN: I don't mind. I'm here only to do as good races as we can and always you want to win and it's disappointing to finish second but sometimes we have to take what we can get. Like I said, I don't mind if people don't notice us. We do our work, be happy what we do and obviously try to achieve in Enstone.

Q: Is the lack of attention possibly helping you?

KR: It makes no difference really to me. We know in the team, and all the sponsors, what we try to achieve and what we are doing and that's the main thing.

Q: Felipe, what a great drive, from ninth place on the grid [to third]. Felipe, are you back to your very best?

Felipe MASSA: Yeah, I think so. For sure I was a little bit disappointed yesterday after the qualifying losing three places but anyway the race was very good for us, our car was fantastic. Very aggressive straight away. I gained back the positions. I think maybe in the first lap I was already sixth. Then overtaking cars. Struggling a bit with the tyres, to make it survive every stint in a good way but I think the race was very good for us.

Q: Fernando, as you were saying, the first time the race has been won from that far back on the grid. Obviously your third win on home soil. Can you describe the emotion you're feeling right now?

FA: Very good again. It's very special winning at home. It doesn't matter how many times you can do it, how many you repeat it, it's always like starting from zero and you have again very emotional last laps, very long last laps because you want to finish obviously as soon as possible. Extremely happy for the team to have both cars on the podium after a difficult qualifying that maybe we were not too fast yesterday. But we knew we had the pace on the long runs and we wanted to have some clear air to exploit this potential in the car. We did it. Everything worked perfect. Happy for the team, for the fans and hopefully this is not a one-off.

Q: Obviously you took a lot of points today out Sebastian Vettel as well. The start was clearly crucial, as was the timing of the first stop - you undercut Vettel at that point but at what stage of this grand prix did you feel you had it under control.

FA: Let's see, after the last stop. Until that point you never know what can happen. We had more or less an easy race in terms of traffic etc but we know Kimi was on a different strategy but you never know how the tyres are going to behave. When we pit two or three laps later than Kimi and we were first, at that point.

Q: Kimi, we heard you say on the podium there you were disappointed you didn't win. You had a different strategy to Fernando, doing one stop less than the Ferrari today. Was there a point at which you thought you might have an opportunity to challenge Fernando for the win today?

KR: Maybe half way through. Obviously, we were leading but when we were on old tyres and he had newer tyres, it's too easy to overtake. There's no point to really fight against [him] because you cannot hold him behind. I knew if I could somehow stay a bit more closer, even with old tyres, maybe I have some chance, even if I'm already behind and will be with old tyres in the end but you never know. But they were just too fast. He had a good start around the outside of me. I don't think the end result really was decided there but we just did a different way of doing the race. It wasn't a winning way today but... We're never happy if we're not winning. We're only here to try to win. But we kind of caught up with Vettel few points and obviously Fernando caught me up [by] some points but we're still in the hunt and we'll keep ourselves there and hopefully in the future just try to win a bit more.

Q: Consistency is the key though, isn't it? It's the fourth time in five races you've stood on the podium, including that win in Australia and as you say you've got it down to just five points to Vettel. How do you feel about your championship situation and what comes from here?

KR: Obviously it's better than before the race now. It will not be easy. We cannot fight against... it's the same for everybody. Everybody wants to win it, but sometimes you have a bad day. You try to minimise those and make the most out of them and give yourself a chance to be up there and fight for wins. I think if you can do that often it will give a good chance in the end to fight for the championship. It's only a five race-old season, so there's an awful lot to be raced. We'll see what happens. We'll try to do well and see where we are in the end.

Q: Felipe, your first podium of 2013. You recovered from your penalty in starting ninth to finish in third today. What does this result say about you and Ferrari this season?

FM: Well, I think a bit disappointed for what's happening yesterday. These things happen many times and no penalties happen so I'm disappointed with that. I didn't cause him any issues for him in the qualifying, so I'm disappointed for that. The race was good. Very good start; very good beginning of the race; overtaking cars; trying to be aggressive, you know and passing people, which was the case. I tried to undercut people as well, stopping before. Maybe it was a little bit early as well. Looking at the end of the race I thought I maybe had the opportunity to fight with Kimi. But I think it was a great race, we did a good job. Our car was really superb for this track. The degradation on the tyres was not Lotus but I think we did the best as we're supposed to do and we showed a good performance that I expected to have from Friday. I think we are [heading] in a good direction so I hope from now on we are fighting for the podium every race, especially in the race, which is where it counts. Qualifying we know is not easy for us. We are pushing very hard to improve the car, to make the car quicker in qualifying. But we know we have a good car for the race so I hope me and Fernando are having great races from now and until the end of the year.

Q: And looking at your performance across this weekend, from what you felt in the car, do you feel that you could be winning races soon?

FM: Yeah, definitely.

Q: (Adrian R. Huber - Agencia EFE) In China you equalised Mansell's victories now you have overtaken him, 32 victories. Senna has 41, do you think that's possible? How about Prost, 51 and Schumacher, 91?

FA: No. I don't know. I just be happy if I finish second all the races and I win more championships.

Q: (Jaime Rodriguez - El Mundo) This is your fourth year in Ferrari, is there in this moment, have you got the best chance to win the Championship this year, do you feel like that?

FA: Probably yes, in terms of performance of the car. We should have won the championship, I believe, in 2010. We arrived in Abu Dhabi with seven points, or nine points ahead of Sebastian [15]. We lost there but nothing we can change now. Last year maybe we didn't deserve it because we were one second off the pace but even with that we manage to fight until Brazil race. So, this year we have in our hands a package that maybe is not the fastest, still not the fastest but we are working on that. But definitely on Sundays it's a very competitive team package, let's say. We are not the quickest over one lap, maybe we don't set the fastest time in the race but we have fantastic strategy people, fantastic pitstops, the starts, tyre degradation. We have many ingredients to have a competitive car to fight for the championship. In the four years in Ferrari maybe it's true that this is the one we feel more confident with but we are not happy still with the performance of the car and we want to have a good and aggressive developing programme for the next races.

Q: (Toni Lopez - La Vanguardia) Two questions for Fernando. Congratulations. In 2006 you said, when you had your first winning at home that it had been your best race in Formula One. What can you say now? And when have you realised that you can win this race?

FA: Well the first, I didn't remember to say this in 2006. And if I say that, obviously from 2008 to 2013 I did better races. Maybe, as I said before, after the last pitstop when I found myself in front of Kimi, eight or nine seconds, and our tyres were two or three laps newer than Kimi, I realised that the race was in our pocket if we don't do mistakes.

Q: (Carlos Miquel Gomez - La Gaceta) A question for Fernando: what about the overtake, two guys, Hamilton and Räikkönen in the third corner. Was your belief in the last moment that you can pass Hamilton because you stay very, very near of the line.

FA: Yes, I think we knew that to win the race we needed to pass people at the start. The start was very good but then it was very narrow and we didn't have the space to move a little bit. So, I wait for a better opportunity. It came straight after turn one. I saw Kimi and Lewis running a little bit wide in turn one so I changed trajectory and I had a clean exit in turn two. I passed Kimi and I said 'why not also Hamilton?' I had a little bit of KERS that I saved from the start for turn three, so I used that to pass Hamilton and I think that was a lot in the race and I think also when exiting the first pitstop, we undercut and we overtook Vettel, in the strategy in lap 11 but not Rosberg. So Rosberg, we have to overtake him at the end of the straight. And that was also very close.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Fernando, historically this has always been a track where it was pretty difficult to overtake but today we have seen that there were many manoeuvres. You made history because nobody ever won starting fifth, so how do you feel about it? And also, to all of you, don't you think it's too much with these tyres having too many pitstops and there is too much confusion?

FA: I don't know. I'm happy to win from whatever position to start. Here, I think this historically has been difficult to overtake and starting off the front row was hard for the race but now with this year's degradation and this year's tyres we see the races keep changing all the time. Whatever car keeps the tyre alive normally is on the podium at least - or winning the race. So, happy for this. If it's too much confusion for the spectators? There is no doubt. I think it is impossible to follow one race now. Here it's good because you have the tower and I think you follow the race on the tower with the numbers and you see who is first, who is second. But in some other circuits, if I'm sitting in the grandstand, without any information: radio, telephone or something, you only see cars passing.

Q: Kimi, your thoughts on that?

KR: I don't really think it's any different to last year. Obviously I wasn't there the year before but they had a lot of pitstops also. So that's the way it is and it's the same for everybody. For sure sometimes it's a bit tricky, even for us, who is where and what is going on if you haven't seen it as the guy in front, what's going on. But that's what Formula One is today. It might change, it might not.

Q: And Felipe. Do you know where you are in the race at all times?

FM: Yes. You can see on the...[points]

Q: (Pierre Van Vliet - Fli.com) Kimi, in the early part of the race when you had your first pitstop, you came back with new soft

tyres and you spent... you lost a few laps behind Vettel. Without that time lost do you think you could have been in front of Fernando on the last stint?

KR: It wasn't a new, it was used from qualifying. So, I mean obviously I have to overtake and I took maybe a few laps more than I expected but I got past him and I really could pull away but in the end I really don't think those were the decisions that were the deciding story of the race. I think we had the speed but we should have done it different. Maybe more pitstops, then you can push all the time - but I think this was our best way of doing the race. That's what we planned and that's what we did and I think we deserved to be second and not really winning today. It's OK for the team, the guys did a good job and we go for the next race to try to do better and get the best out of it.

Q: (Leonid Novozhilov - FLife) Kimi, what do you think about the pit stop strategy in Monaco?

KR: I have no idea. I know what we did here and yesterday. There's a few weeks to go. We will see what happens, what tyres they bring and how everything plans out. I think it's usually quite straightforward there. Usually, if you're not in the front, you start behind somebody else and it's really difficult to overtake. We will see.

Q: Fernando, what are your thoughts on Monaco, because obviously the Mercedes is very quick in qualifying, they were quick in Monaco last year, do you think the problem that they have at the moment with tyres in the race is less of an issue there? Are they going to be more difficult to beat in Monaco?

FA: Yes, definitely. They will arrive as favourites for Monaco. They've been on pole position for the last three races, they were on pole last year with Michael's lap, so it would be a surprise if they weren't on pole position in Monaco. And as you said, it's more difficult to overtake in Monaco, so maybe they can keep good positions for longer. It's something we need to understand and we need to do a better job on Saturday, Felipe and I, and Monaco is one of those places where we must do it.

Q: (Heikki Kulta - Turun Sanomat) Kimi, you have three successive second places and now you've managed to catch up Sebastian by six points: was this the most rewarding of these three races, and how do you see your chances to do better in Monaco?

KR: First of all, Monaco is a different place compared to this, so it's a bit hard to say. Last year I wasn't very good there. For sure, it should be a bit better but I've had some good races there - it's a dangerous thing to say - but as Fernando said, I think Mercedes will unfortunately be pretty quick there and after that it's difficult to overtake. The only difference that they have made against most of us is in the last sector where it's tight so you can really expect, from what they did last year and what they did here, that they should be pretty fast there. We will see what happens there, but gaining the points on Sebastian was nice. If he would have lost more points and still be second it would have been even more annoying, but OK, you also want to win but we cannot still put ourselves in a better position for the championship so at least something good came out of it.

Q: (Fulvio Solms - Corriere dello Sport) Fernando, are you concerned that this fantastic situation with this marvellous pace of Ferrari in the race can be changed in Monte Carlo?

FA: I'm confident for Monte Carlo. Looking at the last three years, even when we were not competitive in Monte Carlo, we always managed to be on the podium, more or less, in a consistent way so that's the aim for this year as well. We had a problem in Malaysia, the retirement, the problem with the rear wing in Bahrain and we lost some of the consistency that we need to fight for the championship. In the three troublefree races we've had this year we finished second in Australia, we won in China and in Spain so what we want to do is put together four or five consistent races with no problems and try to get some podiums in our pocket and score some good points, and I think in Monaco we can continue this trend. I remember in 2011 we were lapped here by the McLarens and Red Bull and we arrived in Monaco and we nearly won the race, we finished second behind Sebastian with a red flag on the last lap. We were fighting for victory so I don't see any reason - with this car which is also competitive everywhere - not to fight for top positions in Monaco. Let's hope so.

Q: (Sarah Holt - CNN.com) Fernando, an impressive drive. I'm wondering if you felt under pressure this weekend after two difficult races and you're at home. Did you feel pressure that you had to perform this weekend? Maybe you like pressure. I wonder.

FA: Not extra pressure but it's true that, as I said just now, we need some good races and I will feel more or less the same in Monaco. We must take extra care for the next races, in terms of possible mechanical issues, driver errors, strategy mistakes, whatever. All these things happen sometimes in races. I think all the team and myself are extra focused now on this part of the championship, because we felt we lost too many points with some things that we didn't do right and we must put everything together and avoid any more mistakes. Here, there was this extra pressure to do everything well but I don't think it will be any different in Monaco or in Canada where we will go and approach the race to really avoid any mistakes that can arise. So good to race at home, extra motivation, little bit more pressure but I didn't do 100 percent in the car sometimes. You are fifth, sometimes third or first, the happiness of the grandstands changes, it depends on the position but inside yourself, you are normally quite happy with the performance if you give 100 percent of the time.

Q: (Cristobal Rosaleny - Car and Driver) Fernando, have you been surprised not having Sebastian breathing down your neck today?

FA: Sebastian, not really. I think that when we started the race we knew that Kimi was probably the fastest on race pace of the leading guys. The Mercedes were a question mark. We thought that maybe they would have problems in the race but you never know until it happens really. And Sebastian... they didn't have an easy weekend on Friday and in qualifying they were not on pole which is normal for them and then in the race, they struggle a little bit more, so, as I said, Lotus was the team that we looked at a little bit more.

Q: (Cristobal Rosaleny - Car and Driver) And Fernando, could you please compare your feelings when you seem to be very relaxed in comparison to the European Grand Prix last year?

FA: Emotions compared to last year? Valencia was very different because it's not that we expected to win today but we were completely surprised last year when we won the race. We knew that today, if everything goes well and we do a fantastic race, we can win the race but in Valencia last year, we thought optimistic strategies pays etc, maybe our final results in the simulation were sixth, seventh, fifth and when we won that race starting eleventh and in front of everybody, it was a little bit more joy or a little bit more of an emotional win.

Q: (Michael Schmidt - Auto, Motor und Sport) Fernando, you had to catch up the time for one extra pit stop against Kimi. How difficult was it to balance the speed or the pace against tyre saving?

FA: Not so difficult today. We had the pace in the car, we had clean air, no traffic, only a little bit in the first stint behind Sebastian and Rosberg. Then we undercut and we passed Sebastian in the pits and Rosberg two laps later at the first corner, from that point we just pushed 90 percent, more or less. You have enough pace to open the necessary gap and you know that if you push 100 percent maybe you kill the tyres, so it's more or less normal

driving, let's say, in 2013 races. You try to control the pace and the tyres and you put in balance these two things.

Q: (Livio Oricchio - O Estado de Sao Paulo) Felipe, when you left the pit at the last stop, you were ten seconds behind Kimi on new hard tyres, and Kimi had already pitted before you. Did you think it could be possible to overtake him?

FM: Well, first of all I was 15.5s behind Kimi, not 10s, so anyway, I was pushing hard to see if I could manage to catch him. I was catching him until lap six or seven by more than one second per lap but then maybe I was pushing too hard, I lost the tyres at the end, so I saw that maybe it was not possible to catch him so I started to save the rears more and the pace didn't carry on like that. The only way to catch him was to push so I tried to push but it was not possible.

Q: (Livio Oricchio - O Estado de Sao Paulo) Alonso, did you anticipate a third pit stop, because you set very good laps and then suddenly you came into the pits?

FA: I don't have any answer, really. They called me in: I don't know if it was too early or too late, because our fight was with Kimi at that point, because we were out of sync with Kimi for five laps always. It didn't look anything special, short or long. I don't know really.

Q: (Jussi Jakala - YLE) Kimi, all top drivers are kind of supermen; did you have time to enjoy the battle that you had with Sebastian?

KR: Yeah, it didn't last very long. It took a few laps. I maybe had a chance earlier but I didn't think that I would take him at the end of the straight but actually they were very fast at the start of the straight so I couldn't catch him there, so it took a bit longer than I expected but then it was quite nice, fair but quite tough fight, but it worked out OK.

F1 Spain Blog - Saturday press conference

It was a historic post-qualifying press conference that took place in Barcelona on Saturday afternoon: for the first time since the 1950s, the front row of a Formula One Grand Prix has been locked out by the Silver Arrows.

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

Q: Nico, two in a row. Just looking at the lap there on the monitors, it looked like a very clean lap. Tell us about where you found the speed today?

Nico ROSBERG: It's just been... things just worked really well the whole weekend, just optimised everything. Of course, after Bahrain thinking about the race a lot, also, so surprised that we could be that quick today. But it all went perfectly in qualifying and I had a really good lap in the end. I'm really, really happy with that. It's always a good motivation boost and everything, especially for the team - front row, fantastic. But of course I have to be a bit cautious because of what happened in Bahrain, so for sure, nice but to be enjoyed with caution.

Q: Lewis, as Nico said a one-two for Mercedes and for you just a couple of tenths off Nico. Where did it get away from you?

Lewis HAMILTON: Firstly, congratulations to Nico, he did a great job, so very happy, but also really happy for the team because it's down to the great work that everyone is doing back at the factory, so I'm very proud to be able to get a front row for the team. But, as Nico said, we've got to approach it with caution because tomorrow is going to be tough but today I didn't have two option sets at the end, which would have helped a little bit but I think was just quicker today.

Q: Well done and Sebastian - final sector it would appear where Mercedes had it over you today, just two or three tenths of a second, I think, on the final laps. Is that where it got away from you today?

Sebastian VETTEL: To be honest, no. I was pretty happy with the last sector because historically it has been a bit weak for me. After a couple of years now I finally understood a little bit better the last couple of corners. I'm quite happy to be honest because yesterday and this morning I wasn't really happy, particularly in the last sector. I think we improved the car. Things calmed down and we had a pretty smooth qualifying session. Again a little bit different approach than the majority of people - using option tyres only. Whether that helps us tomorrow we'll have to wait and see. But for sure it will be an interesting race. It will be all about tyre degradation. I think we've seen this in the winter. We didn't really get very far, all of us. So now I think with the conditions it's helping a little bit but still it's a tough challenge and the tyres don't last as well as we'd probably all like but that's the challenge we have to face tomorrow. I'm happy with today's result. It's good historically to start this grand prix a little bit further up, so let's see what we can do tomorrow.

Q: Nico, let's talk a little bit about the race tomorrow. You mentioned that you don't want to get too overconfident after what happened in Bahrain, but tell us a bit about the work done behind the scenes to avoid a repeat of what happened to you in Bahrain?

NR: Yeah, for sure, everyone has been working really, really hard back in the factory to understand even better our problems. You know it's really an ongoing process, understanding how to get the most out of these tyres. It's really, really complex, for us drivers, for the engineers, for everybody and we're just a bit behind at the moment. I'm sure we've caught up now. But then you come here and there's different issues again because here it's more the graining of the tyres that's the main issue. And so then again here we were trying to catch up and make the most of that situation. I think we've improved things. This morning things were looking a little bit better, so I'm a little bit more confident for tomorrow but still the race is going to be a whole different thing, with the tyres it's a big challenge.

Q: Nico, pole position has been vital here in the past. Do you feel that's still the case? I guess you're hoping it is?

NR: For sure it's a benefit to start first. Yeah, definitely. Clean air - hopefully - after the start, starting on the better side of the grid, so that's all great but the race is very long. To win it's not good enough to start from pole, you need to have the fastest race car. As we've seen, there's so many differences in speeds through the race and strategy and everything. And if you don't have a very, very quick car there's no chance. So, just really need to wait and see.

Q: Lewis, give us your thoughts on how you feel the race will evolve tomorrow. Obviously you starting on the front row of the grid, historically it's the place to be.

LH: It is, but my side of the grid isn't really the place to be. These two have a good position on the cleaner side but we'll do the best job we can from the

start but I think more the concern is tyre degradation. Looking after those tyres is going to be an interesting one. I really hope that we can try and get into turn one first, in a 1-2, that'd be really good for the team.

Q: Sebastian, still no pole for you in Barcelona. What is it about this place?

SV: I think today we can be very happy. Mercedes was too quick, both Lewis and Nico. So, I think we can be happy with the result, as I said. Historically, I didn't really like the last sector and the new corners they implemented a couple of years ago. This year it seems to be that, for the first time, I found a better way around, after trying so many times – which is quite funny if you think that we come here more than once a year. So, I'm happy with that. And for tomorrow hopefully I can prove statistics wrong. I know it's very important to start from the front row. We just missed it – but I'm confident for the race. I think this year will be a lot about tyres. Nico touched on it earlier. I think generally everybody is suffering quite a lot, so let's see if we can make our strategy work and have a fast race from where we are.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Nico, congratulations for the pole. Did you practice to take it already during pre-season testing?

NR: Did I practice the pole position? No. But I mean of course. We practiced with lower fuel during the winter to simulator pole position – well, not pole position, to simulate qualifying. Just as for the car, us drivers, y'know it's also good to practice a little bit – so I was quite confident coming here because I know that I feel comfortable with the car on this track and things went really well today, definitely.

Q: (Livio Orriochio - O Estado de São Paulo) Both Mercedes drivers, your team said many times that you must better the car in race conditions – and all the improvements you try to do for this race was in this direction, and the free practice yesterday and today morning. Do you think the car can be in race condition better than the previous race?

NR: Better for sure, yeah. Because in Bahrain the temperatures and the circuit and everything exposed our small weaknesses in a very extreme way. So a) we're in a different track and everything so naturally it's going to be a bit better, and b) we also really tried to understand what went wrong in Bahrain, and we do understand better what's going on there and have improved things. But still, for sure, I'm not going to sit here and say I'm very confident that I can go for the win tomorrow. No, the target needs to be a little bit less than that I think – maybe a podium – but there are so many unknowns for tomorrow because the situation is completely different again, with graining. And so, we just have to see how it goes.

Q: And Lewis, your thoughts on that and whether you've had to adapt anything in terms of the way you drive, in terms of looking after the rear tyres on the Mercedes?

LH: Not really, it's the same as the last race for me.

Q: (Barna Zsoldos – Nemzeti Sport) Nico, in the past few years, Lewis' team-mates were just blown away by him in the qualifying and now you're beating him on a regular basis. How does it feel?

NR: Of course I'm pleased, yeah, to be ahead of Lewis, very happy with that because I know that he's very, very high level in terms of his driving. He's one of the best out there. When I can be in front of him I'm extremely happy.

Q: (Adrian R. Huber – Agencia EFE) Question for both Nico and Lewis. Did you guys expect in the pre-season this beginning of the season – or is this working out much better than you expected? Less?

LH: I don't think we expected it, definitely not. Especially for Nico, in the last couple of years have had a really difficult time in the team with the cars, and me coming to the team I definitely didn't expect to have such a competitive car. But obviously massively pleased that we do and it's great to be able to put on performances like we have today for encouraging the team and the guys back at the factory to keep pushing to improve and bring more developments. We're not there yet but this is a good starting point for us.

Q: (Pierre Van Vliet – Fli.com) Sebastian, you had only one run in Q3. What's the point of saving tyres and how to you expect that to play a role tomorrow in race pace?

SV: What's the point? I think it's pretty easy: the tyres don't last so the fresher the tyres are, the longer they last. Ideally they are new. That's why we decided to save as many sets as we can. Obviously a bit different to other people but that's the idea behind. Whether it works or not we'll know tomorrow. Tomorrow will be the big challenge – as both of them touched on – to look after the tyres and make them last, try to suffer as little graining as possible, which I think we all do suffer, some people more, some people less.

Q: (Leonid Novozhilov – Fl Live) Lewis, do you have a problem with your car today? When will we see you win in a Mercedes?

LH: Generally this weekend I haven't had the best of weekends up until now. Obviously this is still great for us today, to be one and two on the grid but I've just been struggling all weekend generally. Even my long runs have been pretty poor but on one lap pace, the car doesn't seem to be too bad but I've just been a little bit lost generally, not really knowing what things to change and which direction to go, so I kind of didn't really make many changes into P3 and into qualifying, I just left the car the same. I didn't really make any changes to it, I wasn't one hundred percent comfortable but I knew that it was good enough to do what we did today. As for the win, we've got improve our race pace but obviously we have very good qualifying pace. I hope in the near future we will get our win, but we'll work for it tomorrow.

Q: Nico, you used the word confidence before. Did you use a used set of tyres in Q2 to get through?

NR: I used a used set...

Q: Yeah, because Lewis was tearing it up in Q2 and you came in Q3 with a new set of tyres, so you obviously felt very confident then?

NR: Confident, yeah, in general, confident, yeah. It was more a question of Lewis didn't quite manage to get his lap right with the used set in Q2 and I managed to get it right so it was enough to go into Q3. That was the difference.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – Associated Press) There's some talk about this penalty points system being discussed; something could be implemented in the future. I just wanted to get each of your opinions on what you think of this proposal if it happens.

SV: I don't like it. I don't know, maybe I'm a little bit too old fashioned, I don't want to make this too long but I think we had a lot of penalties in the past. I think from a drivers' point of view we've been pushing for penalties and right now we are probably in a situation where we have more penalties than we would like so it's a little bit of a vicious circle. I think the catalogue is not released entirely. I've seen some sketch of it but I think you have the potential of scoring points for some things that are not entirely in our hands and small things and at the end of the day the consequence could be very big. I don't know if that's the idea. Surely, if you want to adapt a system that everybody uses on the road, which is the idea, there might

be some logic behind it, but at the end of the day we are not driving on the road, we are racing.

LH: I'm not really bothered by it. I don't really have much of an opinion about it.

NR: I don't know enough about it so it's not worth commenting on.

Q: (Rosanna Tennant – Pole Position) A light-hearted question: Lewis, how's Roscoe finding his race?

LH: Go and ask Roscoe! He's much better. He was a bit ill – not ill, but he was injured earlier in the week but he's recovered so I might bring him down later on or tomorrow, with his new team coat, yeah, race suit.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sebastian, taking account that maybe the other two guys have a problem with long pace, the long race distance, who do you think could be your main challenger tomorrow, Kimi or Fernando?

SV: Well, I think first of all them (the two Mercedes drivers), they are in front of us right now so to be honest, I think they had some long runs and they didn't look too bad. Historically the Mercedes is pretty aggressive when it comes to looking after the tyres. How that turns out tomorrow we will have to wait and see. Other than that, eye-balling the long runs yesterday, I think Ferrari and Lotus were pretty competitive, so I think we can expect them to be very strong in the race as well.

Q: (Ralf Bach – Sport Bild) Nico and Lewis, what kind of help do you really expect from your new development driver Daniel Juncadella?

NR: For sure he's been doing a good job in the simulator from what I hear but why he is here this weekend is mainly as a gesture from Mercedes DTM to give him race experience and to see what it's like at the pinnacle of motor sport. For sure, in DTM, there are a lot of things they can learn from where we are in FL.

LH: I think that's a good answer really. It's good for him to be here, to experience it all.

Q: (Valenti Fradera – El 9 Esportiu) Following on the question about Nico beating you in qualifying, Lewis do you feel somehow disappointed to having been pipped by Nico again?

LH: No. Sometimes you get beat, sometimes you get ahead. It's the name of the game and at the end of the day he was quicker today and it just means for me that I have to work harder. Simple.

Q: (Sarah Holt – CNN.com) Hallo everyone: Lewis, you in particular seemed to be fastest in the final sector, as did you, Nico as well, that's where the Mercedes seemed to find its time which is interesting because it's the slower part of the track. So that might bode well for Monaco, perhaps, but what about this track tomorrow, which might suit the Red Bulls more which are faster in the first two sectors? Talk about tomorrow and Monaco if you like.

NR: I don't think you can understand something from that for how it's going to go in tomorrow's race in terms of degradation and race speed. Of course it is an interesting thing to have a look at and OK, it's definitely not a bad thing for Monaco to be quick in that last sector with all the tight corners and last year we had a very good car in Monaco, I think the fastest of everybody, so I'm looking forward to Monaco, but in general we have to really play it low because it's always great to be in front on Saturday but then if you're not able to win on Sunday – which has been our issue and our weakness, has been our race pace, so we need to be very careful and just try and do better than the last race. Last race, I think Lewis managed to finish fifth and the target is to be a bit better than that.

Fl Spain Blog – Saturday report

After another strong showing from Ferrari on Saturday morning at the Circuit de Catalunya, it looked as though qualifying would be a straight fight between the Scuderia and Red Bull, with Lotus and Mercedes in contention but not as strong. Much improved was McLaren, whose new components appear to have given the team a much-needed forward step.

As the pit lane opened for the first round of qualifying there were sunny skies over the Barcelona circuit, with an air temperature of 20 degrees and a track temperature of 37 degrees.

The first half of Q1 was dominated by the mid-field and backmarkers, with Lotus the only front-running team to send their drivers out in the first few minutes. Kimi Raikkonen topped the timesheets early on, but was displaced by local hero Fernando Alonso. Ferrari's signs of pace were further cemented by Felipe Massa's first timed lap, which saw the Brazilian in P2, two-tenths slower than his teammate.

Nico Rosberg brought about a premature end to the Ferrari party, besting Alonso's time by three-tenths, before he too was displaced. Lewis Hamilton shaved a further two-tenths off his teammate's time and claimed the top slot, while Sebastian Vettel's first flyer slotted the German in between Rosberg and Alonso.

Towards the back of the pack, it was the Sauber pairing of Nico Hulkenberg and Esteban Gutierrez who were in the dropout zone with two minutes remaining, with Valtteri Bottas, Paul di Resta, and Pastor Maldonado hovering on the edge. The Hulk saved himself in the final minute, as did di Resta, and it was the Williams pairing who were left out in the cold with Caterham and Marussia.

The McLaren pairing narrowly avoided elimination in Q1, but the team elected to keep their drivers in the garage for the first third of the session, choosing tyres for Sunday over extra laps on Saturday afternoon.

Sauber took the inverse approach, sending Gutierrez and Hulkenberg out early on. But their early times were quickly knocked down the timesheets – but still in the top ten – by the established front runners when the Sauber drivers were taking stock in the pits.

Lotus, Ferrari, and Mercedes all gave a strong showing in Q2, while Red Bull were remarkably off the pace for the first thirteen minutes. With just over ninety seconds before the chequered flag, Sebastian Vettel pulled out one of his trademark timesheet-topping laps, quickly followed by Mark Webber a little more than a tenth slower.

The final minute of Q2 was chaos on the timesheets, with drivers moving up and down the order at lightning speed. Lewis Hamilton was the most

dramatic, leaping from the middle of the dropout zone to P1 with a six-tenths lead as the flag was falling. Sergio Perez also made great strides, going from elimination to P7 as teammate Jenson Button languished in P14.

Joining Button in the dropout zone were both Saubers, the Toro Rosso pair, and Adrian Sutil.

The top ten shootout saw a mix of strategies from the teams, with the pitlane split on whether it was best to set an early banker and potentially waste rubber, or pin all of their hopes on one last-second flying lap.

Ferrari and Lotus sent out both of their drivers for multiple runs, while Red Bull, McLaren, and Force India chose the one-lap strategy. At Mercedes, tactics were divided – Rosberg claimed provisional pole with an early banker, while Hamilton went for a single flyer.

With an all-Mercedes front row, the split strategy appears to have worked for the Silver Arrows, with Rosberg claiming his third career pole, and Hamilton taking P2 ahead of Vettel and Raikkonen, with the Ferrari pairing making up the third row.

Provisional grid

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m20.718s
2. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m20.972s
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m21.054s
4. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m21.177s
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m21.218s
6. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m21.308s
7. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m21.570s
8. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m22.069s
9. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m21.219s*
10. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m22.233s

11. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m22.127s
12. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m22.166s
13. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m22.346s
14. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m22.355s
15. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m22.389s
16. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m23.260s

17. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m23.318s
18. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m24.661s
19. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m22.793s**
20. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m24.713s
21. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m24.996s
22. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m25.070s

* Massa qualified in P6, but was given a three-place grid penalty for impeding Mark Webber.

** Gutierrez qualified in P16, but was given a three-place grid penalty for impeding Kimi Raikkonen.

F1 Spain Blog - Friday press conference

It was a technical director special with the questions to match for the Friday press conference at Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya.

Present were Mike Coughlan (Williams), Andrew Green (Force India), Dave Greenwood (Marussia), Adrian Newey (Red Bull), Mark Smith (Caterham), and Nikolas Tombazis (Ferrari).

Q: Mike Coughlan, if we can start with you. You won here last year but what conclusions are we to draw from your performances so far this season?

Mike COUGHLAN: Well, we're disappointed. It's a fast-moving sport, everybody's progressing and we haven't made enough progress. We're making steps in the right direction. We're making steps in the right direction but there's a long way... there's at least a second to catch up.

Q: And what did you learn from today?

MC: We learned that the prototype tyres didn't work on our car and we found that... we had an aero test last week, some things we learned have worked on the circuit here, but we've still got a lot of work to do.

Q: Thanks very much. If we can move to Nikolas Tombazis. Obviously, a lot of discussions at the moment about the re-introduction of testing in Formula One. The vote this week didn't necessarily go in favour of it, but do you feel that's the end of the story or do you think there is a chance that will be revisited?

Nikolas TOMBAZIS: To be honest I think it's something more for the team principals to be discussing with each other. I guess there will be more discussion about it but I don't think it will be at our level of engineer to be honest that we discuss it.

Q: And today? Obviously very close between yourselves and Red Bull. What conclusions do you draw from the running we saw this afternoon?

NT: I think it's very difficult to draw any conclusions properly from a Friday. I think we are in reasonable shape but it's impossible to know exactly what fuel levels each team is running. So, I think we're cautiously optimistic but I couldn't say more than that. In the morning obviously it was raining

so it was not easy to test some of the components we were planning to test. So that's an ongoing process that will go on for the next race to try and establish whether the new bits are actually faster or not, so it's not possible to answer all the questions in one single session.

Q: Obviously your old colleague James Allison is back on the market, do you fancy a reunion with him in Maranello?

NT: I'm very good friends with James, I think he's a super bloke both technically and 'humanly'. I think that any team having him would be making a good buy. Whether he is coming to us or not is a story to ask the team principals.

Q: Okay, thank you for that. Adrian, your thoughts on today? Obviously, you and Ferrari look very quick but as Nik was saying it's not always easy to draw conclusions from Friday. However, do you see it being a scrap between the two of you this weekend?
Adrian NEWEY: Well, if Nik would be kind enough to tell us what his fuel load was this afternoon we'd have a better idea, but he probably won't do that so, no, as Nik says then it's certainly tight with Ferrari. Lotus I'm sure will be good, we've seen they have very good tyre degradation, and Mercedes are the outsiders I guess, so it's the usual story of the last few races.

Q: Obviously Red Bull was one of the teams calling for a change to the tyre specifications. Pirelli has made one change, to the hard tyre that we have here this weekend. That was the preferred tyre here in the race last season. Can you give us your take on the changes that have been made? Did it go far enough as far as you're concerned?

AN: The changes to the tyre relative to last year are two-fold, one has been construction and the other has been compound. As you say they've gone back to the compound that we used in some of the races last year but that still leaves a very significant construction change, so it's still a very different tyre to what we had last year.

Q: Moving on to Dave Greenwood from Marussia. Obviously Marussia have taken a clear step forward this year in performance. Can you quantify it for us and tell us where the major gains have come from?

Dave GREENWOOD: Well, it's difficult to put exact numbers on it but definitely we're a per cent or so closer to the front. We no longer worry about anything like 107 per cent, those days are long gone, so it's much more looking towards the midfield, where we want to go. Obviously, as anyone else would say, the main advantage has come in aerodynamics - better correlation in the wind tunnel - and perhaps slightly more creativity in that area. That's where really most of the lap time has come, coupled with improvements in the mechanical installation of course.

Q: We spoke earlier about the possibility of in-season testing returning. As one of the teams with a smaller budget how would you feel about that?

DG: It's a tricky one isn't it? As an engineer you'd want to go testing but obviously there's a resource issue there to consider as well. I think as Nikolas said, it's probably one more for the team principals. But I think for us it would be as long as it was in a measured, controlled way and not an absolute free-for-all then maybe it would be something that would enable us to slightly catch up by having a little bit more testing.

Q: Moving on to Andrew. Obviously, first of all, we have to start by asking about Paul Di Resta's left-rear tyre failure. What can you tell us about that from second practice this afternoon?

Andrew GREEN: Well, completely unexpected, in the middle of a high-fuel run, it was on about lap six or seven. That's all we know at the moment. It's currently under investigation by Pirelli and I'm sure they'll release something as soon as they know but it's early days yet.

Q: What's the protocol when something like this happens, in terms of how you as a team interact with them, in terms of moving forward from here?

AG: We're completely with them. We'll give them everything they need to understand what happened with the tyres. It's one of the reasons why we stopped the car straight away - to not damage the tyre and give them as big an opportunity as possible to understand what happened.

Q: Obviously it's been a competitive start to the season for Force India; you're beating teams with larger budgets. How is that done?

AG: How's it done?

Q: Yes.

AG: We've got our own programme. We've been on a stepped improvement every year for the last three or four years. We do our own thing. We try to understand the car as much as we can and move forward in areas where we see the performance gains. We are massively resource limited in our team. We haven't got the big budgets, we've got to pick and choose where we develop the car and make sure we develop it in areas that give good rewards and we'll continue to do that. One of the key things for this year, which we identified last year was race performance on Sunday, tyre life. Understanding the tyres was a big part of this car and has given us a big opportunity to set the car up for all different conditions, all different tyre types. So that's helped us on the Sunday for sure. But it's everywhere; it's a little bit of everything. The wind tunnel guys are busy trying to add performance from their side, and on the tyre side we're trying to manage the tyres mechanically.

Q: Moving on to Mark Smith from Caterham. We've seen in the past Caterham talking a lot about upgrade packages when they come along, but there seems to have been hardly any talk about this one at all. Can you tell us what you've done and why you've decided to keep quiet about it this time?

Mark SMITH: The strategy that we had, for a number of reasons, was to introduce a car for the first four races that was probably 30 per cent of what would ordinarily be the new season's car. So, yes, it's an upgrade but in actual fact it takes us to the point that ordinarily this would have been our roll-out car. And that has to do with understanding the way we model things and not committing to things. We felt that had we have done the car in the normal timescale we would have been taking parts to production and to the car that we weren't particularly ready with in terms of our understanding and modeling and so on. So it's more a case that this is the new car.

Q: Can you tell us what the impact the return of Heikki Kovalainen in a development role has had on you in the past month or so?

MS: It has been very useful. Obviously, Heikki worked with the team previously. We lost driver continuity. So that in itself, when Heikki ran in F1 in Bahrain, was a positive. There were some minor set-up directions that we were considering and in fact Heikki endorse those independently, so that was useful. So in terms of having some continuity, having some connection to the previous car, which actually the car he drove in Bahrain was only a minor development of, has been useful.

Q: (Dan Knutson - Auto Action and National Speedsport News) All of you have upgrades here; could you tell us what the new

parts are on your car and please be specific?

MC: New front wing, some forward floor changes, but that's it.

DG: New front wing, new floor, new suspension parts on the front suspension, so not just aerodynamic. Reasonably comprehensive I would say.

MS: Front and rear wing, floor, some bodywork parts.

NT: Sorry, but I think I will be a spoilsport and won't specify. You can look at the photos.

AN: I think it's a bit of an unreasonable question really. It's all part of the sport isn't it, to find out what we've done?

Q: But presumably there have been plenty of boxes arriving overnight from England.

AN: Well, we've got to keep the boys in sandwiches.

AG: Bit of everything, really: aerodynamic and mechanical.

Q: Is it as significant an update package here at Barcelona as it has been in the past? Is it one of the most important milestones?

AG: Not as big as it has been, but it's still significant, yeah.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Tombazis, the upgrades that you brought here, are they working reasonably well and do you think they are going to help you to try to catch pole position tomorrow?

NT: As I said before, because it was raining in the morning, we haven't had the opportunity to do all the back to backs as we would have liked. It's quite difficult to get good answers on a Friday even if it's not raining because of the tyres and the various other things one has to do on a Friday. So we were still analysing and it's an on-going process. I would say that some things are working, some things are not but we will have to also re-test some things at the next race, before we decide properly.

Q: Fernando was saying that qualifying pace was something that he wanted more of from the Ferrari. Did you set that as a first order priority for this upgrade?

NT: Yes, I think it's quite clear we want to improve there, but obviously if we improve there we don't want to give away some of our race pace so the race pace is still more important in some ways for the end result but sometimes when we start further back it makes things a lot more difficult, so yes, qualifying is a priority.

Q: (Mike Doodson - Auto Action) From time to time, the idea of having a point for pole position comes up. I understand the idea has been discussed recently and rejected. Without putting all of you to any trouble, could I ask perhaps Nick and Adrian if they are first in favour of that or why was the idea rejected?

AN: To be perfectly honest, I wasn't aware that it had been discussed again lately. Certainly, when I was in IndyCars, and that was the standard procedure it always seemed to me to be a good thing. It gives a little bit more emphasis to qualifying, bit more to the show if you like and qualifying's all part of the TV spectacle. It seemed like a little extra bonus at the end and seemed sensible. That's my personal opinion.

NT: Yeah, I must say that I don't think it's a bad idea provided it's clear from the start what the rule is then one can make one's assessment between performances in qualifying and the race. I'm not against it, personally. I also wasn't aware of it being discussed. It's possibly a good thing.

Q: (Alex Oller - Associated Press) Mr Coughlan, regarding Pastor Maldonado's struggles this season: do you think you might be pressing a little bit, due to a lack of confidence in the car and also, might there be an adjustment due to the change with the personal engineer?

MC: No, I don't think so. It's a fast-moving sport, there's lots of little things. This time last year we had a good balance here and the driver was very confident on the Saturday but not so good on the Friday, so there's a lot of work to do. We have a good team, Pastor's very focused, working hard. It's just going to come down to hard work and small steps.

Q: (Sam Collins - RaceCar Engineering) Looking at this car and next year's car, some of you guys have got a bit of a challenge of resources, some from the RRA and some from your own team's resources. At what point are you going to switch off development of the 2013 car and switch on to the 2014 fully, and what's going to be the thing that makes that decision happen?

MS: I don't know that there will be an absolute switch off. I think these things... obviously 2014 represents a big change so in terms of resource, everybody's resource-limited, you're just given the level that you work at, so to a greater or lesser extent, I think every team will have been looking at 2014 for a while now. The time at which you switch the majority of resources will be different for all teams because all teams will be facing different challenges in the championship. For us, 2014 is a very significant thing and I suspect that the majority of our resources will have moved over after Barcelona.

DG: Well, in terms of resources, yeah, obviously we are one of the resource-limited teams but that's not to say we don't have big ambitions for 2014, so we've done quite a big change-over to that already, in terms of specifics of wind tunnel times, detailing and even design time, there's a lot going on for 2014 already. It's a tricky one because we still keep where we are in 2013 with one eye on it, more from the point of view of ensuring that if the opportunities are there to move up, then we've still got to keep a development going, so probably similar to what Mark says, it's about that point now where it's all or nothing basically.

AN: It's a hugely difficult problem. In an ideal world, you kind of try briefly to increase your work force to deal with the resources needed for this and then shrink back down but that's neither feasible nor practical really. I think that certainly for us, we have to put effort into the '14 car, we can't just ignore it. We are putting effort into it at the moment. This is actually about how that percentage varies throughout the year. Well, to some extent it depends on how our championship programme is.. Clearly, if you're in a tight battle for a championship, you don't want to turn your back on that. Equally... it's a juggling act, there's no magic formula to it.

Q: (Matt Youson - RaceTech) Nick, how does the 2014 power unit dictate the aero of next year's car?

NT: It's a hugely complicated project from a mechanical point of view, the installation of the turbo with all the energy recovery and the completely different looms and also all the other issues my colleagues spoke about - in terms of resource allocation make it very difficult to focus on this project as much as one would like. So one of the challenges is to make sure that apart from the work that the engine people need to do to make sure that they get the most efficiency/power/fuel efficiency etc, is to also make sure that one doesn't take any wrong turnings in terms of the packaging of this new power unit into the car. It would be a big shame if one discovers, from the start of the next season, that one has missed some trick and has to live with a sub-optimally packaged power unit. So a lot of the early aerodynamic work has to do with answering basic fundamental questions about that installation and obviously the engine being so different, there's also a lot of other things that are... one loses points of reference compared to the previous year. For example, the cooling could be one of them, or gearbox or whatever. So there's a lot of importance in being good at your simulations at this stage so as to be able to not over-design or under-design some particular aspect.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) For all six of you: we're coming to the end of this set of regulations after five years. For all of you, which was the most satisfying car you had in this period and why, and what was the car which you felt you could have done a better job with, and again, why?

AG: This car is going to be the most satisfying car, to be honest. It's got all the potential to be and we're really looking forward to this season. I think there are some really strong races ahead. I would say this car, for sure. And the one we could have done more with? Every other one, for sure.

AN: I think to pick out one car is difficult. I think overall I've certainly enjoyed the challenge of the regulation change from 2009. I think we didn't win the championship in 2009 but in some ways I'm most proud of that, as a team, not me personally, but I think as a team we did a good job with that car. We didn't have a double diffuser which is still a matter of contention about the legality of that, which is obviously all history and that, without doubt, to some extent, cost us the championship together with the fact that as a team we just weren't mature enough at the time to know how to operate the car to a championship-winning level really. But I think it's the catalyst that gave everybody in Milton Keynes the confidence to step forwards and out of the ex-Jaguar 'always seventh in the championship' – type position that people felt a bit beaten into and put a spring in their step and launched us into the following cars.

NT: Well, obviously for Ferrari, this set of the regulations, the last five years have been quite difficult. We've had some years that we were very disappointed with and I'm hoping that at the end of the season I will say that this year is one that we are most happy with but clearly we have to wait and see for that.

MS: I think for a number of reasons which generally revolve around the way we're working as a team and the way we are going about our business, I would say that it's the current car.

MC: Obviously last year's car returned Williams to winning ways and we perhaps didn't make as much use of it as we could have done but certainly here last year and that car.

DG: Obviously this year's car for the reasons we've come a long way since we entered in 2010 but I would say this is the biggest step we've made year on year and the most significant one.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) We've recently had quite a bit of discussion that's since fallen by the wayside about integrating young driver tests into the race weekend. How do you guys feel about that? Do think it's good for bringing on talent or are you wary about these young guns damaging your precious new parts?

NT: It's not exactly the sort of topic I normally think about much. I think the way of testing makes it very difficult for young drivers to really get started so to find a solution to that would be a good idea. Whether that would work at a race weekend I'm not sure, unless it's the Monday after a race or something like that.

AN: I think the first problem actually comes from the lower formulas inasmuch as we seem to be in a situation where now in GP2, for instance, experience counts hugely and quite often it will be drivers in their third or fourth season that win the championship, which seems to me quite an unhealthy way to be. I think also now, with the way the tyres are behaving, then to have junior formulas where the tyres are lasting three or four laps before they've gone off heavily, young drivers need mileage, they need seat time and it concerns me that the way the lower formulae are going they're just not getting that.

AG: Well, from Force India's point of view, we've got a track record of bringing young drivers through and it's something that we're very proud of, something we'd like to have the ability to do more of so we definitely look towards a change in regulations so we can bring young drivers through without compromising the race weekend. We put forward a motion in the meeting yesterday but I'm sure there will be further discussions on it. Hopefully we can come to some agreement because I think it's probably a little bit short-sighted of the sport not to recognise that these young guys do need time in the car.

Q: Do you have a Friday driver in the pipeline?

AG: Yes, there's one coming through. Hopefully we will announce something shortly.

DG: This is something we actively participate in, in using young drivers in an F1 session but I think tyres is key at the moment. Perhaps one set of tyres in F1 is not quite enough for these guys and maybe we need to look to giving them a few more sets of tyres.

Q: Mike, Williams is another team that has run Friday-morning drivers, you're not doing it at the moment, are there plans to do that this year?

MC: Not at the moment, no. I think our experience, although it's improved Valtteri tremendously last year, Bruno [Senna] would argue he probably suffered a little bit from it. So it's a difficult call. I don't really have an answer.

Q: ...and Mark?

MS: It's a general philosophy. When we have the opportunity we've given young drivers a chance in F1. It's not something... going beyond that in the way you describe is not something I've given a lot of thought to – but in principle, as Adrian says, there's a shortfall in terms of opportunity for guys new to Formula One to get to grips with it. So there could be something positive there, yeah.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action / National Speedsport News) Nik, a question for you: when you're designing and developing a car, how do you take into account and balance the fact that your drivers might have different driving styles and might want different things from the car?

NT: The differences are not that massive. The both want more downforce and less drag and so on. So the basic parameters are not too different. But they do have some slightly different characteristics: what they feel makes it more difficult under braking for example, or mid-corner or whatever. But we try to establish an average condition so as to have an overall car that's best – and then what the drivers prefer is dealt with in car setup.

Q: (Ted Kravitz – Sky Sports) Question for Mike: Mike, this is the first year you've been back in Formula One full time, even though you did do some races last year, first year I should say since the events of 2007. Has it been like a fresh start with Williams?

MC: I've enjoyed it tremendously. I did work all last year doing it too. I've enjoyed it. It's a great engineering challenge. If you're an engineer, Formula One is a great engineering challenge, so I've enjoyed every moment of it. Even though we're struggling a little bit now, the challenge is to get back.

Q: (Nicolas Carpentier – F1i) Back to 2014. Mark Smith talks about the big change, will these cars look very different from this year's cars in their shape? I guess you already have an idea: a shorter engine cover or something like that...

DG: The initial rules framing the regulations of where bodywork exists etcetera have been out now and published and a lot of discussions have taken place in the technical working group meetings and I think everyone has now got the confidence to start laying cars out and initial wind tunnel tests

and CFD etcetera. The version I've seen looks very much like... the cars won't look immensely different once you get used to them. The first time you see them, you'll decide they're a lot different and then by three races in you'll think they always looked like that. There are some areas that have gone. Like the beam wing, which is probably the most significant but the rest of them, you'll still think it looks like a current Formula One car.

Q: Adrian, your thoughts.

AN: So much of the shape of the car is dictated by the regulations, and that kind of hems you in. Visually, as was said the lack of the beam wing, the low nose which is again forced by regulations and a slightly narrower overall front wing – 75mm a side narrower. Those are the other things you'll notice. The other thing, depending on how good a job everybody manages to do, is probably slightly bigger sidepods to accommodate the significantly increased cooling requirements.

Q: Are these regulations that excite you?

AN: They're different and I think it's always good to have something different. I think the whole philosophy of the engine and the KERS unit and energy storage is altogether another matter – but that's more for the engine group.

Q: (Alan Baldwin – Reuters) Mike, talking on the technical side about Williams. Since Mark Gillan left, how much has the team suffered from that and are there any plans for you to bring in another heavy-hitter to help you out and bounce ideas off?

MC: No, I don't think so. As soon as somebody moves on there's always somebody younger and fresher who wants to take that place. Obviously change is something we try to avoid – especially with somebody of Mark's calibre – but at the moment, no, we don't plan to bring anybody else in.

F1 Spain Blog – Friday report

The Spanish Grand Prix weekend got off to a soggy start on Friday morning, but the wet weather failed to dampen the spirits of the crowd, who had turned out in their droves to support hometown hero Fernando Alonso.

The Ferrari driver repaid their cheers with a headline time in F1, a session dominated by the Scuderia. But despite their strong showing, it was a frustrating morning on the Ferrari pit wall.

Barcelona traditionally sees the first round of significant upgrade packages, and this year is no exception. The teams rely on the Spanish sun to enable them to complete their complex run plans, testing the new components in seemingly endless configurations as they harvest data with a view to fine-tuning their cars for the rest of the weekend. But thanks to this morning's rain, the best laid plans went awry, with more data-harvesting to be done on Saturday morning.

Both Red Bull and McLaren completed very little running on Friday morning: Jenson Button did six tours of the circuit without setting a timed lap, while the Milton Keynes racers hung back and harvested data without pushing for pace.

McLaren have been hampered by a lack of spares for their new components, but new parts are currently en route by both plane and truck from Woking – including a more aggressive front wing, which the team hope will improve their chances in Saturday's qualifying session.

The afternoon saw a dry track and a change in approach from Red Bull, with Sebastian Vettel topping the timesheets ahead of Alonso. Just behind the Spanish racer was Mark Webber, a mere 0.083s behind his pace-setting teammate.

The biggest moment of drama on Friday afternoon came about thanks to Paul di Resta, who suffered a spectacular delamination of his left rear when running along the main straight. Force India instructed their driver to park up, rather than run home on rims, so that Pirelli would have the best possible chance of establishing the cause of the failure.

Based on Friday's running, Red Bull, Ferrari, and Lotus appear to be the three strongest contenders this weekend, with Mercedes the rank outsiders. In the mid-field, both Toro Rosso and Force India look to be in good shape, while heritage teams McLaren and Williams continue to struggle.

One of the big fights this weekend will take place at the back of the pack, where Caterham have pinned their hopes on a massive upgrade package – referred to by some as a new iteration of the car – helping them to beat Marussia and stake their claim to that all-important tenth-place finish in the constructors' standings.

F1 times (unofficial)

1. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m25.252s [20 laps]
2. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m25.455s [20 laps]
3. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m25.667s [25 laps]
4. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m26.042s [21 laps]
5. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m26.212s [24 laps]
6. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m26.374s [19 laps]
7. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m26.456s [20 laps]
8. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m26.614s [21 laps]
9. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m26.621s [21 laps]
10. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m26.755s [16 laps]
11. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m26.940s [26 laps]
12. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m27.061s [24 laps]
13. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m27.135s [6 laps]
14. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m27.250s [26 laps]
15. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m27.576s [24 laps]
16. Heikki Kovalainen (Caterham) 1m28.373s [14 laps]

17. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m28.600s [19 laps]
18. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m28.887s [14 laps]
19. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m29.457s [11 laps]
20. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m29.473s [21 laps]
21. Rodolfo Gonzalez (Marussia) 1m30.314s [13 laps]
22. Jenson Button (McLaren) NO TIME SET [6 laps]

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m22.808s [34 laps]
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m22.825s [35 laps]
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m22.891s [36 laps]
4. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m23.030s [32 laps]
5. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m23.110s [37 laps]
6. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m23.140s [35 laps]
7. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m23.398s [45 laps]
8. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m23.840s [37 laps]
9. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m24.058s [31 laps]
10. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m24.104s [25 laps]
11. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m24.175s [32 laps]
12. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m24.306s [35 laps]
13. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m24.854s [31 laps]
14. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m24.888s [38 laps]
15. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m25.167s [38 laps]
16. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m25.321s [32 laps]
17. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m25.441s [37 laps]
18. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m25.851s [35 laps]
19. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m25.963s [30 laps]
20. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m26.078s [31 laps]
21. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m26.930s [35 laps]
22. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m26.970s [25 laps]

F1 Spain Blog – Thursday press conference

With the F1 circus back in Europe for the first time since the pre-season tests, the first press conference of the Spanish Grand Prix weekend was a mixture of reflection and anticipation.

Present were Fernando Alonso (Ferrari), Valtteri Bottas (Williams), Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber), Sergio Perez (McLaren), Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso), and Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull).

Q: Sergio, sixth in Bahrain, was that a breakthrough result for you with McLaren?

Sergio PEREZ: Considering where we started from, I think it was pretty much the maximum we could get. We came very close at the end, [fighting] with Lewis [Hamilton] for fifth place. We did a good strategy, good race pace – better than expected – so it was definitely a very positive race, especially after all the tough start to the season we had.

Q: And what's happened in terms of discussions between you and Jenson [Button] after the disagreements over your battle in Bahrain. Where do you stand going into this race?

SP: It's very clear between us, between the team. We had a very good chat, Jenson and myself, but also with Martin [Whitmarsh] and Sam [Michael]. We sat down after the race and, yeah, I think we were a bit too aggressive, both of us, between us, and we risked quite a lot to the team... to damage to the result of the weekend. Especially, we needed so much those points. We both apologized to the team and it was cleared. It was a nice chat to have.

Q: Thanks very much. Esteban, Monisha Kaltenborn said after Bahrain 'he's struggling at the moment'. Can you put your finger on why and what positives have you drawn from your experiences so far?

Esteban GUTIERREZ: Well, generally it has not been the ideal start to the season. Especially for myself, I would have liked to have a more consistent four races. When you're competing you're taking risks. Especially at the beginning it's important to find the right equilibrium between being conservative and taking risks. I have made some mistakes and definitely it has not been very positive but I'm determined and focused to work, myself and also as a team. It [Bahrain] was not a great track for us and hopefully it will be better for Barcelona.

Q: Obviously qualifying seems to be the particular problem, you're a few slots behind your team-mate on average this season. What are you experiencing now on Saturday afternoons?

EG: Of course on Saturday morning, in Bahrain for example, we decided to do a race simulation and this is not an ideal preparation for qualifying. We thought we could get some information for race performance. And of course also my driving, there are some little bits I need to improve, be more confident in the corners with the car that I have and get the most of the car.

Q: Fernando, you challenged for the win here last year and you've won twice on home soil. After all these years of racing in Spain, does the emotion that you feel help you, or is it something that you have to master first and keep under control in order to do well?

Fernando ALONSO: I think it motivates you to race at home and you give an extra 10 per cent on what you normally do, to take care of every detail of the weekend, starting from tomorrow's practice, qualifying, race. You try to do everything well because you know that a nice result here, a nice podium finish or whatever will make you happy, will make the team happy, make many people in the grandstand happy. So, it's a special weekend

but after all those years I think you're OK with that extra motivation and it's not anymore a pressure or the emotions you maybe felt in the first year, that you really worry to do well here, for everybody that comes to support you. Now you've proved for many years that there's not a pressure or anything that will stop you doing well. After doing very good results at home, so now you want to keep doing like that to really make everyone enjoy Sunday afternoon.

Q: From 22 Grand Prix here only two have been won from outside the front row, the stats say it all. Have Ferrari prioritised that in the approach to this weekend?

FA: Not really. I think this year we see how important are the races, the race pace. The tyres are a key factor, more than previous. Obviously it's good to start at the front and if you start on the first row you know that your chances are high and the podium, you can really touch with your hands if you start on the first row. But I think we need to have a very, very normal weekend like we did in the first four races and try to find the right balance between qualifying and the race. Maybe the first really important qualifying will arrive in two weeks' time in Monaco, when we know that qualifying is extremely important. I think here is still more or less a normal circuit and you need to find a compromise.

Q: Sebastian, championship leader with 77 points, three front-row starts, three podiums out of four starts, including obviously two wins, and yet one senses that you and the team have not been completely happy with the level of competitiveness so far? Sebastian VETTEL: Disagree. I think if you look at the results that we got, we can be extremely happy in terms of how competitive we were. I think we can be equally as happy because we had a car that was good enough to finish on the podium and fight for victory, not in all four races, but yeah we won two out of four so it's not that bad and even the third place in Australia was very strong and the fourth place in China. Obviously we didn't have that many races yet but I think from a result point of view we can be happy but surely you're not looking at the raw result and you're looking at the way you achieved the result and here and there I think we had some room for improvements and that's what we are targeting. But I wouldn't say that we are unhappy with what we got so far.

Q: Pirelli has obviously changed the harder compound tyre to something more like last years. As a team that was calling for changes, how do you feel about what's happened?

SV: Who did we call? I think there was more talk than action from our side - as in I think we said what happened to us as a team, what we felt happened to us as drivers, just like everybody else. But surely there's a lot of attention and then people try to make their own stories but I think you could for the whole grid that people were struggling with the tyres, it's not a secret, it's not just us. I think we also learned to deal with the tyres, with the situation. Sometimes you succeed a little bit more, sometimes less, but then again it's the same for other people, so yeah, up to a certain point where you feel, as a driver, it's obviously different racing. It's the same for everyone but you know, I don't know, for example in the race in China where we struggled with tyres. I had the occasion that Fernando approaches from behind. I was on a different strategy to him and so on, so I was on different tyres. But there was no point fighting with him because in the end I only slow down my own race. So, I don't wave him past but I'm not really resisting and it's a different style of racing and I think that's what we, if anything, criticised in the past.

Q: Valtteri, you got your big break this year but I'm sure you didn't expect it to be quite the struggle it's been. What has held Williams back so far, would you say?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Yeah, it's not been a start we wanted - that's for sure - but I think we all the time understand more and more the problems we've had. It's just some of the paths in the development of the car we took in the winter proved to be a bit of a dead end and we understand it much better. We had a good aero test last week and I really feel we are on the right path now.

Q: And what about your own performances against your team-mate? It's 2-2 in qualifying, you both have a best result of 11th, does that satisfy you?

VB: I think from my side it's not been a bad start. It's still my first season racing F1 and there's a lot to learn. It's been quite a smooth start, of course there's always things you could do better and willing to improve a lot during the next few races and during the whole season.

Q: Daniel, a breakthrough result for you personally in China, qualifying and finishing seventh. Is that the limit though for Toro Rosso at the moment, or can you do more?

Daniel RICCIARDO: I'd like to be able to do more. I think seventh was the best we could have done in China. Obviously the week after wasn't anywhere near what we showed a week earlier in China but I think yeah, that's probably where we were at that time. We brought some updates this weekend - along with probably every other team - so we have to see now which direction it favours. Hopefully it can push us further up the front. We'll have to see but I think for us to just try to get some more top tens more consistently. It was great to have a one-off good result but we want to finish in the points more often. So, we'll see what we've got this weekend, really. We're all excited to see how much of a gain we make and hopefully the others haven't made any big gains.

Q: What has the Red Bull management said it expects from you - and do you and they feel you're on target at the moment?

DR: I was waiting for one of these questions! For them what they expect is, I think, what they've always expected from us juniors since I started in the junior team a few years ago now. Just to maximise our equipment, to show some signs of being a potential winner, a potential champion and just to make the most out of what we've got really. I definitely felt China, that was achieved, but doing it once isn't really going to stick for 19 races. It's got to happen more often. I think it's along those lines really, just to maximise it and get some good results like I did there. Want more now, that definitely... not only for them but for me, that's what I want.

Q: (Kate Walker - GP Week) Valtteri and Esteban, you're both rookie drivers: Valtteri you came with a number of Friday drives under your belt whereas Esteban you had GP2 experience. What have you both learned in the first four races which has been different from your previous roles last year, and how are you going to take that on to improve further over the course of the rest of the season?

EG: Well, basically one of the biggest differences from GP2 is the complexity of your work with the team. There's a lot more development, there's a lot more communication and you have to be more precise as a driver on that side. Also, from the atmosphere, there's media attention, there's more followers and everyone is looking more into detail and into everything so it's quite an interesting experience and something that is inclusive of being a Formula One driver.

VB: I think Formula One racing is something different to anything I've ever experienced before. The longest races I did before was F3 in thirty minutes or something and now it's one hour 30 minutes minimum, so it's a different style of driving, different style of adjusting the car's set-up and you really need to focus throughout the weekend to maximise the car both for qualifying and for the race to find a compromise. There's so much more other technical stuff; you can adjust the car and you need to be very focused on every single little detail if you want to improve your driving

and make the car better. I've really learned a lot: I can't say just one thing but I'm sure I will be learning more and more all the time and at every race I feel I'm getting better and better.

Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) It's about the back straight, between turns nine and ten. It's quite short so can you really overtake into turn ten (with DRS)?

SV: It definitely helps. I think in the race it will be possible to overtake, not only on the straights, and not only on the two straights where we have DRS, especially when, similar to the last races, when we're in trouble with tyres etc, I think you will find more than one or two places on the track to pass. It can only help if you have DRS available there. But surely, if you look for one lap on fresh tyres it's not going to be easy because turn nine is quite fast, so it's difficult to follow, as usual.

FA: Same.

SP: Same.

Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) Sebastian, would you comment on the rumours of you and Mercedes? What's the story?

SV: I was surprised when I read it as well. I don't read that much, usually just the headlines. It's pretty funny.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) To the three in the front row, because they are the most experienced: what effect can it have on a team when it loses its technical director in the middle of the season and what do you expect this to do to Kimi Raikkonen's challenge for the championship?

SP: Well, I think they (his neighbours) are fighting for the championship, they should be the ones to answer this one. I think it depends on certain teams. It isn't the same in every team. In some other teams the technical director is more important than in the others. Obviously he's a very key person in that team, so I don't really know what effect it's going to have on Kimi's team to lose the technical director. But I don't think it's a big thing if they have very capable people who can do a good job.

FA: I don't know really.

SV: I heard it yesterday. I think there's always a reason and probably reasons that we don't know, so it's difficult for us to judge. I don't think it's our business. It can be negative, but it can also be positive. As I said, I don't know the background.

Q: (Toni Lopez – La Vanguardia) Fernando, one year ago I think you were ten points behind the leader. Now I think the gap is thirty but you look more confident, more optimistic. Can you explain your different feelings now?

FA: Well, last year we were one to one-point-five seconds behind the top cars. Whether we might have won the Malaysian race with luck this year but this year we have finished two races without problems. We finished second in Australia and we won in China so it's a very different feeling and a very different package that we have this year which brings us optimism and some confidence that we can have a good championship. We need to deliver, we need to do some consistent results now and gain some consistent points for the next Sundays but we are more optimistic now that we have some points behind us, but the championship is long and there are many many examples, as we said many times last year – I think the most recent was Sebastian's recovery last year. He was 43 points behind us after the summer break and was leading at Austin in Texas, so in five or six races you can recover 45-50 points if you get some consistent results. Same with us in 2006 when I was 33 points in front of Michael, which means 75 or 80 points with the current points system, and he was leading the championship in Suzuka with two races to the end. Until we are 75 or 80 points behind, we should be optimistic, until that point.

Q: (Valenti Fradera – Il Nuovo Sportivo) To both Sebastian and Fernando: how do you think the new hard compound tyre will suit your car?

SV: I've no idea. We will see tomorrow. I think we know what to expect a little bit, given the information we received from Pirelli so after all, I don't expect a miracle. I think we will still have to work a lot around the tyre and make the tyre last so whether it helps us or not and whether this is the compound that we carry on using – talking about the hard tyre – I think we will know a little bit more after Sunday.

FA: Yeah, same, more or less. A learning Friday for us tomorrow, we will put that tyre on the car and try to have as much information tomorrow in practice, to analyse data and to have some good points, good information for the race and then after Sunday afternoon's race we will have more information on the hard tyre that we will use in the future and we will see. I don't think it will have a big impact on the car's performance. It's just up to the teams, up to each of us to make the most of the tyre and I think to get the benefit you need to work around them. We know how important the tyres are this year and we need to find the most information we can tomorrow.

Q: (Felix Gorner – RTL TV) Sebastian and Fernando, have you watched the champion's league games and who is your favourite for the final?

SV: I'm not going to start.

FA: I've watched (the games) and it was sad for the two Spanish teams – especially for Real which is my team – but they didn't play so well in Germany and in Madrid they played better but the gap was too much in the first game, unfortunately, and now in the final, who knows? I think it will be close. They've played in the national league and they were close so I'm expecting a close final as well.

SV: So, I'm Sebastian from Red Bull Racing. Yeah, I think it was obviously, from a German point of view, very successful. Quite surprised to have two German teams in the final now. I think, on paper, Bayern Munich should win, they have an extremely strong team this year but I cross my fingers for Dortmund. Let's see what happens in the final. Nevertheless, I think it will be decided on the day and not on paper so depending on how well they play on that day.

Q: (Jens Walther – ARD Radio) Fernando, with football and Formula One in mind, how would you describe the sports relationship between Spain and Germany?

FA: Good. I think we don't have too many games together. It was this semi-final this week that was Germany – Spain for two games but in some other sports we don't play much together, because the sports that are good for Spain like basketball or tennis, the Germans are not so good. The sports that the Germans are very good at on snow, in skiing, where there aren't Spaniards, so we don't play much and in Formula One, I think we are in the minority because there are always four or five Germans in Formula One and one team or two, I don't know how many German teams: Mercedes and... I think Mercedes only. I'm happy for Germans to keep winning in football.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – AP) Sergio, you said it was important to have a talk with Jenson and with your management and you said it was a nice talk. Can you talk a bit more about what was said in that talk?

SP: Jenson and myself talked firstly to apologise to the team because we were quite aggressive, we were close to having an accident. The chat was mainly to clear the air, to say everything that we thought between us and to clear the relationship, because at the moment, especially, we need to be

together to come out of the position that we are in where we are not quick enough at the moment, and we have to keep working very closely, Jenson and myself, and I think the chat that we had with Sam (Michael) and Martin (Whitmarsh) helped to keep the relationship strong and to keep the team together and get out of the difficult moment. The chat was mainly for that.

Q: If you had the same situation again, what would you do differently?

SP: The same, but risk less with your teammate. We were far too aggressive with each other, we lost time and I think that has to be a little bit different between us. Don't waste too much tyre, especially as this stage of the season where the tyre is so critical. We are wasting too much tyre if we fight that hard, so I think we have to be more flexible in the fight. We are thankful that we are in a team like McLaren which lets you fight as teammates, so in that respect we have to respect each other a bit more.

Q: (Livio Orrichio - O Estado de Sao Paulo) All teams brought components, new parts for this race. Do you think that we will now see a different picture than what we saw in the first four races this season?

DR: Yeah, normally once the European seasons starts, it's the start of the F1 calendar. It normally creates a bit of a picture, the top teams are normally established here so I think now, for a few races probably, you will see the top teams and they'll stay there for a bit of time. Then maybe around Silverstone, there'll be a second set of updates from a lot of teams, but normally what happens this weekend will draw a picture for the next couple of months, let's say. Hopefully we're in that picture, from my point of view, but I think that's more or less the situation and as it has been the last few years.

VB: I really hope that we can really fight for better positions that we did at the beginning of the season. I really hope places will change and it will be better for us but as for everyone else, it's just unknown. We will see how it goes. I'm sure we're moving forward step by step, but it's in a week or something so we're bringing updates to every race now.

SP: I think it's the same. It's important for us to keep improving. I think we have improved quite a lot since the first race, so I think we're going in the right direction. We don't expect a big gain here. I think when you are so far away from everybody in front you have to bridge the gap and to start closing the gap is a priority. I think this race will be very important for us to learn a lot more about the car as well.

FA: I don't think the picture at the front will change much this weekend.

SV: I don't think there will be a big surprise. I think ideally everybody makes a step forward and they're in the same boat.

Q: (Paulo Ianieri - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Fernando, do you feel that for the first time since driving for Ferrari that you come to this race as one of the favourites and ready to attack rather than being the underdog and trying to profit from the misfortunes of the others?

FA: Yes. Maybe yes, first time that we arrive with a competitive car but that doesn't mean that you will fight for top places, even if you do everything right and if you don't put together a good weekend. It's also true that we need to check how the car responds with some new parts that we brought here. Same with the other teams. Our competitors make the biggest step that they do and after that we see. As I said, in the first four races we felt competitive, we felt that we were able to fight for the top places if the race was without problems and what we will try here is to have a clean race with no problems Friday, Saturday, Sunday and if that will be enough to put us in contention for victory it will be nice. If it's not possible, we will try to be as high as possible, but it's a weekend that we approach with a positive mentality and maybe not as a defensive mentality as my first three years with Ferraris.

Q: (David Croft - Sky Sports) Fernando, you worked very closely with James Allison when you were at Renault. He was deputy then technical director. How highly do you rate him? Is he the sort of man you would like to work with again and could you tempt him to come to Ferrari?

FA: I don't really have an opinion on that. He will chose what he prefers. He may choose to stay at home. I don't know. We just know the news from yesterday and we don't have any more news. For sure, I worked very closely with him and was World Champion with him two times. Then I came back to Renault in 2008/9; in 2009 he was already technical director and we were not so successful with that car, but we saw the Lotus car in the last two years and no secret that he's one of the top men here and we will see what future he has.

Q: (David Croft - Sky Sports) Would you like to work with him?

FA: I would like to work with all the technical directors. It would be nice to have all of them in our team and see how our competitors create their cars because this is impossible. We are working well and this year things are going much better so we are happy with what we have but it's always welcome, any extra help.
