

F1 India Blog - Sunday press conference

It was a historic press conference after Sebastian Vettel became one of only three men to win four consecutive drivers' titles.

Present were Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), and Romain Grosjean (Lotus).

Q: Sebastian, tell us your emotions from this victory.

Sebastian VETTEL: First of all I would love to say thank you to the crowd. Unbelievable reception today. It's a shame we are not racing here next year. I'm speechless David, I don't know. I crossed the line, I was empty. I took ages thinking about something to say. It's one of these moments you wish to say so many things but you can't. Phenomenal season. The spirit inside the team is so strong that... I said it on the radio, it gives me so much power that, it's a pleasure to jump in the car and go out for the guys and just try to give it all I have. The car was phenomenal today. It was phenomenal all season to be honest. I couldn't ask for more.

Q: I think the crowd here probably enjoyed your little celebration before coming up to the podium. Had you thought about that or was that just purely instinctive reaction?

SV: No, I haven't really thought about it. Rocky, my engineer called for the usual procedure but I said "yeah, not this time," and there's so many people here on the main grandstand that I had to do it. Usually we are not allowed to - but it felt so right at that time. I want to say a big thank you to the team, to all the people that were behind us. For sure it was not an easy season, even if people from the outside get the idea that we had it in our hands for quite a while, the last couple of races. But I think it was a difficult one all in all. Very difficult one for me personally. To receive boos, even though you haven't done anything wrong, to overcome that and to give the right answer on the track and finally get the acceptance that I think we're all looking for as racing drivers... it makes me very proud to join people like Prost, Fangio and Michael is unbelievable.

Q: Nico, that was a good day in the office.

Nico ROSBERG: Yeah, I'm pleased. The start was a bit difficult, dropping behind Massa. He was definitely a lot slower. I gave it a go on one lap but I couldn't make it happen and he passed me back on the exit. And then the team did a fantastic strategy. I managed to get by him like that and, yeah, second place, I'm pleased with that. The car was working well today. Important for us to have a normal weekend, so a lot of points and giving Ferrari a run for their money in the Constructors'. That's the aim for us now.

Q: Just a quick word on your compatriot, your fellow German here.

NR: Yeah, fantastic. He's done an amazing job this year and deserves to be World Champion. We're going to give it all over the winter to be a massive challenge next year.

Q: Romain, fantastic drive from 17th place. Did you really believe you could be on the podium today?

RG: Not at all. I would not have bet a penny on me being on the podium today. But the car came back how it was on Friday. The race pace was really there. We did a very brave strategy - as we did yesterday. I think it was not the time to go safe and it paid off. We're back on the podium it's quite amazing from where we started. The race was alright. I tried to go through the field. It was tough until the end. I didn't know when the tyres were going to go off but the team did fantastic and very proud to be here.

Q: We saw some very close racing between yourself and Kimi Räikkönen. Tell us a little bit about that battle - we heard some of the radio transmission.

RG: Yeah, well, Kimi was in a difficult situation. I went for the outside and he didn't see that point, so I wasn't... I knew I had to be careful to my engine, I knew Massa had much fresher tyres behind so I didn't want to lose time. I lost a little bit of time - but never mind. We are here on the podium and scored good points for the team and we still have a very strong car for the upcoming races.

Q: Sebastian, I know you've said you're speechless and can't find the words to describe the emotions of this moment - but please try one more time. As you stand here away from your racing car, how do you feel?

SV: I miss it! How do I feel? I'm overwhelmed. I don't know what to say. I think it's one of the best days of my life so far. When I was small... I always try to think back and think back where you started. Formula One was so far away. To race against these drivers, to race in Formula One was so far away. There have been so many people that I have to thank along the way from go-karting, junior formula categories, up to now, that have been teaching me a lot. I've always tried to listen and learn and it's incredible to race some of the best drivers in the world, that Formula One ever had. I think it's a very strong field and to come out on top of them... As I said, I think the spirit in the team is fantastic and to go for numbers and statistics that we have done in the last four years is unbelievable. I don't feel old - I'm getting older but I think I'm not that old yet and to achieve that in such a short amount of time is very difficult to grasp. Maybe in ten years' time. I'm trying very hard to come to the level I am now and maybe then I'm a little bit better in understanding what we have done so far.

QUESTIONS FOR NICO ROSBERG AND ROMAIN GROSJEAN

Q: (Srinivasan Kannan - Mail Today) From where you qualified and where you finished eventually, how happy are you?

RG: Well, I think very, very happy. I honestly thought in seventeenth I had not a very big hope of this. The best strategy, computer thing that we had was P4 but that was taking that we had a very good start and we were just behind the Force India on the first lap so that was P13 or something like that and everything was going as planned. We did not have a very good start. I lost quite a lot of time behind Gutiérrez in the middle of the race which was quite... yeah, defensive, let's put it that way. And then I didn't know how the tyres were. So, being third today, I wouldn't have bet a peanut on it. And

it's just great. I think the karma was good today.

Q: (Shridhar Potdar – Sakal Media) We saw you hold up Vettel on the podium – how does his achievement motivate for you as opponent and a contemporary?

NR: It doesn't. I look at myself. I congratulate him, they do a fantastic job – but it's not like it motivates me. I look at my own thing and try to do with my own team the best possible job. Of course trying to beat them because Sebastian has been the guy to beat in the last four years so our target is – well was this year to beat them but that didn't quite work out – and next year it will be to beat whoever is our fiercest competitor. Very likely they're going to be up the front again next year but I'm confident that we can be strong too and I really look forward to that.

QUESTIONS FOR SEBASTIAN VETTEL

Q: (Srinivasan Kannan – Mail Today) There was something unusual we saw at the end of the race: you got out of the car, almost kneeled, almost kissing in front of the car. What was that?

SV: It's just an appreciation for the car, for the team. It's pretty special. We work so hard all year to try and make that car faster, as simple as that. The guys are pushing, you could argue that it's the fifth season with this generation of cars. Next year it will be a new generation, but you still see issues that we have. Unfortunately Mark had a problem with the alternator, similar to last year. Out of precaution, I wasn't allowed to use the drinks bottle in the race, we switched the KERS off, we did everything to try and save energy at the end. So the cars are built on the limit, even if you think it's season number five, with the same – in a way – the same kind of car. The fact that the car lasts, the work that the mechanics put into the car. It's just an appreciation. I think it's a team effort at the end of the day. I spoke to the guys yesterday night... surely you could argue that I have an important job when I'm out there driving the car, no doubt, I'm aware of that but I'm not selfish, I'm not taking all the credit myself. I'm very thankful for what these guys are doing. If you look at their pay check at the end of the month, you'd be surprised if you could do the amount of hours that they do. I think it's better to work at McDonalds than to do what they do! It's one hundred percent commitment. They love their job, they love the fact that they are working on a Formula One car and get to see technology like that. I think at the end of the day we could... it's rockets in a way. It's a shame, in a way, that with modern circuits people don't get the excitement of the speeds that close any more, but I think for safety reasons there's no doubt... you don't want to go back to where we've been in the past, so I think the sport has progressed but for sure you lose some of the excitement but I think for racing fans, such as the mechanics, it's still the same. It was just a gesture of saying thank you.

Q: (Lokendra Pratap Sahi – The Telegraph) Seb, congratulations, would you say this has been amongst your most or probably the most emotional day, as an F1 driver?

SV: In a way, we saw that one coming. Last year was very special. If you look at the race last year, Brazil, it was... if you tried to write a story like that you can't because you can't be creative enough. Maybe this year the difference is that it happens in a place like this. What I want to say is that I would actually love to take the time out and travel India, travel around here, because I think this country has the possibility to teach you so much. The majority of people are very poor, if you compare the living standards to Europe. I think it's within human nature that you always find something to complain about. Being German, maybe it's in my roots to find something to complain about but you come here, the majority of people have a very difficult life you would say, but they are very happy. Obviously we don't get to see much because it's an isolated world, we are here in the paddock so if you get to see a little bit of the surroundings, it's quite frightening sometimes to see the circumstances people have to live in, but the big lesson is that they are happy. It was a difficult emotion to cross the line and to feel happy all of a sudden because you're in a rhythm, you know what you're doing, you have a certain routine. Yes, I was very nervous before the race but I am all the time, I am nervous, usually the last hour of my sleep from Saturday to Sunday is quite poor because I'm looking forward to the race, I'm having all sorts of scenarios in my head. I think it takes time to understand what happened but I think it is also a special place to win at and yeah, when my engineer called for the usual procedure – parc ferme, park the car – I said to myself I don't care, I go there, the crowd was great in the main grandstand and I'll have some fun there which I enjoyed a lot.

Q: (Aditya Iyer – The India Express) Sebastian, firstly congratulations. I was just curious to know, when you were growing up, watching Formula One, did you ever root for the underdog, did you ever want the guy finishing behind Schumacher to win, as a fan?

SV: I was never imagining myself to... what were we dreaming about when we were young boys? To be honest with you, when I started karting, I was doing the free practice, I was interested in the result, knowing if I was quick or not, I wanted to know, and after that I went to the sand and played with toy cars. We played hide and seek... it was a very nice time, to be honest. I had a lot of friends at the go-kart track, at the age of seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, when it was really about just growing up and having a hobby, you know? My friends at school went to play football, I joined them, I wasn't very good. I already didn't like losing at the time so yeah, it was a very nice time. It's a lot of work, a lot of hours you put in, but I have to thank my parents in a way because they never put pressure on me. I understood it was very serious, I understand that they... maybe I understand now better than back then, but I understood that they spent a lot of time with me, sacrificed their lives in a way but we had a good time as a family together. Yeah, even if I wouldn't be here in Formula One now and successful somewhere else, I don't know, studying and having a normal job, I would still look back and say it was a nice time we spent together as a family and we would still talk about it every second or third dinner, because they are nice memories that we have. So when I was a child, I wasn't really... of course, it was a dream to race in Formula One but I think it's wrong to say it was a target. Later on, when I was 15/16, yes, I had a target but now, looking back, it was very difficult to grasp.

Q: (Saptarshi Shukla – Autocar India) Congratulations Sebastian, incidentally, I was at your hotel last evening and I saw you come in at nine at night which was six hours after qualifying finished. Is it normal or are you as diligent at any other weekend?

SV: I think I spend a lot of time here at the track, looking at stuff, writing my reports and trying to give feedback but also to be honest, last night I had dinner here at the circuit. Many times people complain about the paddock and the people; to be honest with you, I'm not like that, I enjoy being here and spending time with people that you know. I had an interesting discussion last night with a journalist. I like the paddock, it's not like a prison to me. People say when you cross the entrance it's like being in a circus but I think it's what you make of the circus also. If you come in with a negative mindset then for sure you will have a bad time. This morning, when I looked at the car and also yesterday to be honest, I looked at it and it's a small piece of kit. It's not very big. A truck is bigger, any truck you can buy on the road is bigger but imagine the speed this car can travel with you behind the wheel. It's amazing. I just appreciate that fact, you know. Whether you finish first, second, 15th or last, it doesn't really matter, but I think it's something unique, that we get to feel, we get to enjoy. I appreciate that and hopefully this kind of feeling never changes.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) First, being Italian, I apologise for all the boos that you got because I think they're quite shameful and since they were coming a lot from Ferrari fans, I think it was not very much deserved. Second, Fangio...

SV: Yes, but to be honest with you, I'm not blaming the Ferrari fans. I tried to make the example, unfortunately nowadays the world is ticking so quickly that people are not always listening exactly to what I'm saying or what I'm trying to say. I don't blame the people that booed, you know. If I go

to the football stadium, for example, I cheer for the home team. The first moment you maybe don't appreciate the outside or the away team to score a goal, the guy who actually scored a goal you don't appreciate him being an amazing player and you might boo because other people boo. So in that regard, I think I know how to put it but like I said, obviously it doesn't feel great but if you have a love for.. for example for Ferrari or McLaren... I had actually one guy writing a letter after Singapore. He apologised because he was in the crowd and he was booing and he apologised that he was booing, it was the wrong thing to do. I think if people think about it they understand but in the heat of the moment, you know, there's nobody really to blame. Somebody starts, some people join in, others don't. We are fans of the sport and if some people have a passion for Ferrari, which they might have for good reason, they've been around for quite a while, they don't like it if somebody else wins. It's not necessarily my fault. I think I'm mature enough to understand that.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri - La Gazzetta dello Sport) My question actually was another one, because it was just four names: Fangio, Schumacher, Prost, Vettel.

SV: It's very difficult to, to understand. Put it this way, I was watching TV, I was watching Formula One when Fernando started to win races and now I'm racing Fernando, he's been my toughest opponent for the last couple of years. I think he's extremely talented, very gifted behind the wheel, for sure. He's Spanish, he's very passionate, one way and the other. Now, to race people like him, race people like Lewis who I think has an amazing level of natural talent, to race people like Mark who I rate the same way, like Nico who I think is underestimated. A lot of guys, you know: Kimi, Jenson. To win four titles, I don't know, it's just a big number, you know? Four. Titles. Fangio put the number of five titles, everybody appreciated him as the best driver in the world. Michael came along a couple of years later or... couple of years! Quite many years later. Different time, different era of the sport. Don't get me wrong, I'm just talking as a fan of the sport, you know? Yes, he had a very dominant car but he created that at Ferrari, you know? He was working very hard, arguably harder than everybody else. He had some tough challenges coming in and going out: people like Montoya, David, Kimi, Fernando. It's incredible that one guy managed to actually score more championships than this guy did. Unfortunately Fangio passed away but when you speak to true legends of the sport, in my opinion, like Stirling Moss, they actually have the guts to say that... fuck, this guy was better than me, he deserved to win and Stirling Moss for sure was not a... he finished twice, I don't know how many times, three/four times in the championship? To join people like that: Michael, Fangio, Prost is very difficult to put into perspective. I'm way too young to understand what it means. I might be sixty one day, maybe then I will understand but nobody cares any more. I care, it's difficult to realise something that nobody can take away from you, basically.

Q: (Amanpreet Singh - PTI) Congratulations, Sebastian. Would you say that people have been unfair to you when they say that F1 is becoming boring because of you winning everything but at the same time, there are people like Fernando Alonso who say that you should be respected for being the fastest?

SV: No, I'm not... I don't know the word, nachtragend (resentful). I'm not... I don't blame people. They boo because they are Ferrari fans. At the time it hurts, as I said, not to get the reception that you expect but at the same time, I think I'm clever enough to understand why they do it. I'm not blaming them. Maybe if I would be a fan of McLaren, Ferrari, whatever, one of the traditional teams, I wouldn't like it if the same kind of guys, same team wins again and again. I think the most important thing for me is to get the respect from people that I know and people that I race against. I feel respected amongst the drivers. Sure you have to fight to get that respect when you come in but I'm not blaming the fans. It's very difficult for the fans, to be honest, to understand what's going on behind the scenes because they get a little of an idea of who we are but it's impossible for everyone to introduce yourself and to explain what kind of guy you are. But then again, it's nice to give a little bit back to people you meet, at the hotel, at the track, outside of the track, maybe when you're shopping, people that recognise you. Therefore, I think it's important that you get the respect from people that you really know. Others, I think, will always struggle, there will always be pros and cons, speaking for and against you.

Q: (Rohit Bhaskar - Hindustan Times) When you entered the room, you were on the phone. Who were you talking to? And what was the talk about?

SV: My parents and my brother. I was basically... they said congratulations. I said that I loved them very much, thank you and yeah, it's very difficult to find the right words. As I said, it's one of these things I struggle to understand right here, right now. But as I tried to explain in my message in German, there have been a lot of people supporting me on the way and for sure my family played a huge role. I think we just got to spend a very good time together and to have this sort of outcome, nobody expected that. It's just a nice bonus at the end of the day.

Q: (Bharat Sharma - IndoAsian News Service) Congratulations Sebastian, you just said that you would love to explore India. Considering there's no race next year, would you like to explore India in the off-season? Would you have the time?

SV: There's not enough time in the off-season, to be honest. It's a very busy schedule. If you look at the schedule itself, obviously December will be quite busy and then I get some time for myself at Christmas. And then we start very soon in January. It's a big big big project waiting for us next year. I think teams like Mercedes, Ferrari spend a lot of time thinking of new ideas. It's a new car, it's a new engine so it will be an incredibly big challenge. We already start testing in January. I think this year's winter will be as short as... or will be shorter than many winters before. And then you have... at the moment there's 22 races in the calendar, so you don't get to spend two, three, four, five weeks really for holidays or to have a break. I think, in the end, that India is big, lot of people here and you need more than a week or two to really get the taste of the country. It's a shame but since there's quite a good perspective that one day I will retire and I will still be young, I'm looking forward to that.

Q: (Santhosh Kumar C - Deccan Chronicle) Since you said that India is a special place to win, would you consider naming your 2014 car with an Indian angle?

SV: Actually, don't get me wrong, but yesterday there were a couple of guests we had from the team and I signed some autographs and I was asking for their names and I regret that because I looked like an idiot. They were spelling the names and I'm... 'OK, can you say that again?' and one guy who had, I don't know, some Ts in his name and he spelled it and he said D like Tomato. So I put D and I looked like an idiot because he actually meant T. Don't get me wrong, you look like an idiot when he spells the name and you put something down wrong. For sure, my English isn't perfect either but I struggled to understand him. I really like the people here, they are very friendly. He didn't actually take it personally so we just did another card. With the right spelling.

F1 India Blog - Race report

For months it has been a mathematical inevitability, but on Sunday afternoon at India's Buddh International Circuit it became a certainty - Sebastian Vettel made history by securing his fourth consecutive world title, becoming the youngest driver in F1 history to have logged such an achievement.

It was yet another commanding victory from the Red Bull racer, who failed to lead every lap of the Indian Grand Prix for the first time in the race's

history, thanks to an aggressive strategy that saw Vettel start the race on the soft tyre before diving into the pits at the end of the second lap for a switch to Pirelli's medium compound. Emerging from the pits in P17 Vettel then had to work his way back up the field, passing some drivers on track while also being bumped up the order as his rivals made their own stops for fresh rubber.

The expectation was that the race would be a test of Red Bull's split strategies, with teammate Mark Webber starting on the harder compound – a strategy the Australian thought would prove advantageous – but an alternator failure on the second RB9 made any direct comparisons impossible. One man who made a great success of going against the grain was Felipe Massa, who defied his engineers to start on the softer compound, a strategy that eventually reaped dividends for the Brazilian.

But perhaps the most impressive performance of the afternoon came about courtesy of Romain Grosjean, who finished the race on the podium, one of two men to make a one-stop strategy work around the challenging Indian circuit.

The Frenchman lined up 17th on the grid, shod in soft rubber. Grosjean took full advantage of his fast – fresh – tyres, working his way up to P12 by the end of lap 4. By lap 7, he had passed Adrian Sutil for eighth, and one lap later Grosjean was running in sixth.

On lap 14, after an impressively long stint on the softer compound, the Lotus racer dove into the pits for what would be his only stop of the afternoon, making the medium compound last beyond all expectation. More impressively still, in the closing stages of Sunday's race Grosjean was setting purple sector times as teammate Kimi Raikkonen – who had been on a one-stop strategy until that point – started falling down the order in a manner reminiscent of the 2012 Chinese Grand Prix.

Joining Vettel and Grosjean on the podium was Nico Rosberg, who started and finished the race in second place. But the Mercedes driver didn't have the easiest of afternoons, having been passed on the first lap by a rocketing Massa and dropping down to third. At the end of lap 7 Rosberg pitted for medium tyres, dropping out of the points in the process.

But as the first round of stops began in earnest, he was elevated back up the order, running in seventh until his second and final stop – also for mediums – on lap 27. From that moment onwards it was simply a matter of managing his rubber as he worked his way back up through the pack and into his original starting position, inheriting third place when Adrian Sutil made his only stop of the race on lap 41.

On lap 51 Rosberg took advantage of Raikkonen's fading rubber, and reclaimed the second place that had been his starting position. Four laps later and the vulnerable Finn was under attack from his own teammate; the pair touched briefly but Grosjean kept a cool head and hung back, reprising the attack on the following lap. Massa followed suit, and Raikkonen was then passed by both Lewis Hamilton and Sergio Perez before making a late second stop on lap 58.

As a small consolation, Raikkonen snatched the fastest lap from Vettel when the race winner was already celebrating his victory and fourth successive title.

2013 Indian Grand Prix results

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1h31m12.187s
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) + 29.823s
3. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) + 39.892s
4. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) + 41.692s
5. Sergio Perez (McLaren) + 43.829s
6. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) + 52.475s
7. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) + 1m07.988s
8. Paul di Resta (Force India) + 1m12.868s
9. Adrian Sutil (Force India) + 1m14.734s
10. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) + 1m16.237s
11. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) + 1m18.297s
12. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) + 1m18.951s
13. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) + 1 lap
14. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 1 lap
15. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) + 1 lap
16. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) + 1 lap
17. Max Chilton (Marussia) + 2 laps
18. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) + 2 laps

Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) RET

Mark Webber (Red Bull) RET

Charles Pic (Caterham) RET

Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) RET

F1 India Blog – Saturday press conference

It was the usual man back front and centre in the post-qualifying press conference for the Indian Grand Prix.

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

Q: Sebastian, it seems to have just been a seamless weekend for you. It seems to have all gone perfectly so far.

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah – so far it's a brilliant weekend. The car has run basically very, very well since yesterday morning. We didn't have to

change a lot and through qualifying it just got better when the track ramped up. New tyres again, new tyres again and yeah, the car was amazing. It's a great circuit, I really like the flow of the track, especially around the middle sector with all the high-speed corners – but for sure it's not a secret if your car behaves the way you want to through there then for sure you're going to enjoy that a lot. So, I think we did that today. Great result – also for the team. Obviously Mark is on a different strategy so we'll see what the race brings tomorrow.

Q: Your third pole position here, you've led every lap so far, you must start favourite to win the race tomorrow – and take the ultimate prize.

SV: Yeah – I'm trying not to think about it. Obviously it's difficult when every second person in the paddock asks you the same question. But I think we've done pretty well in the past, focussing on every single step and I don't see a reason why to change things for tomorrow or the next couple of races. So, yeah, we're in a good position. I think we worked hard to be there and yeah, tomorrow is a long race, as I touched on, with strategy I think it will be tricky to always do the right thing – but there's a lot of laps so I think we have a quick package and should be in good shape tomorrow.

Q: Nico, you said yesterday it was a tough day. Obviously a lot of progress made.

Nico ROSBERG: Yeah, and to be honest we're – I'm – completely on a knife's edge. Really pushing the limits this weekend, just trying to extract that little tenth more out of the car. Trying different things, new ways, new setups and until now it works. So I'm very pleased with that. Qualifying in second is better than I hoped for – because of Mark being on another strategy, so for the moment it's looking OK. The race is still going to be tough because it's very different circumstances here with the Option tyre really struggling at the beginning of the race tomorrow and then Prime will be OK but also the balance of the car is all very different. So, we'll see.

Q: The strategy really is what it's down to. Is that preferable for you drivers? Is that something you enjoy?

NR: Well, I'm very interested in it, yeah, but it's so complex that you really rely on the pit wall to do their job – but of course I prepare for it well before the race and look into it and also discuss what my preference is and all of those things.

Q: Lewis, third on the grid and obviously great that the two Mercedes are second and third – best of the rest as it were – behind Sebastian. What are your feelings?

Lewis HAMILTON: It's been a tough weekend. It's been a tough weekend for us and incredible... congratulations to Sebastian, it's obvious that that's some serious pace that they have, especially with Webber on the Primes just behind us. But we've been pushing, as Nico said, as hard as we can. We really want to get a great result this weekend. Strategy is going to play a huge part but I was a little bit surprised to be where we are but generally, bit by bit, adjusting the set-up and everything, we got a reasonable balance and hopefully tomorrow we can push together to try and stay ahead of the rest.

Q: Any traffic issues out there?

LH: I did have through eight and nine. I did have someone in front of me – I'm not really sure who it was, I was so focussed on the road. It didn't help (To Vettel: "It might have been you!"). I think it may have been one of the Red Bulls, but I probably didn't lose too much time. Yeah, anyways, look forward to tomorrow.

Q: Sebastian, did you consider the same strategy as Mark?

SV: Well, I have to start on the different tyre so obviously the strategy is different. It's all difficult now, as Nico touched on, obviously. It's very interesting, surely not easy. I think in the end if everybody does his bit then it probably doesn't matter too much. Surely the race will differ in the beginning if you start on the opposite tyre. So for us three I think it's the same thing but then obviously I think Mark is the first car on Primes – with a different strategy.

Q: Sebastian: 43rd pole position, as I said, you've got an amazing record around here. What is it about this circuit?

SV: I don't know. I really like this circuit, especially the middle sector. I think it's very challenging with all the fast, or high-speed corners. It really depends, obviously, if the car does what you want. I think that's what all of us enjoy and in particular you get to enjoy that around these couple of corners. So, yeah, the car's been strong since Friday morning, since yesterday morning. We didn't have to adjust that much. Of course you always trim a little bit – in the right direction hopefully. But, yeah, we've been very strong on both compounds, so a good result, and also a good result for the team with Mark sitting in fourth, right behind those two guys.

Q: Interesting with that strategy certainly. I wondered if you'd considered that or how much of a threat that strategy is?

SV: Which one?

Q: With the medium tyre.

SV: Well, difficult to say now. Obviously we decided to go for what I did together, and Mark decided to go for the opposite. So, yeah, what turns out to be the right strategy, we'll find out tomorrow. But I'm sure the race is long and you will have plenty of time to make up. In the end I think the strategies shouldn't determine the result that much. We're got very good pace, the car, as I said, behaves well around here, so we'll see what we can do tomorrow.

Q: Have you solved the problem – if there was a problem – about the start from Japan?

SV: Well, we just got surprised by how low the grip was, I think. Yeah, obviously, both then, I think we've been a bit too aggressive, too much wheel-slip and the guys behind us had a better start. So, for sure, we'll try to do better tomorrow – but quite confident. I think the starts we had before that were pretty good. Korea, I had a very good start, so I think we know how to do it, we just need to get it all right.

Q: Nico, easily your best qualifying here, your previous best was seventh a couple of years ago – so you must be very pleased with that.

NR: I am, yeah, definitely. Coming here I knew it was going to be trying to be best of the rest and managed to do that really well today with second place. And even getting Mark because he's on a different strategy. So, yeah, I'm pleased with that. It's really been a tough weekend because we really just pushed the limits, completely on everything, to try to extract that tenth or two more out of the car. I think up to now it's been successful. It's been very, very difficult, on a knife's edge all the time but for now it's worked, it seems. We're a step forward from where we were in recent races and that's good to see. But still a long race tomorrow.

Q: Question for both you and Lewis really. Did you consider going the medium tyre route?

NR: Well of course it's always a consideration. It was a consideration for tomorrow but we decided that soft tyre was the best way to go.

Q: Do you feel it was a bit of gamble to go that way?

NR: No, not a gamble. It was the best thing to do from my point of view.

Q: To go on the mediums would have been a gamble?

NR: Not really a gamble either because that strategy is also a good one, yeah? But we just through our one was better.

Q: Lewis, basically happy with third or do you think you could have pipped Nico?

LH: It doesn't really matter at the end of the day. Nico did a great job, he's been strong all weekend and on my side, I've struggled a little bit through this weekend. I struggled a little bit with something different on the car this weekend which Nico had had experience of seeing maybe in the past. I came to grips with it really quite quickly at the end and I'm really happy with the result and the lap time that I was able to get. There's always a little bit of time everywhere but we'll try and push these guys as hard as we can in the race obviously. They're in another world but we'll try to stay ahead of the rest.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Nico and Lewis, obviously, as you said, you are the best of the rest and probably Sebastian will do the race by himself and you're going to control Ferrari more for second place in the Constructors' championship. Do you think that Alonso's strategy, starting with medium, could be a threat to you or do you feel confident that you have better pace than them here?

NR: Well, we've been a little bit quicker, I feel, until now, the whole weekend, but of course that strategy is a threat, because there's not that much difference between the two strategies so for sure we need to keep an eye on, them.

Q: (Sudhir P. Chandran - Chequered Flag) Sebastian, I'm curious to know what kind of music or chant do you listen to on your headphones before qualifying and the race, every single time, to get on top, every time you've gone out?

NR: Didn't you say Justin Bieber last time? No?

SV: No.

NR: Ok, I must have misunderstood or misheard that one

SV: It's not really... it's music, yes, but it's more like melodies, no singing, so no Justin Bieber. I think that was on your iPod. In the end, it's not a secret, it's just music that gets me or tries to get me in the zone so that I hopefully get the best out of myself.

Q: (Shridhar Potdar - Sakal Media) Sebastian, the second part of the season has always been fruitful for you, the last two seasons when you have delivered most and this year also you are delivering your best in the second part of the season. Is there anything special about the races, especially in Asia?

SV: Not a lot, really. I'm trying hard in the first half as well. Obviously the last couple of years it was a benefit to do well in the second half. I think generally there's no track in the calendar that I dislike. I think towards the end, we've got very good tracks such as here and the best one, I think, Suzuka. For the last race, maybe there's a little bit of that but I don't think there's a reason why we perform better in the second half than the first one. I think, as a team, we've been working very hard and very consciously on our fitness: it's a long year for all the teams so that we make sure that we're still on top of our game towards the end.

Q: (Dan Knutson - Auto Action and National Speedsport News) Nico and Lewis answered this earlier, so just for Seb: in a few weeks we will be in Texas, what are your thoughts on the track and also the ambiance at the track and in the city of Austin?

SV: Well, I think it was fantastic last year. To be honest, we were all very surprised. Obviously, up to that point, Formula One didn't have the best record in the United States, so it was great to see that there were so many people. The whole city... I think that's really the special thing that we enjoy, apart from the track itself, that the whole city was living the Grand Prix. You could feel that there was a special vibe and that everyone was looking forward to the event. I think it was generally very positive. We obviously look forward to going there again. I think the track is tricky, very challenging, mixed, with high speed and slow corners. It was nice to be on the podium last year, nice to get a different kind of hat. Yeah, we'll try to do it again.

Q: (Luis Fernando Ramos - Racing Magazine) Sebastian, it is known how much you admire the history of F1 so what is your top five drivers of all time?

SV: I don't think it's fair to only name... that for sure there is more than five. There are different times in Formula One so if you look back recently, you've got a couple of drivers racing now but obviously if you don't look too far back, drivers like Mika (Hakkinen), Michael (Schumacher), Ayrton (Senna), Nigel Mansell dominated their times in a way - Prost - so you cover quite a lot of the last couple of years. After that, there's guys like Lauda, Piquet. I don't think it's fair to highlight one-two-three because Formula One has changed.

Q: (Shridhar Potdar - Sakal Media) Sebastian after the qualifying was over, you took an instrument from your teammate and checked the brakes. This shows 100 percent involvement, that you're very serious about the set-up and the technical preparation of the car and 100 percent involvement is giving you 100 percent commitment and earning nearly 100 percent success. So how much involvement and what motivates you to be so into the game?

SV: Well, I think first off, if you don't give your 100 percent, then you would be disappointed because you didn't give your 100 percent... No, I'm joking. It's a team effort at the end of the day, you know. The team is pushing very hard and you also feel that you have to deliver as well, as I feel part of the team, so I feel that I've got to do my bit right as well and for sure you're very conscious, so you try to find the right set-up. The team obviously tries to support you as much as possible, before the race, at the race weekend. I love what I do, it's days like this when you get out and the car feels fantastic, it's the greatest reward you can get so for sure you want to use all that 100 percent.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sebastian, if you look at the previous three years when you won the championship, the day before, what is the difference? What is your approach, how are you going to approach tomorrow's race?

SV: To be honest, I think they've been very similar. Obviously two of the three years have been very different: 2011, you could say that it was more relaxed. Obviously 2010 and 2012 was a different situation but at the end of the day there's no secret, no secret preparation. I think we all have a certain routine we go through before a race but also the night before. I don't think I did anything special the last three times, not that I can remember and I wasn't really looking forward to the race, saying that 'yeah, tomorrow is the day, could be the day.' I was basically trying to focus on the race and in a way, trying to ignore the fact that it could be the decisive race. At the end of the day, you also have so many races a year that on the last race of the season, if you do your best and it's enough then it's fine, if you do your best and it's not enough, then it's not the last race that's to blame.

Q: (Nirmal John – Fortune India Magazine) I just wanted to ask your views on Formula E which is the new electric car racing series which is in the works. How sustainable is that kind of racing series and what does that signify in terms of the future of Formula One meeting something like electric cars?

SV: I don't like it at all. I think it's not the future, I think the people come here to feel Formula One and there's not much to feel when a car goes by and you don't even hear anything else but the wind. Maybe I'm very old fashioned, but I think Formula One needs to scream, needs to be loud, there needs to be the vibration. That's what I remember from the first time I went to see Formula One in 1992 for free practice at Hockenheim, even though it was wet and the cars didn't go out, but once they did their installation laps it was a great feeling just to be there and hear them coming through the forest and feel it through the ground. That's why I'm not a big fan at all.

NR: Well, it's an interesting thing, for sure, something new and I know there's a lot of interest and it's planned to be in the cities so it's bringing the race to the people, not the people to the race and of course it's a bit of the future, so it will be interesting to see how it goes. We need to wait and see.

LH: I agree with both of them.

Q: (Lokendra Pratap Sahi – The Telegraph, Kolkata) Seb, what has made you the driver you are?

SV: I don't know. I think in the end there's a little bit of influence on the guy you become but also you have your preference in life, you have a certain thing called taste so you do what in the end you'd like. Sometimes some people lead you to one thing or another but in the end you make the decision. On track, obviously, if you look at my career, I think there's a lot of people that I had behind me supporting me from an early age but to be fair, when I started, all this was not even... we didn't even really dream about it. I had a hobby and I started together with my father to go racing with the whole family as well. Obviously it became a little bit more serious, a little bit faster, a little bit more serious. I think you really go step by step. In the end, I think it's passion that drives us all, the love that we have for the sport, the love we have to challenge ourselves, challenge the cars and nowadays instead of racing with go-karts we just end up in bigger cars on bigger tracks with more people watching. I think the core hasn't changed.

F1 India Blog – Saturday report

For the third and final practice session of the Indian Grand Prix weekend it was Sebastian Vettel who once again topped the timesheets, half a second faster than teammate Mark Webber.

In third, two-tenths behind the Australian, was Fernando Alonso – the only man with a mathematical possibility of preventing Vettel from collecting his fourth consecutive title. The session was cut short by heavy smog, with the medical helicopter unable to operate due to poor visibility for the first twenty minutes.

As qualifying got underway on Saturday afternoon at the Buddh International Circuit the four men with theoretically the best chance of winning Sunday's race – Vettel, Webber, Alonso, and Romain Grosjean – stayed put in their garages. The session was half run before any of them emerged, and it was Nico Rosberg who topped the timesheets for much of Q1 before being dethroned by Esteban Gutierrez, who was himself bumped down by Alonso's first timed lap.

Vettel's first run saw him in P2, while Webber's first effort was worthy of P3. Further down the pack, the dropout zone was comprised of the four usual suspects plus Jean-Eric Vergne and Pastor Maldonado. As the session came to an end the times at the top changed rapidly, pushing once-quick drivers further and further down the order, resulting in Grosjean getting knocked out in Q1.

Q2 saw Vettel and Webber hanging back in the garage again, while Rosberg continued his run of promising pace in the opening – pre-Red Bull – phase of the session. Webber was three-tenths faster than Rosberg when he crossed the line, while Vettel was another half-second faster than that.

At the back of the pack as the flag fell were Daniel Ricciardo, Paul di Resta, Adrian Sutil, Jean-Eric Vergne, Valtteri Bottas, and Esteban Gutierrez.

Given Vettel's pace in India, pole looked to be a foregone conclusion for the German as the pit lane opened for Q3. Alonso and Webber were the only two men able to get close to Vettel in Q2, but Q3 was over before it had even begun, with a 1m24.119s lap from the defending champion rendering all other efforts essentially pointless.

Webber was 1.1s slower than Vettel with his first Q3 lap, and Alonso six-tenths slower than that. Kimi Raikkonen was able to get within fighting distance of Webber, but Vettel's one second advantage rendered any real challenge close to futile. The Mercedes pair were able to break into the 1m24s, but seven- and eight-tenths behind Vettel.

Provisional grid

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m24.119s
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m24.871s
3. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m24.941s
4. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m25.047s
5. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m25.201s
6. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m25.248s
7. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m25.3344s
8. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m25.826s
9. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m26.153s
10. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m26.487s
11. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m25.519s
12. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m25.711s
13. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m25.740s
14. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m25.798s

15. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m26.134s
16. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m26.336s

17. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m26.577s
18. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m26.842s
19. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m26.970s
20. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m27.105s
21. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m27.487s
22. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m28.138s

F1 India Blog - Friday press conference

It was a record-breaking Friday press conference in India, the longest session anyone can remember.

Present were Eric Boullier (Lotus), Ross Brawn (Mercedes), Stefano Domenicali (Ferrari), Christian Horner (Red Bull), Monisha Kaltenborn (Sauber), and Vijay Mallya (Force India).

Q: I think as you have pride of place, front and centre, Monisha, I think we should start with you, in what I'm sure is a happier time at Sauber at the moment. The last few races have seen good points-scoring finishes. Has that been a relief to you, something you always thought was on the cards or has it caught you by surprise?

Monisha KALTENBORN: It didn't really catch us by surprise that we improved our performance. We did always believe in it and we had reason to believe in it. But it does make it a lot easier and credible for the team if you can really show that result in points. Because we could see that upward trend from Hungary on but the points were not coming in so it's good if they can be shown like this to the outside.

Q: What's been the change? What's made the big difference?

MK: Well the big difference has been the package, the aerodynamic package we brought in in Hungary. That was a big step for us and we could see that this was really going into the right direction. It counts for more than 50 per cent of this improvement. We then, of course, got a better understanding of the car, which allowed us to operate it differently, to use different set-ups we hadn't been using before. And then, I think to be fair about it, the change in the tyres was - unlike last year - not against us this time, but we benefited maybe more than others from it. So all of this together, and of course a great performance by the team, the drivers, adds to it.

Q: Thank you for that. To your right, Dr Vijay Mallya, it's Force India's home grand prix and if Sauber have benefited from the tyres, has that been to Force India's detriment, and a difficult period of the season since Silverstone for you?

Vijay MALLYA: Absolutely. The change in the tyres for Silverstone has been more than just detrimental to us. Within the mechanical design of the car it's proving very difficult for us to get optimum tyre performance. We've dedicated all our R&D tools to the 2014 car, so we are handicapped in a sense. But having said that I think we are understanding tyres and the constraints under which we are operating slightly better. We are pleased with today's free practice performance. We've certainly fared better today than we did in Japan or Korea and I think we'll attempt to even improve on this before the last remaining races. The lady on my left has certainly woken us up. We are now wide awake and hopefully we will hang on to our current sixth position in the Constructors' Championship, though she is getting dangerously close. But having said that, the tyres have not been the best for us in the second half of the season but hopefully whatever we suffer this year will be a good investment for next year's car.

Q: You mentioned the lady to your left getting dangerously close. Are you looking nervously over your shoulder or do you think that the performances can improve and you can hold on to that place?

VM: As I said, I was quite pleased with the free practice performance today. It's certainly a step ahead from Japan and Korea, so that gives me confidence we are heading in the right direction. I also realise the constraints under which we are operating, because the window available to us mechanically is quite a short one. But having said that, I think the results will speak for themselves going forward.

Q: Let me turn to Eric next. In terms of results, Lotus continue to go forward, involved in a three-way battle for second place in the Constructors' Championship. What are your targets for the remaining four races of the season?

Eric BOULLIER: Well the target is obviously to chase podium finishes and those kind of fights every race. I think this is the prize to chase, to get the chance to be in the second place, or on the podium of the Constructors' Championship.

Q: Romain Grosjean has scored back-to-back podiums in the last two races for the first time in his career. Can you tell us a bit about his form at the moment? Is he a man that could lead your team for next season?

EB: We are definitely pleased with his performance, since Germany actually. Clearly, something switched on and he is working better. I mean the same tyre story as well, the latest spec of tyres suit a little bit more his driving style than Kimi's one. But yes, we are pleased that he is stepping up. We don't have a policy of driver number one and number two but we needed him obviously to step up, yes.

Q: Enough to suggest to yourself that you're looking for one more driver for next season or not?

EB: Yes, definitely. Normally we compete with two cars!

Q: But Romain definitely in for next year?

EB: Romain has a contract signed anyway for next year. It's just, say, a matter of confirmation. We are being prudent after last obviously. But I think it's on its way to be confirmed soon.

Q: Let me turn to Stefano next, if I can. This morning, for Fernando Alonso, not the best start to the weekend with a gearbox problem. Can you explain a bit more about what happened?

Stefano DOMENICALI: Yeah, it's true. Unfortunately we couldn't do the programme we were expecting to do. We had a problem on a little spring inside the gearbox, so at the end of the day we were able change it and to keep the gearbox for the session.

Q: This was a race gearbox?

SD: No.

Q: So it will be fine for the rest of the weekend?

SD: I hope so.

Q: You'll need it and you'll need a good performance from Fernando and Felipe, because as Eric was touching on, that battle for second place in the Constructors' Championship is mathematically out of your reach this weekend, could go right down to the wire?

SD: For sure, the fight is very strong. We know that around us there is Mercedes and Lotus, who are very competitive and we cannot be complacent. We have second but if we want to beat the opposition we need to perform well with both drivers and with the team of course. It will be for us a very intense end of the season. We know that everyone wants to reach that; we are the same, with the others. It will not be easy because in the last couple of grand prix we saw that Mercedes and Lotus have increased their performance but we will fight up to the end, that's for sure.

Q: ...and on the subject, Ross, of that intense battle between now and the end of the season, is that something you welcome at Mercedes, or causing you a headache you could do without with 2014 and the big regulation changes looming large?

Ross BRAUN: No, I think this business is mostly about managing several programmes and obviously from a development perspective most, or all, of our efforts are in the 2014 programme. Couple of things we still want to learn with this car and in terms of racing, I think what's crucial for these last four races boils down to who races most effectively – because I think the teams are all quite close. We've not raced very well the last few races. I don't think we've scored the points that we could have done or should have done and it's now up to us to make sure we race well in the last four races. Of course if we had something available to make the car go faster, we'd fit it but we don't – and I don't think the others do, so I think between the three teams it's a question now of who races well: the team; the strategy; the drivers and that will determine who finishes second in the championship.

Q: And there's always that little matter of your future in the sport as well – something that might have been discussed on a few occasions in 2013. I think earlier this year you were quoted as saying there will be a soft hand-over to Paddy Lowe. You later denied that. Niki Lauda now says he wants you to stay. Lewis and Nico both want you to stay as well, so what conditions would keep you at Mercedes for the future?

RB: Well there is a transition going on. We're just determining what will be the best timing for that. I want the team to be in the best possible place for next year, so I think when the time is right we'll let everyone know what we're doing. But at the present time that's all I want to say on the matter.

Q: Christian, you're quite a superstitious man and you will take nothing lightly for this weekend but there might be a stack of celebratory tee-shirts around the back of the Red Bull garage and the champagne might be on ice and it could be a double-championship winning celebration for you this weekend. What would it mean to you and to the Red Bull team to make it four double-championships in a row?

Christian HORNER: Well firstly if there are tee-shirts I certainly haven't seen any and they would be wise to keep them away from me. I think that should – should – we achieve a quadruple double-championship it would be an amazing feat for every single member of the team to achieve such results against such illustrious opposition. But those thoughts really aren't in our minds at the moment. Our focus is very much on this event. The championship tables obviously look very healthy but it's never done until it's mathematically impossible for anybody else to win. So the whole team's focus is very much on getting the most out of this weekend. And then the championship tables tend to take care of themselves. Should that happen here or in Abu Dhabi, the feeling of elation... you can't pre-describe because y'know, we haven't got there yet. But certainly everybody in the team is focussed on the here and now.

Q: And whilst the celebrations are I'm sure welcome, a team that has achieved as much as Red Bull in the last few seasons attracts a lot of attention and teams up and down the pitlane and the paddock wanting to take staff from you to try and emulate that success. We've already seen Peter Prodromou moving to McLaren in the future. How difficult is it for you as team principal to keep the nucleus of this championship-winning team together for the future?

CH: Well, we have a very strong team and we've had tremendous continuity in the team for a long time now and y'know we've got great strength in depth and that's one of the key assets of the Red Bull team. Inevitably, from time to time, people will move. That's the nature of the sport, it's something that happens to all the team principals sitting here. Inevitably, when you're winning, there's a lot of attraction on members of your team – but people enjoy working for Red Bull, they enjoy the environment, they enjoy the way we operate. We have a very, very low turnover in personnel. I don't expect any further dramatic changes certainly into next year or the foreseeable future.

Q: (Ubaid Parkar – F1 Pulse) Question is for the back row: how much driver input has been required in the development of the 2014 car, considering the massive change in regulation? Has it been more or less or the same, considering a few seasons?

RB: Well, I think that in common with most teams, we have regular reviews with our drivers and understand with the car we're racing now what's strong, what's weak, what needs to be improved and that gets translated by the engineers into the designs that we have for next year. I think they are a pretty vital link. Obviously these days we have a lot of data, we have a lot of analysis, we have a lot of simulation, a lot of modelling and that also contributes as well, but the driver is still a vital part of that process and we work closely with Nico and Lewis to understand where they see our strengths and weaknesses – perhaps more importantly, our weaknesses and that contributes and that's part of the process in designing and developing a new car.

Q: Is that the same at Maranello, Stefano?

SD: Yes, yes, I can agree with that. For sure, in the next couple of months these kind of things will be more and more closed because also from the team perspective we are trying to learn more and more how the new racing will develop next year, with all the systems, with all the constraints that we have in terms of regulations and of course we need to work together with the drivers because at the end of the day they are the ones that have to perform in the car so for sure, from now onwards will be a crucial time before starting the practice at the end of January, where also, from this side, we need to understand what it is all about because there are a lot of things which will really be brand new.

CH: Well, they're pretty limited in what they can contribute at the moment because it's a voyage of discovery for all of us. It's going to be a very different type of racing next year with the introduction of these power units and new regulations. Obviously we've had to measure the drivers carefully, especially the width of their derrieres so they can fit in to the car. We've got a new driver next year as well, so their contribution is limited at the moment but that will inevitably gear up over the coming weeks and months.

Q: You've not had to stick either in a corset yet just to try and squeeze them down a bit?

CH: If it was down to Adrian they would both need to lose about 15 kilos between now and Melbourne next year but I think that's fairly unlikely.

Q: (Shridhar Potdar – Sakal Media) Dr Mallya, this was voted as the most popular circuit by the F1 drivers in its debut year but next year BIC has no date and in 2015 nobody's certain whether the race will happen or not. What's your opinion about the approach of government?

VM: Well, when I was walking in this morning I met Mr J. P Gaur, the owner of the circuit and the promoter of the race and obviously I asked him about the continuance of the Indian Grand Prix. I must say I was very very happy when he confidently and enthusiastically confirmed that the race will be back in 2015 onwards on a sustainable basis so I was delighted to hear that.

Q: Did he give an indication as to what matters have been resolved, Dr Mallya, as to why it could come back again?

VM: Well, the official version given was that 2014 posed scheduling problems and therefore you couldn't have a race now in October 2013 then in early 2014 so I wouldn't like to comment or contradict that. All I'm interested in, as an Indian, and realising the vast potential that this country offers, and looking at the investment that has gone into creating this rightly voted number one facility, is that I want Formula One to be back in India and therefore I was delighted when the promoter confirmed that Formula One would be back from 2015 onwards.

Q: (Shridhar Potdar – Sakal Media) This question is about Sachin Tendulkar; Force India is paying tribute by carrying the words 'Master Blaster' on the car. What are your thoughts on the greatest sporting hero India has produced, Sachin Tendulkar?

VM: You know that cricket is a religion here in India and Sachin Tendulkar is arguably one of the best cricketers the world has ever produced. We are very very proud of his achievements, and as he signs off from test cricket after his 200 tests, we at Sahara Force India believe that it would only be a befitting tribute if we bid an appropriate farewell to the Master Blaster.

Q: (Bharat Sharma - IndoAsian News Service) Dr Mallya, your thoughts on the absence of an Indian on the drivers' grid; there will be no Indian driver this time around and a thought on Jehan Daruvala as well, he's won the British karting championship and Force India has always predicted him as being the next Indian driver on the F1 grid, so how is that coming along?

VM: I think that ever since I became involved as a team owner in Formula One I have consistently maintained that we will find an Indian driver who eventually will be in Formula One, and that's why we started the Force India Formula One academy. Jehan Daruvala is a product of that academy and I'm absolutely delighted with the fact that he's won the karting championship. Our efforts will continue, the programme will continue but producing a Formula One driver takes time and they have to be good enough and experienced enough to compete with the best in the world so I can only reinforce my commitment, I can't quite predict when it will actually happen but one day hopefully it will.

Q: (Sandeep Sikdar – IndoAsian News Service) Yesterday my colleague questioned Christian Horner regarding the issues and hassles while coming to India. I want to put the same question to Ross Brawn and Stefano. What exactly are the paperwork hassles involved with coming to India?

SD: To be honest we didn't have any problems at all, no issues with any kind of logistics or whatever it is on that respect. Honestly, for us it is important to see when we have such an important country like India hosting this Grand Prix, to make sure that the promotion is done in a way that... we are here and we can have all the fans of India cheering and stay close with the teams because this is something that for sure is an important element of the show.

RB: I think the same as Stefano. We've had a very smooth... the organisation behind it all has been very smooth, there's been no problems at all, we've got everything here that we need to have here. We do enjoy the enthusiasm of the Indian fans and it's a very important country for us to establish Formula One in so we support it completely and hope we're going to be back here soon.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – RacingLines) If I have a look at the seating plan here, the three gentlemen at the back sit on the strategy group by right and those three in the front don't sit on the strategy group by right. I would like to ask the three at the back to please justify the group as it stands whereby you people formulate or do the primary formulation of the Formula One in the future and those three in the front, how you feel about being excluded from the process and in particular Dr Mallya who has invested an enormous amount of money in his own team, how you feel about the fact that as a team owner you are excluded, whereas the three gentlemen at the back are employees and they are included?

CH: You can always rely on Dieter for a straightforward, easy question to answer. I don't suppose I can talk about Dr Mallya's haircut and avoid it that way. The strategic group obviously is a group of teams, the FIA and FOM and it's part of a process that's been introduced. It's a group that previously didn't exist and it's to try and make more headway and a speedier way forwards for forming and creating regulations. All the teams still sit on the Formula One Commission that still very much exists, that has the right to reject or approve regulations to be introduced but the strategic group is made up of teams that have made a firm commitment to the sport for many years to come and it's a way of hopefully effectively introducing changes with the consultation of others because other groups will still exist but it's hopefully an efficient way of introducing changes to the sport in years to come and I think that it is a positive thing. Time will tell if it works or not.

SD: Nothing to add to what Christian said. The thing that I can say is that I'm sure that everyone knew about it and by everyone I assume that because they've signed the agreement, they have accepted this way forward and for sure we have the big responsibility to make sure that all the systems of Formula One will go and take the right way for the future and for sure, we feel this responsibility. We don't want to say 'listen, we don't care about the others' because that's not really the case. So, we take that on board and I'm sure that time will tell if we're doing a good job or not.

RB: Well, I think the responsibilities of that group are the general interests of Formula One. I think it's vital that that group acts and takes decisions which are in the interests of everybody in Formula One. The structure of the group is something that I think was proposed by the FIA and the commercial rights holder and everyone in Formula One signed up to it. I think it's just important that group does take the proper view on all the interests in Formula One.

MK: Well, we in the front row, while asked about how we feel about it and clearly Sauber is not so comfortable with it because we are not on it. We have nothing, as such, against a group that looks at certain matters and can bring up ideas and also maybe say that this is the right way to go ahead but what matters is that all interests should be represented. Teams like Force India or Sauber are part of the competition and we cannot be happy by being excluded by this group because we do feel that we have to ensure that that's where the danger lies that there's a proper representation of interests in there.

EB: We are not a permanent part of this group but we are lucky enough to be part of this group now so sitting between these two chairs, I think there are some positive and some negative points. I can understand being there and not participating. I understand the frustration of the teams not being there. It's true that it was a wish from the FIA and FOM to have another group, let's say, before the F1 Commission to try to maybe go for decisions.

For sure the proposal is to bring it to FI and make it better and then bring these suggestions to the FI Commission where they can be debated. We will see in the future if it works, as Christian said.

VM: When this was first mooted, I definitely did question whether the intention was to restrict decision-making to the six teams, to the exclusion of the smaller teams but when I was assured that that was not going to be the case, that the strategy group was to advise on future strategy concerning Formula One, to be then debated or voted upon at the Formula One Commission where all teams are represented, that obviously was a source of comfort. I've spoken individually to many team principals who are part of the big six as I call them, and all of them have assured me, as indeed Stefano did now, that they will look after the interests of all, which includes the smaller teams and on the basis of that assurance, I actually voted to approve this new structure at the World Motor Sport Council, so so long as things work out the way they are intended to, only time will tell.

Q: (Rachit Thukral - RachFI) Question to Eric Boullier: a lot of people have been discussing about the second seat at Lotus next season. Why is your test driver, Davide Valsecchi, not on that list of drivers?

EB: It's not true actually, Davide is on the list but to bring to the grid next year a driver with no experience is a huge step for them - I've done it twice with them, first with Petrov and then with a semi-rookie Grosjean and I think I've had enough to be honest with you. Davide is on the list because we consider him as a good driver, as a GP2 champion but it's true that if you favour a scenario for next year it will be a driver with experience. If we cannot find any driver with experience, fitting the strategy of the team, obviously we will go for a rookie driver and then Davide is obviously on the top of the list. It looks harsh, I'm sorry but it's true.

Q: How near are you to filling that second seat now, Eric?

EB: Hopefully a few days.

Q: (Amanpreet Singh- PTI) Dr Mallya, one of your drivers said that we have probably sacrificed fifth position this season, to be at least fifth next year. How do you see this season for your team considering that you may lose even the sixth spot now?

VM: Well, I wouldn't be as pessimistic as you sound. Yes, there was a time earlier this season when we were in fifth position ahead of McLaren. If we perform well over the next four races there's no reason why we can't regain fifth but as I said earlier, the lady on my left (MK) has certainly given us a wake-up call and so we will do everything we can to stay in sixth but having said that, yes, we've dedicated our resources to the development of the 2014 car.

Q: (Kate Walker - GP Week) Monisha, at one of the recent press conferences, maybe Singapore, you spoke about the way in which Formula One teams have often shot themselves in the foot when it comes to looking after their own self interests rather than the collective interest. Given that history often tends to repeat itself, how much faith do you have in the larger teams looking after the smaller teams' interests in the strategy commission?

MK: Well, like Vijay actually said earlier, you have to have faith in the teams you've known for a long while and you work together with and I think it's no secret to anyone in Formula One that we've had a very successful partnership for many years with Ferrari and they have said a lot of things where maybe we as a small team in the partnership benefited more than others in partnership. As an example, if you look at KERS, what we had decided Ferrari exactly said with us as towards the customer which we were. So I think you have to come in here with a certain amount of trust but at the end of the day we are competitive, but we are all in this together so that's the perspective we take, that there will always be things where bigger teams have a different view to smaller ones but I'm confident that eventually decisions will be taken which have to be good for the sport because we are part of the sport, and in my view, Formula One needs more constructors than just the big teams.

Q: (Shridhar Potdar - Sakal Media) One for everyone: you know previously there was a third title - apart from drivers and constructors - counting for the World Championship. Nowadays the tyre championship has been stopped and everybody knows the problems that Pirelli have created this season. Michelin has showed willingness to come back and make F1 tyres. Do you think that a three way title race would make F1 more interesting and do you support the need for a tyre constructors title?

RB: They were pretty exciting times but hugely expensive in terms of track development. I remember at the time when I was at Ferrari we had a car testing almost continuously doing tyre work for the manufacturer and in our case, we had Bridgestone fairly well devoted to our programme. It can be exciting but it's a huge investment for a tyre company, huge investment for the teams. I don't think the climate at the moment is right for there to be a tyre war and that's what's evolved in a lot of top class formulae. The cost of a tyre war is not sustainable. It's happened in MotoGP, it's happened in Formula One and however exciting it is, it's very very costly in what are quite tough times at the moment.

CH: You couldn't probably have more conflicting tyres than have come to this race but I think, as Ross says, to reintroduce a tyre war would not only be massively expensive you would also end up with two classes of racing because there are then the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and what we have at the moment with a sole tyre supplier is that everybody has the same tyre, everybody has the same compound, everybody has the same opportunity. The testing obviously is heavily restricted now as well. So as an independent team, it offers a far more level playing field and obviously the challenges that all of the teams face now are the intricacies of the Pirelli tyres and how they perform from circuit to circuit and compound to compound, which is a different engineering challenge in itself and certainly will create some interesting strategies no doubt this weekend.

Q: (Ajit Devadason - Syfi.com) To all team principals: a few engine manufacturers have previewed the engines of 2014 on the net and social media and it hasn't been accepted well by most Formula One fans in discussion forums. Do you agree or disagree that engine sound is a strong USP of Formula One, especially when you're going into new markets?

SD: Well, for sure, the element of the engine sound is very important, no doubt about it, but on the other side we need to say that in the last couple of years we've moved from V12 that was a fantastic engine for Ferrari with fantastic high revs, high frequency, to V10, then to V8. Now we're going to be V6 with turbo and then it's just a matter of fine tuning the noise - I mean the sound, apologies for the wrong word - and then of course that is vital for the show, above all for the people who are coming to the track, because unfortunately you don't feel it too much on television.

Q: How do the new V6s sound to you, Eric?

EB: Different, it's true. I remember the V12 as well, the sound of music, but it's part of the necessity to move ahead and bring new technology and to follow the technology that you use in your car every day, so I think it's still going to be a pretty exciting sport.

Q: Have you had a listen to the new V6s yet, Monisha?

MK: I did actually, a while ago, when I visited our engine supplier so considering what Stefano said I have full trust that Ferrari will also sort out that issue.

VM: All I can say is that I have participated in many meetings where Bernie (Ecclestone) has absolutely insisted that there can be no compromise on noise, so I guess there will be no compromise on noise - excuse me Stefano, music, not noise.

Q: To use a Spinal Tap reference, Ross, can we turn the noise up to eleven?

RB: Yes. I think we actually need to see the cars on the circuit because I don't think a recording of a dyno cycle is actually that representative. If you listen to a V8 on the dyno it sounds nothing like it does in the car. I think we should all wait and see. It is what we have and we have to get behind it and it's an exciting new period with these power trains. I think we needed to make a transition at some stage, we're making it now, there's no going back and I think it will be exciting for the fans but we'll see how it sounds when we get out on the circuit. I remember the early turbo days and they seemed pretty exciting to me and we've had a whole range of different engines since then. I don't think - to be honest - that they're been more or less exciting than each other. Just different.

CH: Well, I've heard it on the internet. That's as much as I've heard. Noise of a Formula One car is part of the DNA of Formula One. When people come to a Grand Prix for the first time, the thing that really stands out more than anything is the noise. Noise translates into speed, into excitement and so on, and I think it's absolutely crucial that we don't lose that element. We have to reserve judgement until we hear the cars next year: hopefully, whilst it will be a different noise, it will be an exciting noise that conveys what the sport is all about. Only time will tell.

Q: (Will Buxton - NBC Sports) One to you all if I may. To pick up on Dieter's point earlier about the Strategy Group, the elephant in the room right now is that under cost saving initiatives, customer cars appear to be something that may be considered moving into the future. To the three gentlemen in the back, are customer cars something that you would like to push for moving into the future? And to the three guests on the front of the panel, are customer cars something ever something you would consider taking on? And furthermore to the point Vijay made about trust in the teams that are on the panel, can you ever truly trust the teams on the panel give that by your very nature you are competing entities?

SD: I just can say that we had the first meeting of the Strategy Group on Monday and of course this status was on the table and we will discuss it at the appropriate level. No decision or action has been taken. It is a topic related to the cost of Formula One, so I cannot add more than that at the moment.

CH: It's an interesting debate, really, because if you look at costs and the cost drivers in Formula One, the necessity to have four or five hundred people in order to even compete is, in all reality, too high. Now if you're just looking at it from a pure cost point of view, the most logical way to take out a huge amount of cost would be to sell a car or a year-old car in its entirety. Now whether that goes against the grain of what a constructor should be and is in current Formula One is a separate debate. But if you are absolutely transfixed on saving costs, it is, without a shadow of a doubt the most effective way to reduce costs. Whether it's the right thing to do is obviously another questions. Inevitably there is going to be a lot of debate about it and it's something that, as a sport, we need to be open-minded to.

RB: I don't think we, as a team, are particularly enamoured with the idea of customer cars. I think we are more keen on working towards reducing the base cost of the cars for all teams. And perhaps finding ways of sharing parts that are non-performance differentiators. I know the one that gets classically mentioned is the pedal system and a lot of the parts of the car that are not performance differentiators between the competitors but everybody makes their own pedals and makes their own steering racks, because we have to. I think there is some progress that can be made in those areas without damaging the DNA of the sport at all. We should work on that. I think one point I would make and I think Vijay made it, is the security of the F1 Commission, because whatever the Strategy Group decides, if the F1 Commission rejects it, then it doesn't go any further, it has to go back into the Strategy Group to try to improve the proposal. In theory, there is no way that an unpopular or unsupported idea from the Strategy Group could make it into the regulations unless the F1 Commission was happy with it.

Q: Vijay, you've already touched on having full faith in the Strategy Working Group, do you have trust over the issue of customer cars as well?

VM: As far as Sahara Force India is concerned we are completely opposed to the even the concept of customers cars. Let's just go back to the days when FOTA functioned as a comprehensive, cohesive unit. One of the key elements of the FOTA discussions was how to reduce the costs in Formula One for everybody. But then some of the big teams refused to reduce their costs, and as a result of which the whole resource restriction element went out of the window. Now to try to address lowering of costs through a radical customer car concept is ridiculous in my view. What happens to the smaller teams that have factories, that employ hundreds of people and who are effectively running companies. You can't just discard everything and just buy a one-year old car from an established team and go motor racing. I think that affects the total DNA of Formula One from the day it was started.

MK: I absolutely agree with that. Sauber's been in motorsport now for more than 40 years and our core business is making race cars in different series, so we are absolutely against this concept of a customer car because we're ruining our own business here. I think there are other ways to reduce costs, one way maybe is setting certain financial limits, the other one is also to look at the regulations. An effective way could be through this group and then the commission that you have stability and therefore 'seeability' and that you no longer have to do investment in one season where you exactly know that the next season that this device or whatever is going to be forbidden again. So there are many ways to get hold of the costs and reduce them, which is very important for Formula One. But when you introduce these kind of measures you're changing so much. This will not lead to any cost reduction because you might have four teams in there that are capable of putting in that much money, but at some point in time - they are all in their to win - when they don't do that and maybe just end up with a few points they leave the sport as well. So it's a very dangerous route to go down.

Q: Final word to Eric.

EB: I think that customer cars are against the DNA of Formula One personally. But I think obviously there is a cost restriction that needs to be in place in Formula One. We all agree with this. Actually even the teams on the back row agree there us some cost saving to be done. It's maybe as Vijay said a wake-up call. If we just think about the concept of customer cars we maybe will sit down all together and agree on a cost saving, which is obviously a budget cap or something else, which is based on the RRA or the old RRA, because at the end we know you cannot cut solely the costs just by switching off the wind tunnel or something else in the company. We need to make it in a way where there is no intrusive manner into any team developments, which obviously will suit some of us here. Also another way is to leave people the choice what they want to do to save costs but we have to have some rules in place. At the end if we don't do this it's going to be more and more difficult obviously to survive. So if you want to avoid the customer car... we can maybe run three cars in the near future to keep a decent grid but still it's more money and it's against cost saving, so we need to think and think cleverly about it.

F1 India Blog - Friday report

It was an unusual Friday morning in India, with Red Bull securing the top two slots on the timesheets at a time when the team traditionally mask their pace. The gap between Sebastian Vettel and third-placed Nico Rosberg was a relatively modest two-tenths, but the Red Bulls were still the cars to beat.

As tends to be the case in F1, much of the session was given over to set up work and installation laps, with the real running only getting underway around the half-way mark. For Fernando Alonso, however, there was very little running to be done. The Spanish racer's morning was cut short after six laps thanks to a gearbox failure that saw Alonso limp back to the pits unable to shift. Given the circumstances, the Ferrari driver finished a respectable 1.5s off the leaders' pace, and half a second behind teammate Felipe Massa.

Five minutes before the chequered flag fell, James Calado – standing in for an ill Paul di Resta in what most see as an audition for a race drive with the team next year – span his Force India before returning to the track, ending the morning in P18, seven-tenths slower than Adrian Sutil.

The afternoon brought more of the familiar, with Vettel and teammate Mark Webber securing the first two slots on the timesheets. Vettel – who is the undoubted master of the Buddh International Circuit, having led every lap of both grands prix here – was three-tenths faster than the competition. But while that might imply yet another Vettel walkover on Sunday afternoon, appearances can be deceiving.

FP2 in India was characterised by very high levels of tyre degradation on the soft compound, with Red Bull appearing to suffer more than most on their longer runs. Lotus and Ferrari both looked to be in much better shape on the options than the championship leaders, and while any sort of upset in the drivers' standings is incredibly unlikely, the Indian Grand Prix offers the potential of some excitement as varying tyre strategies play out on track.

After missing out on much of the morning's running, Alonso ended FP2 in a creditable fifth place. If the Ferrari driver is able to maintain that position in qualifying, the car's strengths over a long run should put the Asturian in a decent fighting position come Sunday.

While the session was fairly drama-free, there was one hair-raising moment from Pastor Maldonado, who suffered another flying wheel nut as he was lapping post-tyre change. Unlike Suzuka, however, on this occasion all four wheels managed to remain attached to the Williams – the nut failed, but the wheel retention system did not.

F1 times (unofficial)

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m26.683s [24 laps]
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m26.871s [17 laps]
3. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m26.899s [23 laps]
4. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m26.990 [20 laps]
5. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m27.227s [21 laps]
6. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m27.335s [23 laps]
7. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m27.416 [23 laps]
8. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m27.692s [21 laps]
9. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m27.770s [19 laps]
10. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m27.800s [23 laps]
11. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m28.03s5 [25 laps]
12. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m28.214s [6 laps]
13. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m28.336s [18 laps]
14. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m28.342s [21 laps]
15. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m28.468s [20 laps]
16. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m28.538 [18 laps]
17. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m28.730s [18 laps]
18. James Calado (Force India) 1m29.197s [22 laps]
19. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m29.413s [24 laps]
20. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m29.560s [20 laps]
21. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m30.026s [23 laps]
22. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m30.471s [17 laps]

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m25.722s [35 laps]
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m26.011s [38 laps]
3. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m26.220s [36 laps]
4. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m26.399s [36 laps]
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m26.430s [39 laps]
6. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m26.582s [40 laps]
7. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m26.601s [41 laps]
8. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m26.632s [32 laps]
9. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m26.857s [40 laps]
10. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m26.972s [39 laps]
11. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m27.304s [17 laps]
12. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m27.375s [36 laps]
13. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m27.429s [31 laps]
14. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m27.491s [40 laps]
15. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m27.608s [38 laps]
16. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m27.720s [23 laps]
17. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m27.949s [34 laps]
18. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m28.431s [30 laps]
19. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m28.692s [39 laps]
20. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m28.799s [32 laps]

21. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m29.366s [37 laps]

22. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m30.164s [27 laps]

F1 India Blog - Thursday press conference

While the majority of the F1 circus believes will be this final visit to India's Buddh International Circuit, the drivers at the Thursday press conference spoke of their hopes to return to one of the calendar's fastest tracks.

Present were Max Chilton (Marussia), Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus), Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso), Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), Giedo van der Garde (Caterham), and Mark Webber (Red Bull).

Q: I'm going to start with a question for Nico, Mark and Kimi, as, with all due respect to our back row, I think you three gentlemen are best placed to challenge Sebastian Vettel for victory this weekend. He's won the last five races, he's won both Indian Grand Prix from pole position and he's led every lap as well. Simple question Nico: how do you beat a man in such form?

Nico ROSBERG: Well, I'm here to do that, that's for sure and the last couple of races have not really gone to plan, a lot of bad luck also. But, I have a very good car at the moment. I think the Red Bull is a bit quicker than us but you never know, you know. If we really get everything right on a weekend like here in India then it's possible to beat Mark and Sebastian in that car. That's what I'm here to do, so I'll give it everything and we'll see.

Q: What about you Kimi? What have you got up your sleeve?

Kimi RAIKKONEN: I think I have to do a bit better in qualifying. That would help a lot. That would give ourselves a good chance then to try to beat them. It's not just only them though, so we'll see what happens here.

Q: It's tricky Mark, you were on pole in Japan, it didn't quite work out in the race, but what's the secret? Can Sebastian be beaten?

Mark WEBBER: He's on a phenomenal run obviously and as you said his stats here in the last few years he's been pretty strong. It needs a perfect weekend – pole, perfect race, perfect strategy, perfect everything to obviously put him off the top step, so that's got to be the plan.

Q: I wish you all perfection this weekend. Back to you in a few moments. Max, if I can turn to you next. Japan, your fastest qualifying lap there beat both Caterhams and your team-mate Jules Bianchi. Was that your lap of the season?

Max CHILTON: It was one of them. Obviously, it was a bit of a standout performance because we managed to out-qualify both Caterhams and Jules, but I've had good laps in the year and I've been very happy with certain laps but in Japan we just managed to get things right. It was a bit of a manic last lap and I managed to just get enough space and just got the most out of the car and the car performed well. As Nico said earlier, if you get everything right then you get good performances.

Q: I'll ask Giedo about the perspective from the Caterham side of things but Marussia are still hanging on to 10th place in the Constructors' Championship with four races to go. It's vitally important, financially, for a team to finish in that 10th spot not 11th, so how are things? Nervy, tense, determined, excited?

MC: It's definitely tense but I believe that when you're passionate and working on the best result possible, you get the best out of yourself and the team. At the moment we're doing that. It's definitely going to be tight but we've got 10th at the moment and we're hoping to keep it that way until the end of the season.

Q: What about from the Caterham side, Giedo? Anything can happen I'm sure in the last four races but is there extra pressure given that you're not the team in 10th at the moment?

Giedo VAN DER GARDE: Yeah, a little bit. Of course for us it's very important to get the 10th place back. I think the last few races we've seen that we've always been in front in the race compared with Marussia, so the one thing we need is a little luck and the only thing we can do is maximise ourselves, maximise the car, maximise the team and the rest is luck.

Q: Well, good luck with the luck if it comes your way. Daniel, it's been a few weeks since you were announced as a Red Bull driver for next year and you've had time to come to terms with that announcement. How has life changed? Has the attention grown race by race?

Daniel RICCIARDO: No, not really. I think around the time of the announcement it was pretty hectic with the media and everything but it's nicely calmed down now. It's good. I'm sure once I hop in the car next year it will probably rise again but it's been a quiet few weeks. I had a bit of time to myself, which is good.

Q: Have you started to focus on what you need to do next year against a man who is likely to be a four-time world champion, or is the focus still on this season? How do you cope with that?

DR: Definitely still my main focus is on this year. Obviously aware of the competition I'll be up against next year and slowly employing a few things to help me out for January and to settle in with the team but yeah, still very much focussed on the rest of the year with Toro Rosso. I guess once the season's over after Brazil I'll make the conversion, start getting in the simulator and trying to figure out what makes Seb so quick and try to learn quickly.

Q: Nico, this morning, tell us about your bus journey into the track. Kind of a special bus ride with some under-privileged children, stepping out of the Formula One bubble for a moment.

NR: Yeah, it's nice. I'm involved in the Laureas Sport for Good programme, so this morning I took a bus journey to the track with a whole bunch of children from the local community. In the end just trying to be a little bit of an inspiration to them, to show how good sport is for personal development really, to learn about discipline and to learn to be with people and respect other people and things like that. Also, to show them the importance of education. That was the aim – but they also had a great time. We had a good time, we played a bit of soccer together, and showed them the racing car. So, that's good, yeah, a very nice programme.

Q: Brings you down to Earth a little bit, I suppose?

NR: Yeah.

Q: Kimi, this is your second year coming to race in India. Do you notice the popularity that you have? Does it spur you on when you get to the track? Does it give you extra motivation?

KR: I think it's very nice to have it but I mean I've only really seen the hotel this morning, from the airport to the hotel, and the circuit. So, especially today there were not many people when we came here – so I feel it less than at many other places but I'm happy that there are fans here. This circuit is nice and hopefully we can have a good weekend for all of them.

Q: When you come to what is still a relatively new venue, would you like to take more time out to see a bit of India?

KR: Yeah – but I think it'd be a little nicer if you come when it's not a race weekend, so when you have proper time and not during the weekend. But for sure I'm sure there's a lot of nice places to go and see.

Q: And for Mark, your last time in India in Formula One, four races to go now. Do you relax more as the final race approaches or does the desire to get that one more win – at least – intensify race by race?

MW: My mentality hasn't really changed, mate, from the start of the year. Still enjoying driving the car to a degree and no exception to that. The last grand prix, obviously the best racing track in the world in Suzuka – unfortunately they can't design them like that any more – but it's a beautiful circuit. This is not bad and yeah, some good tracks to look forward to. That's the bit that I still enjoy – to a degree. And... yeah, I think the last four is not really changing how I go about it. It would be nice to get a top result before the year's out but...yeah... it'll be four weeks and that's it.

Q: Would it change your view of Formula One and how you remember the sport if you didn't get one more win?

MW: No, wouldn't change it.

Q: Still look back fondly?

MW: yeah, of course. I would never have thought when I left Australia the results and the career that I've had. So, another win or so, of course it would be nice but it's not going to change my retirement too much.

Q: (Abhishek Takle – Richland Fl) Mark, following the last race, you said you were surprised at the switch in strategy from a two stop to a three stopper. Having gone over all of the data, do you still feel the two stop was quicker, or are you satisfied with the strategy switch?

MW: I haven't gone over any data whatsoever from the last race. I still stand by what I said at the time but obviously a bit surprised that we elected to do that. Having a three stop, you've got to pass two cars to win the race instead of maybe sticking to a two where we just focused on trying to beat Romain. What I said at the time is still pretty accurate today.

Q: (Sandeep Sikdar – IndoAsian News Service) Nico, Mark and Kimi, we're quite uncertain about the future of Formula One here in India. I wanted to know what exactly is the feeling in the paddock regarding visiting India, coming to India for the Grand Prix?

NR: The track is fantastic to drive, they've done a really good job with that. There's a growing fan base and a lot of fans in India. It's great to be here and it's a pity that there's no Indian Grand Prix next year and I hope that maybe some time in the future we can come back again.

MW: Yeah, Nico's right. Obviously the fan base is certainly growing very very fast. I know cricket is the number one sport here by a long way but they've certainly shown some incredible enthusiasm to try and understand and get some... attract some interest in the sport. They're proud to have a very very high profile sport which Formula One is and the track layout is sensational. The enthusiasm.. they're doing what they can to hold a very nice event here but it doesn't seem to have been enough for next year. I hope that we can come back in the future.

Q: (Bharat Sharma – IndoAsian News Service) For the front row, if you talk about the track, most drivers have praised the track, they like the layout but as far as overtaking is concerned, there's only the first sector which has a real chance of overtaking, so how do you see the track in terms of overtaking opportunities?

MW: That's generally the case at a lot of circuits actually. There's not any more than one or two chances these days. The second and third sector are quite quick, it's not easy to get a move done there so yeah, most of the focus is on the first sector and the beginning of the sector. But that's not against the circuit, that's how a lot of tracks are and we like the rest of the rhythm and the layout because it's quite challenging, it's quite quick, a little bit of undulation so there's a lot of good qualities inside this circuit. As you said, the racing maybe hasn't been super exciting over the last few years, maybe it's not going to be the same on Sunday but time will tell.

Q: Is that right, Kimi, there's really only the first sector where you can get past?

KR: In a normal situation, yes, but on some of the circuits there's not even one place. You might get a chance in some other places – it depends – but it's a good race circuit. Last year I got stuck behind (another car) but that can happen anywhere.

Q: It rather drives the set-up, Nico, doesn't it? It's a compromise track anyway, but you need to give yourself that chance of getting some overtaking done?

NR: Yeah, but it's OK, the track has what it needs to be able to overtake well and for there to be exciting races. They've extended the DRS zone a bit to try and make it easier to overtake – see how that goes, should be in the right direction.

Q: (Ajay Devadason – Sify.com) Mark, is it a cause for concern that the series that you're moving to recently had a fatality in their event?

MW: At Le Mans? Look, we know motor racing can be dangerous. It was very very tragic, obviously, that they had a fatality this year and they've certainly learned from that accident, I believe. Every time we step into a racing car there's obviously risk; I accept those risks as we all do and they are always going to try and find ways to improve motor sport to a degree which is finding the levels of safety and risk-taking to the right levels. I'm certainly very comfortable with my decision, what I'm doing in the future and looking forward to it.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Kimi, in the last few races, Lotus seem to have been the second team after Red Bull. Do you think that you have the chance to try to grab second place in the Constructors' championship in the last four races and that this could be a place to win?

KR: That's the aim for us but it's hard to say if it's going to happen. It seems that the last races have been strong for our team but I have to qualify better, to put myself up there and maybe try to win some races but it will not be easy.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Max and Giedo, you are the only two men here whose futures aren't yet set for next year, or not so that we know about. Could you both please rate your chances of staying both within Formula One next year and with wearing the same uniforms?

VDG: Of course I hope to stay in (FI) next year but the management is very busy, talking to some teams, also Caterham. At the moment, they told me to be focused for the last four races and I'm doing that, but hopefully we will have some news soon, but it's still far away.

MC: Yeah, I think my chances are looking good. Nothing's set in stone yet. I've learned in GP2 how much continuity can help. I'd love to stay with Marussia again because you always get more out of yourself when you know the team, it's a natural progression. We have been contacted by other teams but at the moment we know where we want to be and we're not far away from it now.

Q: Do you two both feel you've met your targets and your goals for this year?

VDG: Yeah, I think so. At the beginning, I struggled a little bit, then in the middle of the season everything fell into place and since then I've good speed, still have to improve the qualifying a little bit but race pace has been very good.

MC: Yeah, I think to be honest it took me a little bit longer than I was expecting to kind of get up to speed. I think it's hard without the testing, but from the August break, when you have a bit of time to go through everything with the team, we had a really good sit down and picked on key areas where you can really enhance your performance and since then, I think I've proved why I deserve to be here and I'm hoping to keep that on until the end of the year.

Q: (Vinayak Pande – AutoX) Kimi, given the way Lotus is performing towards the end of this season and how Fernando has been struggling recently, how do you feel about your decision going to Ferrari next year?

KR: Good, otherwise I wouldn't have made the decision if I didn't think it was right for myself. It's so competitive... and the rules, nobody really knows how it's going to work out next year.

Q: (Sandeep Sikdar – IndoAsian News Service) Nico and Mark, Pirelli have brought different tyre compounds this year unlike the last two years, how do you think they will affect the lap times?

NR: I'm not sure. The cars are also so much quicker this year. It's been very variable throughout the season. You've never been able to predict how we're going to go, in terms of lap times from one track to another. Sometimes we're faster, sometimes the same, so it changes all the time and I don't know yet for this weekend.

MW: Yeah, very difficult to predict how the tyres will behave. We know how sensitive they are. Even when we had the slight change of construction during the year we see some teams coming forward, some teams going back, some drivers being happy, some drivers less happy. The tyres are super super sensitive. I think we will find out here whether it's... last year was quite easy on the tyres, we had a pretty comfortable one stop. Whether that's possible again, I'm not sure. We will find out on Friday with the long runs, maybe.

Q: (Chetan Narula - Planet F1) Mark, your teammate is going to be a consecutive four time World Champion and obviously you've had your differences with him, you're not the best of friends but as his teammate, and somebody who's worked with him closely for quite a few years now, can you shed some light on Sebastian Vettel, the racer and the four time World Cham... or soon to be four time World Champion?

MW: Yeah, obviously he's had an incredible run. Some of the championships have been tight, some less tight. Obviously '11 and this year have been pretty much a non-event but 2010 and 2012 were up to the last race. I think he's certainly done an incredible job. I think he's been very strong on the Pirellis; obviously (on) the Bridgestones was probably a little bit tighter but on Pirellis he's certainly been very strong and no real weaknesses on those tyres so it's been strong for him. Just super consistent and that's what's made him strong, obviously, and also getting the most out of the package. Obviously the car's been quick and he's capitalised on a lot of venues. He's won with a dominant car but also he's won with a car which some races is probably not... certainly over those four years to win races he probably shouldn't have won races. That's also been a quality of his.

Q: (Unnatee Gidithuri - Auto India Magazine) To you all, what are all of your opinions on the Indian Formula One fans?

DR: I think that as the boys touched on earlier, it's growing each year we come here, there seems to be getting more and more interest. It's good, there are a lot of seats to fill here. Unfortunately they are not always full but they are filling up each year so that's good. I don't think a sport can grow overnight and it does take time. It's definitely gone in the right direction.

MC: It's obviously got huge possibilities. I think there's over a billion that live in India and that, from my calculations, is a seventh of the world, so it's probably got one of the biggest potential markets anywhere in the world, so it's a shame we're not back here next year but there's a lot of other countries that want a Grand Prix as well. It is a bit of a shame.

VDG: I think it's good to be back here. It is a special place, especially when you see cows on the street, dogs! It's different to Europe and I have to say I quite like it. It's good to see different environments, the track is very nice. Of course, it's my second time here. Last year I saw some friends in the grandstand and hopefully this year there are going to be more.

Q: I think you tweeted a photo of a cow in the road, Nico.

NR: We had a bit of a close call yesterday because the cow decided it was going to cross the motorway just in front of us but we managed to keep out of its way, let it cross over nicely and then we could continue.

Q: Mark, Kimi's touched on his love of India, what about yourself?

MW: Yeah, you can see the enthusiasm. Again, I don't want to talk about the cricket too much but you see how much they love their sport with the cricket, they are super passionate about it and the same here, they want to understand, they're very willing to understand the sport as quick as they can. It's been a very quick snapshot for them, in terms of coming to the circuit and seeing the cars and maybe having the drivers as heroes for them. What's also been interesting for me in such a short period of time is also the journalists here and the people are making such a good effort. Their questions, even away from the track, and different things... they're quite knowledgeable on our sport, they want to understand which is a big advancement on some of the other fresh countries that we go to which are super super naive. A lot of good positives about it, so it's a shame it's not here again.

Q: Did you watch the one day yesterday?

MW: It was washed out, wasn't it? Not lucky for us: 296 or 293.

Q: (Rachit Thukral – RachF1) Daniel Ricciardo, two years ago you were racing for HRT. At that time, could you imagine that you could be racing for Red Bull one day?

DR: Seemed like a fair way away at the time but I think that going back years before that, since I got Red Bull supporting me and knowing what opportunities I had with them, then I think anything was possible. A lot of it was up to me. With HRT, I knew there was a bit of a road to travel on, but yeah, it's come along quite quickly, obviously to my delight and as I've said, I can't wait but if you would have said, back in 2011, that I would be in a Red Bull seat in 2014 then I would have smiled and said 'beauty.' One other thing I found out, just touching on the cricket, apparently myself and Mark don't come from Australia. We come from Ricky Ponting country! That's what they all say. Nice.

Q: (Vinayak Pande - AutoX) Mark, it's your last season in F1. Do you think the sport is in good shape going into the future with the new regulations? Do you think that's a good direction for F1 to be taking, or are you going to a technologically more sound series, in terms of sports car racing?

MW: Again, pretty good question. To be fair, I think Formula One needed a bit of a facelift in terms of technology, which they're going to get next year. Maybe it's not what we all want in terms of all the electric stuff and those type of things but that's the way all the manufacturing and all those types of things are going in terms of car production, so Formula One should be the benchmark in terms of rolling that stuff out. How it's going to go in terms of a spectacle only time will tell. I'm sure it's going to be good. The main thing with Formula One is the drivers, the drivers are the important thing. You can have what cars you want but if you've still got the best drivers out there then that's the most important thing. But in terms of sports cars and Formula One, obviously the technology is going to be very similar. Sports cars now are super technical as well as Formula One will be next year. As long as the smaller teams can have a chance, I think that whenever you make a big regulation change like we are going to do next year, the midfield and the smaller teams are really going to be stretched, so I think that the gap between Mercedes, Red Bull, Ferrari, McLaren maybe is probably going to be bigger.
