

Yeah, so I didn't get to go to India. Not that I'm bitter or anything. Well, maybe a little. I handed in a three-day priority visa application and was told I'd be able to collect my visa on Friday or Monday. On Thursday evening, at 6.30pm, I got an email asking me to supply a letter from my employer. I arranged one first thing on Friday morning, but was told that because it hadn't been there at 9am, the letter wouldn't be seen until Monday, when the three-day process would start again from scratch. Thanks to a public holiday that saw the consulate closed for a day, the earliest I'd be able to collect my passport was Friday morning, shortly before FP2. That didn't leave much time to book a flight and make it to India, so I covered this one from home.

F1 Sofa Blog – Getting to know the Buddh International Circuit

It's hard to know what to say about a circuit no one's raced on, and concerning which the teams have only simulator data.

But that is the challenge the F1 circus faces this week, as it arrives in Greater Noida for the fifth new circuit to grace the calendar in the past four years.

"The first time you run on a new circuit is a strange experience because you're piecing together an incredibly diverse and vivid set of data in your mind," McLaren driver Jenson Button said. "That's quite an intense experience.

"You're quickly gathering everything together – constantly assessing the grip-level, watching for unexpected bumps, checking the kerb-height, run-off areas, pitlane entry and exit, gradient. And that all happens at about 170mph!"

Ordinarily, teams would arrive at a grand prix armed with reams of data to make the set-up work easier. And while some data exists for the Buddh International Circuit, it is based on predictions, simulations, and modelling. But even the simulated data comes in useful, as Renault's James Allison explains.

"There are lots of tasks that can be well simulated prior to arriving at a brand new circuit," he said. "Conventional lap simulation can give us a good idea of items such as: optimal gear ratio selection, which rear wing to fit, what springs and ride heights to fit, fuel consumption, cooling levels, DRS effectiveness etc.

"Although much preparatory work has been done, there will remain several areas where the team can only really react once we start running in anger. For example: grip level of the tarmac, effect of track bumpiness on the optimal suspension setup, tyre degradation etc. To give you an example, a three percent variation in the asphalt grip would lead to one second difference on the lap time."

Grip is something that all of the technical directors are concerned by in the run-up to the race, as varying levels of grip will affect the eventual set-up chosen for Sunday's race.

"At a brand new track we expect that things like the evolution of grip will be quite significant over the weekend," Sauber technical director James Key said. "This will influence the balance of the car, and you will possibly have to change the downforce level."

The Buddh International Circuit is going to be one of the fastest on the calendar, with cars predicted to lap around 235kph for an estimated lap time around 1m27s. Compounding the challenges offered by the twisting final sector will be a series of elevation changes throughout the lap. In the first three corners, drivers will climb fourteen metres.

But in terms of circuit characteristics, Allison is not expecting any aerodynamic surprises.

"The track is a conventional downforce circuit with a decent array of cornering speeds and a sensible length main straight," the Renault man said. "At one level all tracks are sort of the same, with similar straights and corners. However, the real character of a track only really unfolds once you start to run on it. This track looks like it offers a range of challenges to the drivers and I am sure it will prove to be popular."

Button agreed with Allison's assessment, saying that the track layout provided a few points of particular interest.

"The track itself has quite a nice mix of corners – the start of the lap is pretty stop-start, there are a couple of long straights mixed with tight hairpins, but it's the end of the lap that's more interesting: there are some pretty high-speed changes of direction through the esses and some gradient change," the McLaren driver said.

"One of the things that looks really interesting is the double-apex banked corner at the back of the circuit – that's pretty unusual. It's sort of a mix between Turn 13 at China and Korea's Turn 11."

HRT also pointed to the gradient changes in their preview of the race: "The circuit is up and down with eight percent downhill slopes and ten percent inclines adding to the challenge of the track. There are three high speed straights and a number of slow-speed turns meaning that getting the set-up right won't be an easy task."

While Sauber's James Key was positive about the circuit layout, he warned that the DRS might not be as effective as it has been at some races thus far.

"The track itself looks pretty interesting," he said, "as it has one long straight and a fairly high downforce requirement in some of the winding bits at the back. The track is not unlike other new circuits. There seem to be some overtaking opportunities, but the drivers need to learn where that works and how effective the DRS is."

As this is the maiden outing of the Indian Grand Prix, there are no lap records, past winners, or the like.

A lap of the Buddh International Circuit measures 5.137 kilometres; the 60-lap race runs clockwise to a total of 308.220kms.

F1 Sofa Blog – Thursday press conference in India

It's an all-new circuit with teething problems aplenty, as drivers and media discovered when a power cut – the fourth of the afternoon – struck the drivers' press conference at India's Buddh International Circuit.

Present were Rubens Barrichello (Williams), Narain Karthikeyan (HRT), Felipe Massa (Ferrari), Michael Schumacher (Mercedes), Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus), and Adrian Sutil (Force India).

Q: First of all your impressions of India. Adrian, I know you have been here a few times and you've been here probably a whole week now.

Adrian SUTIL: Yes, so I know this country. Quite good job on the circuit really. I went around the circuit this morning and it all looked finished. Looks very interesting lay-out wise. It was still very dusty I have to say, quite dirty, so we will have to see how it is for tomorrow morning. But hopefully it is going to be a great event. For us it is very special and now since a few years we are doing better and better so India knows about our team here and now I think it is time to introduce Formula 1 here in India. Great weekend for us, many people watching us, and I look forward to it. Rubens BARRICHELLO: I have also felt that the track is quite good. They have done a super job in a short period of time. We are going to go out tomorrow but like any new circuit there should be some dirt on it and some dust, but that's fairly normal. I am enjoying what I have seen so far.

Jarno TRULLI: Well I have to say I arrived only last night but the circuit itself looks pretty good. They must be really proud about having such a nice circuit in India especially for the future of this country's motorsport. The layout of the circuit seems very interesting. Obviously the question mark is about how dirty and dusty it is. I have been around this morning cycling and it was very dusty. I hope they can clean today and tomorrow morning and see how the circuit develops over the weekend. But it is definitely something that looks pretty good.

Felipe MASSA: I think it is very nice, I am enjoying being here in India and also to see the circuit. It is pretty interesting even all these hairpins with very wide braking point which you can choose two different lines. I think that is a very interesting even for overtaking and everything so I think it will be a nice circuit.

Narain KARTHIKEYAN: First of all, as I have been saying, I did not think in my racing career that I would be racing in India and here we are just around the corner. With the circuit, again like everybody else, it is wide in some places, I am sure lots of different lines you are going to see, lots of overtaking. It is definitely a very challenging circuit, with lots of run off areas and so on, so they have done a very good job, no doubt.

Michael SCHUMACHER: Equally to the other guys I think they have done a very nice job here. It looks very interesting. Just seen the safety car running around and saw the elevation change, some blind spots, so quite a bit of a challenge for us with high and low speed corners, good overtaking, so a good mixture of all that we like to enjoy ourselves on so I look forward to drive the car. That's the real feeling. That's the only thing that really tells you how you feel about it.

Q: Interesting you mention the blind spot, particularly going up into..

MS: Turn three.

Q: Yes, into the hairpin. That's going to be interesting isn't it?

MS: Yeah, exactly. It is a new sort of philosophy with this overtaking with getting the circuits very wide at the entry as we have the one line defend mechanism so if you go that far certainly the other guy choosing the outside line can take a good run at you at the end of the straight. It offers a good tactical perspective for overtaking, for having a good show, and hopefully make the Indian fans enjoy Formula 1 after this weekend.

Q: Adrian, I guess you have been here for a few days doing promotions. Tell us about what you have been doing?

AS: Well I was in Delhi first day, then I went to Mumbai. Always press stuff, appearances, just normal events for us, kind of Kingfisher events and it was quite nice to see how many fans we have got and how excited the people are. During the years it has picked up. I have seen that every year I come back here and people were more aware of what we were doing on the circuit so I hope it is going to be another step after this weekend.

Q: What are your expectations from a competitive point of view as you have been particularly good in qualifying over the last couple of races, but not quite so good in the races?

AS: Yeah, I think in Korea the qualifying was quite good again but in the race I just didn't have the right balance. We had a lot of understeer and that's why I couldn't go into the points. I think we have to try to address that here for this race. We have some modifications so hopefully that will help. I am quite pleased with the speed of the car, we are always around this top 10 area, but probably at the moment a little bit better in qualifying than in the race so let's see what comes out. I am confident for this weekend though.

Q: Rubens, you have said you have tried this circuit on your home simulator, whatever that is, so what was it like to drive on the home simulator?

RB: I have actually built a small simulator at home as I am racing on the internet with different things which is great and I just adapt the circuit.

FM: He is racing for seven hours a day.

RB: He races for five-and-a-half. We meet each other on those games and he was the one that introduced it to me so that's why I am there. My wife is pissed off at him, not me.

FM: Mine too.

RB: We definitely won't end up being at the same house anyway without the wives. I try to adapt this Formula 1 game into India which was quite nice. I did 100 laps on it. You could see the elevation, turn three and the opening and so on, so it was quite nice. The team is looking forward to see as Pastor

(Maldonado) has been on the Williams simulator with the track and there is a difference in time. The time that I set and the time that he set and we want to see which one is better. He might go home to drive the Abu Dhabi one.

Q: What sort of lap time are you reckoning?

RB: It is on the 26's, high 26's, low 27's

Q: And Pastor reckons what?

RB: I think on the Williams simulator he was on the high 29's. It is not who is right or wrong, it is just the fun side. It was good to learn the lines and see what the car reaction is to the track and so on. It is going to be a little bit different as the track is dusty and the lines should be getting better all the time up until the end of the race really. Just such as Korea, for example, so I don't think we will have the full picture tomorrow.

Q: Jarno, I guess the locals were all hoping that Karun (Chandhok) might have been driving for the team, but it is very important for the team that the regular drivers are in the car?

JT: Yeah, I think so. I believe the team is trying to get the best position for the team's future. There is a lot of investment made by the team for the future, for next year, in order to make this step into the midfield and I think none of us wants to lose this opportunity to finish 10th in the championship. This, I believe, is the main reason for not giving Karun another chance. But it is not down to me, honestly, to talk about it. This race is the only thing I can think about.

Q: Lotus is a very active team. Is the focus very much on 2012? Are you looking for a different role, for example, for next year?

JT: No, not really. We are focussed already on next year's car as we have several new things coming in which should make us take a step forward in terms of performance. We really hope that we can do what we haven't done or what we were not able to do this year. We were expecting to be fighting the midfield and we were not quite there so for next year I think Tony (Fernandes) and everybody is determined to make this step and they are working very hard on next year's car and there are several deals in place in order to get a good package together for next year's car so we are very confident of making this step.

Q: So you are suggesting a step rather than a jump?

JT: It depends. If you look at certain results we don't really need that jump. We just need a little further step as we are in a situation that the car in front is slightly quicker than us and the car behind us are definitely slower than us so we just need a further step to be in the midfield. Obviously if you want to think about winning races it is different. You need a further jump but you need to take things step-by-step. Rome wasn't built in a day and the team was built just two years ago.

Q: Felipe, some good races recently from the team. What are your thoughts on the recent performances?

FM: Well I think it was okay. We didn't bring so many pieces in the last races so the car was more or less similar four races ago, for example. But it is true that in some tracks the car was a bit more competitive than at other tracks. I would say the last two tracks the car was a little bit more competitive compared to Spa, Monza so I think depends on the layout of the track. Maybe we can be a bit more competitive, depending on the track maybe it was a bit more difficult, so we will see how it is going to be here and how it is going to be in the next two races as well. I hope we can push hard to see better results.

Q: What tracks does it suit and is this one and the next two exactly those sort of tracks that suits?

FM: I think it is difficult to say as at some tracks we expected to be competitive and we were not so competitive and some other tracks where we expected to be in a difficult direction we were competitive, for example, in England, so we will see. It is difficult to say.

Q: Narain, the expectations of a huge nation are on your shoulders. How are they?

NK: Well I can say so many things, but the realistic thing with our car is to possibly finish the race and beat your team-mate. If you do that, I think at the moment, we can't expect much more. It is an historic and symbolic moment that an Indian driver is on the grid and, of course, there is a lot following Formula 1 for a long time. There will be a lot of fans here. It will be hard to explain but it is what it is. I want to enjoy the weekend, have a lot of fun, and try and do the best I can do.

Q: What are your inner feelings at the moment. Massive excitement? Anticipation?

NK: Yeah, lots of, thousands of requests for passes. I just need to relax and from tomorrow it is going to be different, you are in the car a lot. I just want to enjoy the whole atmosphere. My family, everyone is coming. All the sponsors and so on so it is a huge day for Indian motorsport and those first few laps tomorrow are going to be very special, yes.

Q: Just give us some indication of the support you have had from India and from the industry as well?

NK: Since I started in Formula Three in England I had the support of the Tata Group, India's largest group, and a few other sponsors. Once Formula 1 is here the exposure will create a big opportunity for the young drivers and for the whole motorsport infrastructure to grow. We are all looking forward to it. India is different to China. There has been a lot of interest in Formula 1 for a long time and Michael probably has millions of sponsors here. It has been that long, since 1993, that it has been on TV live here and I think it is going to be very good for the sport and all the motorsport fraternity here is very, very excited.

Q: Michael, we have always slightly thought of you as the fourth team but more recently you have been getting up there almost into third place in terms of the team. Can we expect more in the last three races?

MS: I guess it is maybe more to do with nature of tracks that one suits us more than others so, therefore, we might have a chance indeed to go a little bit further forward than just being seventh or eighth. This track, honestly, probably plays a little bit in our hands and can be a little helpful. Qualifying usually is difficult but then the race we look a little bit stronger recently so let's find out.

Q: And the next two after that?

MS: Well, I have not really thought about it. Let's think about this one here.

Q: There was quite a lot of excitement about the front wing that you used at the last race. What was it like for the driver? Did you notice the difference?

MS: Perfect.

Q: Perfect? No improvement to be made?

MS: We didn't use a different front wing, quite honestly. It was as good as before.

Q: So no change?

MS: No.

Q: Have you been to India before? Narain just mentioned there are a lot of fans of you here. Have you seen a huge amount of interest?

MS: I only arrived yesterday so I haven't really been out in town and sort of got the social touch but certainly I want to go over the weekend and see a little bit more because when we have the opportunity and chance to travel to different countries I usually like to see a little bit more of the country. I have had a very warm welcome from all the people I have met so far. That is very nice. We had a press conference this morning, together with Mercedes, lots of interest and follow-up from the media side and I just look forward for the main fact. It is a new track for us and it is always a great challenge, but even more important is how are we received with the sport that we all love here in this new country. How do the Indian fans like what we are doing? We just hope we can enjoy them as much as we have an opportunity to do so.

Q: Michael and Adrian, I don't think either of you has been present in Q3 in the last couple of races, even though you make it into the top ten. Is there any reason? Is it about the cars not being easy on the tyres, or is it taking much more of your soft tyres to get into Q3? What is the real reason?

MS: I guess it was only the last race that I haven't been in (Q3) and I guess (it was) having just selected a bad set of tyres, because I wasn't too long or just too... because you just pick up a tenth of time with soft tyres, which normally almost give you a second. And I had already experienced some problems on the 'out' lap, but I thought I had enough in hand to do so. But generally, our performance is around seventh and eighth, that's what our base point is for qualifying. In the race, when we get things right, we can occasionally do better and I expect similar, hopefully a little further forward here, this weekend.

AS: Well, for me qualifying has been a little bit better but also tyre life and everything is difficult for us in the race. But also in the last race, as I said before, the balance was just not good, so we have to try and make it better again. I think in Singapore we were very strong and competitive in the race, also in Suzuka, it could have been a little bit better, but the safety car caught me out, and that's the main reason why I lost the points, but I see our car quite consistent as well so in qualifying – in the race, sometimes a bit better than in qualifying, worse in the race, or the opposite way around but nothing to be concerned about.

Q: Felipe, what are your personal targets and what are the team's for the last three races? Are you more concentrated on scoring points and winning here or more concentrated on starting to develop the car for next year?

FM: I think both. We've concentrated on the last three races. The target is always to fight for the podium, to try to see if we have the possibility to even get to fight for the victory. That's always the target. It's not easy but that's always the direction we take. Already, we're working very hard for next year, already developing the car, trying to put all the ideas for the new car, trying to see everything that we were not so happy this year about, to try to make the car stronger next year, which I guess most of the team is already working very hard on next year. But now these are important moments to put all the good points for the next year's development.

Q: Narain, given how dusty the track is, and that there will probably be a line with grip and if you get off the racing line, it will be fairly dusty, is there concern about trying to overtake in circumstances like this, with the DRS wing open?

NK: Well, off-line yes, it is going to be dirty for sure, so you just have to see where the best level of grip is and go for it. For us, the big problem is when you go off-line when you get lapped, that's the problem. We will try to see how it goes. The track is going to evolve a lot and we have to see where the level of grip is.

Q: Michael, given the championship is already finished and with the two incidents we've had over the last couple of weeks, do you think there will be a temptation for drivers to take it easy this weekend?

MS: I don't think that while we drive, we think that we put ourselves in danger. First of all, when we take the cars to the limit, that's what we feel comfortable with and therefore our ambition is always to take the cars to the limit and it will be the same here this weekend. To have total safety I think is absolutely impossible to call, in any part of life. Yes, there is more risk involved in race car sport and yes, Formula 1 is probably the quickest motor racing sport that you have around the world. At the same time, safety has been hugely improved. If you look at a new project such as this track, there's lots of huge run-off areas and it certainly has a very high standard of safety. If on top, something happens, then that's what I would call fate and fate is something that we all have to face sooner or later. I'm certainly very much touched by what has happened for both of the drivers that we have lost but unfortunately you have to say that that's life.

Q: Michael, as Narain said, you have millions of fans here in India but also all over the world. How important is it for you to get on the top step of podium next year, how important is it for Mercedes to give you a good car?

MS: I think it is very important for all of us, that's what we're here for. All of us involved in the team know the taste of winning races and championships and that's what we're here for, to do exactly that. We know that we are in the situation that we have to face right now and there's only one way forward, that's to focus, we're concentrated and don't panic and that's what we're doing. We're building up the future of Mercedes and hope to take the fruits of that rather sooner than later. But then there are limits to what you can do and you have to accept those limits too, and that's what we're doing right now.

Q: This is obviously the first time we've been to India; we've been to a few new tracks in recent years but this is the first time that we've come to what is almost a new continent. Can you just give us an idea of if it feels different, some of the biggest differences that you've noticed and does it really feel as if Formula 1 is breaking new ground coming here?

RB: I would say so, I would say that it's great that Formula 1 is expanding and going to new places. Obviously in my long career, I never had the chance to get to India, for example, so it's great that with my sport and my job I'm able to visit a (new) country. It's been quite good to visit here. It's really been a good experience and a new one so I think that with Formula 1 trying to go back to United States and some other tracks, I think it's really really good. It's more travelling for all of us, but I think Formula 1 is a worldwide business and it needs to be like that.

JT: Definitely, every single new circuit and country that we visit is a breakthrough for Formula 1. Formula 1 is not only a sport or motor sport, it's also business and it also brings a lot of messages to the countries that we visit, so it's definitely important that we expand and I think Formula 1 is spreading

very well in the last five years and as we have heard, we are going to have two grands prix in the USA, which we all know is important. It's important for car manufacturers, it's important for Formula 1, which has never been really highly rated in the US, but I think Formula 1 wants to be in every country, and I think every country wants to have a Formula 1 race. I think it's important for both sides.

Q: Michael, we have the soft and hard compound tyres here and given that it's a new track, and the hard compound is returning after Silverstone, what do you reckon in terms of tyre wear in this race?

MS: Well, that's going to be an interesting subject for all of us this weekend because new asphalt and new tracks have their own nature and character, and whether the tyres fit together with this is going to be an interesting one. Pirelli took a very safe option with the hard tyre that can maybe be rather entertaining to drive this tyre, as tyre temperatures need to be in the right window in order to make use of this tyre and you have to use it at least once in the race, and the one I guess is probably spot on but with the development over the weekend, again, to anticipate and look forward to how the track may change, how to use the tyres for strategy and so on and set-up, is going to be a big challenge for all of us. Nobody knows the track, nobody knows the answer, everybody's going out there to try and find that.

F1 Sofa Blog – F1 in India

I'd forgotten how hard it was to get out of bed at 5am to watch a practice session when you're not soaking up the energy of the paddock. F1 fans, you have my renewed respect for doing this every week before heading off to a full day at work.

Based on the evidence of a solitary practice session, the biggest problem at Buddh International Circuit – dust aside – appears to be the Turn 5/Turn 6 complex. Everyone and their dog took a trip across the grass after carrying too much speed into the entry of Turn 5, bumping their way back onto the tarmac at the exit of Turn 6. Not pretty, and hard work on the tyres.

But the Indian Grand Prix circuit looks to be a challenge for the drivers, and is very impressive to watch. The elevation changes are not flattened out by TV cameras, as so often happens, and the sweeping bends and tight corners make for great viewing.

The inaugural practice session of the subcontinent's first grand prix was riddled with incidents, starting when a stray dog wandered onto the track and brought out the red flags.

Fernando Alonso retired from the session with a scant four laps under his belt; an unspecified engine problem saw the Ferrari driver pull over and park up on the grass.

The closing ten minutes of the morning were a near-constant run of yellow flags. First, Toro Rosso's Jaime Alguersuari smacked his car into the barriers at Turn 10, damaging the rear end of his car. Then, Pastor Maldonado's morning ended in a puff of smoke when the engine on his Williams failed.

Both Lewis Hamilton and Sergio Perez set their fastest times of the morning under the yellow flags; the stewards have issued the pair with three-place grid drop penalties for Sunday's race. Renault's Vitaly Petrov already has a five-place grid penalty for Sunday, following his crash with Michael Schumacher at the Korean Grand Prix.

Red Bull showed strong pace throughout the session, and would have ended the morning 1-2 on the timesheets were it not for Hamilton's late – and illegal – flyer.

The Mercedes is looking very good on the long back straight; the combination of their DRS and the powerful engine shared with McLaren and Force India could see the Silver Arrows holding up a grid-dropped Hamilton on Sunday.

F1 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.26.836s
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.27.416s
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.27.428s
4. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.28.394s
5. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.28.531s
6. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.28.542s
7. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.28.644s
8. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.28.705s
9. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.29.219s
10. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.29.355s
11. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1.29.700s
12. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.29.705s
13. Bruno Senna (Renault) 1.29.799s
14. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1.30.132s
15. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.30.367s
16. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.30.566s
17. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.30.669s
18. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus) 1.30.818s
19. Karun Chandhok (Team Lotus) 1.32.487s
20. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.32.771s
21. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT) 1.33.928s
22. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1.34.113s
23. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1.35.796s

F1 Sofa Blog – FP2 in India

The afternoon running at Delhi's Buddh International Circuit was much calmer than the morning session, although there were still a few spins and offs.

Felipe Massa topped the timesheets for Ferrari in an FP2 that saw drivers getting to grips with the dusty Indian racetrack. As had been the case in the morning, the Turn 5 and 6 complex proved to be the most troublesome part of the circuit, with numerous drivers taking trips across the grass.

The biggest incident of the afternoon came courtesy of Jerome D'Ambrosio, who repeated Jaime Alguersuari's F1 error of smacking the rear end of his car into the barriers at Turn 11, bringing out the red flags. The Virgin driver was not hurt in the crash.

Pastor Maldonado had another short session: the Williams driver was sidelined by engine failure in F1, and lost out on valuable track time when he beached his car in the gravel at Turn 9. But the Venezuelan driver made it back out on track before the end of the session, and had 24 laps under his belt by the end of the afternoon.

All in all, it was quite a placid session. Teams and drivers alike are still learning the circuit, and with a variety of aero tests completed in the morning session, much of the afternoon was given over to race simulations and longer running on heavier fuel loads.

Lap times in India are already hovering around the simulated predictions for qualifying, but given the improvement in grip levels after a single day's running – provided you stay on the racing line, that is – it's now expected that tomorrow's pole lap will be in the 1m23s.

Grip proved to be the biggest problem on track today, thanks in part to the green-ness of the circuit, but due also to the amount of dust on and off track. While the racing line began to rubber in as the day wore on, regular spins and offs saw dust being kicked back onto the racing line, where it then triggered more incidents in a vicious and dusty circle.

Having reflected on the tyre data harvested today, Pirelli have acknowledged that they may have been too conservative in their tyre choices this weekend, with motorsport director Paul Hembery joking that the hard compound would last for three races.

FP2 timings (unofficial)

1. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.25.706s
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.25.794s
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.25.930s
4. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.26.454s
5. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.26.500s
6. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.26.714s
7. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.27.316s
8. Bruno Senna (Renault) 1.27.498s
9. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1.27.853s
10. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.27.868s
11. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.27.890s
12. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.28.050s
13. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1.28.289s
14. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.28.552s
15. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.28.691s
16. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.28.708s
17. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus) 1.29.332s
18. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus) 1.30.241s
19. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.31.098s
20. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.31.469s
21. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.31.804s
22. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1.32.593s
23. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT) 1.32.768s
24. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1.32.824s

F1 Sofa Blog – Friday press conference in India

The senior team personnel press conference on a Friday afternoon is always one of the most interesting of the weekend, and this afternoon's at the Buddh International Circuit was no exception.

Present were Jean Francois Caubet (Renault F1 Sport), Monisha Kaltenborn (Sauber), Vijay Mallya (Force India), Adam Parr (Williams), and Franz Tost (Toro Rosso).

Q. A question to you all about your initial thoughts about India and the circuit. Franz, first of all?

Franz TOST: India, so far, I don't know very well, as I just arrived yesterday and my first impression is quite positive regarding here, the race track. I must say that the team around Sameer Gaur has done a fantastic job as the track itself is very interesting. Long straights, slow corners, fast corners,

our drivers are really excited about the track. There are a couple of possibilities for overtaking. In general it is very important for Formula 1 that we are racing in India, that we go to these new markets that are interesting and important for the future, like India, like China, Russia, the Arabian area, South America. These are the markets for the future and this is important for our sponsors, to bring in more sponsors as Formula 1 is racing every second weekend. For Formula 1 itself this is very, very important and thanks also to Bernie [Ecclestone] for doing this, as in the end he is negotiating and coming up with these new tracks.

Adam PARR: I would agree with everything that Franz has said. I would just add that India is a spectacular country and very colourful, very vibrant, and always has been. Being here is very exciting for us as a team and as a sport and being able to 'play' here is important if we are to be a global sport, so we are thrilled. I would just like to say thank you very much to the promoters here for putting on such a fantastic event and for publicising it so well in the country and making Formula 1 feel so welcome.

Jean Francois CAUBET: For Renault, India is a strategic market for the future. We have three strategic markets in the future, India, Russia and Brazil so to race here is very important. We are building a huge factory in the south, in Chennai, and it is a pleasure to race here and I hope that the engine will be, probably, winning.

Q. Monisha, you must be very excited to be here?

Monisha KALTENBORN: I am very excited, and to start, I fully agree with what Franz and Adam said about the place here, about the track. We received a very warm welcome here. What I am very surprised about, pleasantly surprised, is the way the Indian media have been covering the whole event so far. I mean the amount of in-depth information they give about the sport, the rules, what is important, technical aspects, it is very unique. I have never seen that before in this depth and from a personal point of view, of course, I am very excited to have this link now between the job and the country where I come from, so it is a very special race.

Q. Vijay, also you must be very excited and very proud of what you have seen today?

Vijay MALLYA: Well, my views are very, very partial. I have a huge vested interest. Over 30 years ago I drove my Ensign Formula 1 car here in India and I never thought I would ever see a Formula 1 car race around India in the future. As the chairman of the ASN responsible for motorsport here, we have been trying to promote motorsport in this country for over three decades and this is like a dream come true. When I acquired the then Spyker team, I re-named it Force India and there was a lot of strategy and meaning behind it, as it was meant to put India on the Formula 1 map. We have had an Indian team since 2008 on the Formula 1 grid and now a grand prix here in Delhi. This is unbelievably fantastic.

Q. A technical question for you all about engines. It is getting to the sharp end of the championship when the eight engines are perhaps getting a bit tired, when you are perhaps running out. We saw a couple of engine failures today. What is your engine situation in your particular team. Franz?

FT: So far I must say that Ferrari has done a fantastically good job. We have not had an engine failure. I hope this stays like it is until the end of the season. Also with KERS.

Q. Adam, you had an engine failure today. What's the situation with the AT&T Williams team?

AP: Well we have, I think, two fresh engines left for the remainder of the season, so we are on track in that sense. We have had some reliability issues actually in the last three weekends, which our partner is working very hard to fix as soon as possible and, obviously, that's critically important for us.

Q. Jean Francois, perhaps you can summarise three teams.

JFC: I think we have one engine free for all the teams and I think in terms of reliability I think we will be quite good this year. I don't think there will be a problem.

MK: Well compared to last year, we definitely have had a better year this year on engines. I hope it goes on like this and we don't suffer any problems.

Q. So you shouldn't have any problems for the end of the season?

MK: I hope so, no.

VM: Well Sahara Force India is committed to putting its best foot forward here on home soil, so we have saved two fresh engines for the race.

Q. And for the other two races?

VM: We are alright, we are alright.

Q. Franz, performance in the last few races has been really good. It must be very useful for next year, and is it a bit of an indication for next year?

FT: I hope so. Currently, I must say, the car performs quite well. The team has made a step forward. We brought some new modifications to Suzuka and as it looked today I think we can be close to qualifying three. That means both cars should be close to the 10th position and this should enable us to score some points in the race. So far, we are within our schedule and regarding for next year, of course, there is some development work which is going on. The main parts for next year we are testing at the young driver tests days in Abu Dhabi.

Q. Adam, you have put in place a new technical team. Can you just outline it and tell us how it's going.

AP: Well the new technical team consists of Mike Coughlan, who we have just confirmed as our new Technical Director. Mike joined us in June. The Head of Aerodynamics joined us in the middle of August, Jason Somerville, and thirdly, Mark Gillan, who is our chief operations engineer looking after the race team. In terms how they are going I think it has been a very positive step for us in a number of respects. First of all, they are all very experienced people. They have a strong aerodynamic interest, particularly amongst Jason and Mark, who worked together as head and deputy head of aero at Toyota, so there is a good understanding between the track and the tunnel. I think they have already had quite an impact on the team at the factory in the sense of people seeing some good direction forward and a good way of working, so that's all positive. They essentially view our existing facilities and resources as being good enough to do a much better job than we are doing today. There are some areas where we need to invest a little bit and we are doing that as fast as we can to really try and take a big step forward for next year.

Q. Jean Francois, we saw today a couple of engine failures, not yours I hasten to add. Tell us the challenges of this circuit, as it was interesting to have those engine failures. Is it the circuit?

JFC: No I don't think it is particularly the circuit. It is not too hard for the engine. I think it is a problem of the end of the season. People try on the engine side to be innovative next year and probably they are more looking to next year and 2014 at the end of this season.

Q. Is there a major or specific challenge at this circuit particularly?

JFC: No, I don't think we will have a specific challenge here. I think Spa and Monza are worse than here.

Q. Monisha, you have obviously got a major Indian sponsor for this race. How easy or difficult was it. How much did you target and look for a sponsor for this grand prix?

MK: Well, I think like everyone else we wanted to also attract Indian companies and it is surprising that there are not many, as yet, in Formula 1, although from the financial potential they are very much capable of doing it. We did try hard and we succeeded in getting one of India's most known, prestigious owned brands with Amul. I think we will continue with that now. An event like this is the best platform, that's where we can present ourselves and show the companies here what Formula 1 is about.

Q. Vijay, a lot has been happening with the team. If you can outline some of the things that has been going on?

VM: Well we have been focusing on our performance, of course, and the big news is the fact that we have a new partner in the Sahara group. The Sahara group is one of the largest groups in India and a huge patron and sponsor of sport, sponsor of India's national cricket team amongst other sports in India. We started discussions and they came on board and are investing \$100million into the team. They will hold 42.5 per cent equity stake. There is no change of control involved. The team will be Sahara Force India. The chassis name remains. I will continue to run the team but with these additional financial resources our research and development strengths get a significant shot in the arm. But what is more, I think this one big move by a major Indian group will encourage many more.

Q. Also, you announced the results of your search for 'One in a Billion'.

VM: The Indian press has constantly been asking me about an Indian driver in our car and I have said "fine, we will find one". A couple of years ago I said that amongst 1.2 billion people there must be a Lewis Hamilton somewhere, so we launched this nationwide hunt. We had karting events across the country and finally we chose 10 kids. We took them to Silverstone and to Milton Keynes in the UK and we announced the names of the three winners, well the winner, runner-up and second runner-up yesterday. We are going to send all three to Europe, pay for their education, their advanced driver training and everything. They are under 14-years-old and hopefully in five to six years we will produce an Indian Formula 1 driver.

Q. Adam, there are five million of us Finns in Finland anxious to know if there is any chance to see Kimi Raikkonen racing with Williams next year?

AP: I am afraid there is only one answer to that question, which is that our race drivers are Pastor Maldonado and Rubens Barrichello and if, and when, that changes we will make an appropriate announcement.

Q. Jean Francois, you mentioned that India is a strategic market. Can you elaborate as to how Renault intends to tap this market, as Red Bull is badged with Infiniti, Lotus Renault is known more for the Lotus name and the other Lotus doesn't earn any points.

JFC: We are an engine provider and the name of the team is Red Bull Renault, Lotus Renault, Team Lotus Renault, so we are pushing the name of Renault and we share an affinity with the name in Red Bull. We are pushing on two grounds. We have a technical communication on the Renault side and more a marketing communication on the Infiniti side.

Q. To the four team representatives. Recently there has been an allegation that certain teams aren't respecting the terms and conditions of the Resource Restriction Agreement and there are suggestions that the entire agreement could fall apart. As you are middle-ranking teams, if I can term it that, what would be the affect be on your teams if the RRA did fall apart?

FT: First of all, we at Toro Rosso are far away from the figures in the RRA regarding employees as well as external expenditures and, therefore, it doesn't directly belong to us. But, generally, we should find a way in Formula 1 to save costs. We should come down with the costs and I think that the RRA was quite a good start for doing this and the big teams in the past years have reduced their costs and where we end up in the future, I don't know yet. We from Toro Rosso respect the Resource Restriction Agreement.

AP: First of all, I don't think there is any evidence that anybody is not respecting the RRA and I think that is very important. There may be rumours, but there is no evidence of that so I think from a team perspective we must trust our colleagues. The second point is that everybody that you talk to in Formula 1 wants cost controls. I met with Christian (Horner) yesterday, I met with Stefano (Domenicali), they are adamant that they want those controls. Now, the question is what is the best way to achieve that and I think that a number of teams would agree, whatever their perspective is, that we can do better than we are doing now in having a good process. Which is not very surprising because it is relatively new and it is relatively difficult and I think, therefore, what is essential now is to get the teams together, which we will do in Abu Dhabi, to work out how to strengthen and move things forward. But there is no disagreement about the need to do this or the desire to do it.

MK: I fully agree with what has been said so far. We also have never seen any evidence indicating that anybody has not stuck to the agreement. And, as mentioned, the RRA is a very important but fair step. We all knew at the time this has to go down this road and it will take a while until we do the next step. It is now time to go into that direction and if you have so many competing teams like in FOTA you have different opinions, you have a different starting point in discussions, so it is fairly normal that we have these discussions but I am quite confident that we will resolve it all.

VM: I think Adam has summed it up very well. I will go along with what he says. There's no evidence that anybody is busting the agreement and there's certainly no signs of cracks within FOTA that would leave the entire Resource Restriction plan to blow up. I think everyone - even from the biggest team owner down to the smallest team owner - everybody wants to spend money wisely and not waste money, so if there is any way in which all the teams participating in Formula 1 can be efficient, can reduce their costs and yet have fun competing and be competitive, I think that's the way forward. As far as we're concerned, Force India is fully in compliance.

Q. Dr Mallya, when you bought the Spyker team, you said that you didn't think of becoming the best of the rest. As you know, in Formula 1 there are two teams who vie for number one and there are other teams whose ranking starts from number three. Now, with the first season, if we look at the stats, this was the first year and it was a learning experience for you. Since then your team has gone places. Do you think the passion and the love for racing is the biggest asset and the biggest weapon of Force India?

VM: When I took over the team at the end of 2007 and our first season was 2008, we just waited and watched because the Spyker team, even though re-named Force India, sort of continued the way it was. And then we made several changes in the team and set out a three year road map from 2009 onwards and I think we're well on track. I think I owe it to all my colleagues in the team who've put their best foot forward and I'm glad we've been able to achieve what we set out to achieve.

Q. Dr Mallya, you said that it was a dream come true for Formula 1 to come to India. How did you feel when not only you had this wonderful circuit but you received all the good comments from the drivers and the other teams?

VM: There has been a lot of speculation, a lot of people were sceptical as well, and I think we proved them all wrong, which is very, very nice. I drove around the track a couple of times yesterday, I spoke to several drivers. They simply love the track. It's complete, it's finished. As a member of the

World Motor Sport Council I read Charlie Whiting's report – the FIA track inspection report – and I was amazed to see how complimentary he was on the technical facilities here at the Buddh International circuit, and of course, as we look around, it's all there, finished on time. The race is happening, it's real, it's a dream come true. Can't complain.

Q. Vijay, in addition to the race, we have an FIA General Assembly and the FIA end-of-season gala and prize-giving in India now. What do those add to Indian motor sport potential?

VM: There are two mega-events happening within a few months of each other. At the World Motor Sports Council meeting, I suggested that the FIA General Assembly be held in India and that the annual prize-giving also be held in India, and the World Motor Sport Council accepted it and so this is going to be a huge event as well, high profile. Our Indian Government's Ministry of Tourism has kindly got involved, giving us full support and so following this Indian Grand Prix and then having and hosting the FIA General Assembly and the annual prize-giving, where we will present the World Championship awards, including to Red Bull and Sebastian Vettel, it's an event that will obviously serve to boost motor sport even to a far greater extent in this country, and I think this is all great because this country has the potential. India is a modern, vibrant nation, we have a huge number of young people here and as you can see all around – Adam mentioned about the promotion through the media as other platforms promoting this race, this event – all this is great stuff and I think it puts India firmly on the Formula 1 map and helps build a huge fan base.

Q. Dr Mallya, do you expect the government to increase their involvement, perhaps financially down the line, to help cover the cost of bringing F1 to India, as you mentioned that the Ministry of Tourism is interested now?

VM: The Ministry of Tourism is supporting the FIA General Assembly and annual prize-giving in non-cash ways. In a country like India, with the profile of our people, with the number of under-privileged people we also have, it would be too much of an ask if we went to government and said 'subsidise motor sport.' So this initiative here at the Buddh International Circuit is a private initiative by the Jaypee Group – God bless them, they've done a wonderful job and invested a lot of money and they haven't depended on any sort of government grants.

Q. A lot of Formula 1 fans across the world complain that it's always the same teams fighting for the win, frustrating for a few of you guys also. Is there anything that has been proposed to help the poorer teams to get more competitive, like having some private testing – the lower you finish, the more private testing you get, something to help you guys to fight for the win?

FT: I don't think that if the teams which are running a little bit more behind or in the midfield get the possibility for more tests that it would increase their performance or put them in front of the current best teams. It's always a combination. If you look at Red Bull, they have a fantastic team with Adrian Newey who is a fantastically good designer, they have one of the best drivers in their car, and the team itself is also doing a very, very good job. That means that this combination has grown up in the last two years and it's not that you say now, for example, to any other team which is behind, 'OK, we give you more tests and then you will beat them.' It's that all the factors have to work together to build up a competitive team, and the reason why there are two or three teams in front, fighting for the championships, it's because they have got everything together and this takes time and there will always be some teams in front with another infrastructure, with better people, with better drivers and this is simply also in the history of the sport. If you remember before, there were the years when Ferrari was dominating, there was the Williams era, McLaren and that's always the case. I think that this year, especially this year, we have had fantastically good races with many position changes and although Sebastian Vettel and Red Bull have won the championship so early, the races themselves were very, very interesting and I think this is what the people want to see, with all the overtaking. Money was at the end.

AP: Just two thoughts: first of all we don't expect any favours on the track, and I think it would be inappropriate to ask or suggest that. Where I do think the sport needs to work together is off the track and that includes the economics, so while I don't think we should get any advantage, I think that as a sport, as we discussed earlier, having a sensible control over the total spending is logical, I think. J-FC: I think on the engine side – because you have a frozen engine and blowing is forbidden next year, reliability is not so bad, it's nearly the same for all the teams now – I think you must wait until 2014 because in '14 you will have new regulations, new chassis, new engine, probably a lot of creativity and things will be completely different in '14. I think it will be something like a new Formula 1 and the gap will be very big in comparison to now.

MK: I think any such measures would basically distort the championship and the sport, so looking at our team itself, we know our strengths and we can be more flexible than bigger teams can, so we have to focus on them, seeing where the resources restriction is going, these kind of measures. We need to wait for our chance and we need to be there then.

VM: I remember the time Toro Rosso won the race at Monza, beating everybody. We thought that Toro Rosso was one of us. It obviously proved itself quite differently so anything can happen in this sport, as you know, but I think I would agree with Franz in what he was saying, that we need to put everything together: the technical direction, the engineering, the research and development, the team, the drivers – everything's got to come together. It's not just a question of money. I don't believe that money alone can just buy performance. It's a lot more than that. If you look at the history of the various teams, where they started, where they are today, it shows you that there is an inbuilt, unpredictability here. As far as Sahara Force India is concerned, we're slowly moving up the ladder and we intend to continue to do that.

Q. Vijay, in the last fortnight or so the team ownership has changed; 42.5% the Sahara Group, 42.5% yourself and 15% the Dutch interest. You've just referred to the team as Sahara Force India. This last week we've received an e-mail from your PR department requesting us to refer to it as Sahara Force India. Have you requested an official name change, because there's a Formula 1 Commission meeting coming up, or what is Sahara's status in the team title please?

VM: The name hasn't changed. The chassis name remains the same. It's like Vodafone McLaren Mercedes. So there's no change of control, there's no change in the chassis name, so I don't require any permissions. Out of courtesy, we informed the FOM and the FOM have acknowledged our communication in the affirmative.

Q. Dr Mallya, the British newspaper The Independent quoted on the eve of the Indian Grand Prix, said in one sense India is a strange venue for a Formula 1 race. Around thirty percent of the Indian population live on less than one pound a day; what would you like to say about that?

VM: In every country there are the privileged and the under-privileged. We have under-privileged people in our country, but that doesn't mean that the country must be bogged down or weighed down. India is a progressive country, we have a strongly growing economy, a large economy. The government is doing all it can to address the needs of the poor or the under-privileged people but India must move on. Back in 1990, we consciously made a decision to integrate ourselves into the world economy, to open up from an era of total government control and so the country must move forward. The Commonwealth Games were held here in India, now it's Formula 1. I'm sure there will be several more global events in our country, because this is a world class country in many ways. Sure we have our problems but those are being addressed.

AP: It's often suggested and maybe The Independent newspaper of England is perhaps guilty of this as well, of treating Formula 1 as if it was an elite sport. Obviously all international sport is elite in that athletes and teams have to perform at an extraordinarily high level of performance, but that is the only sense in which Formula 1 is an elite sport. If you look at the people who participate in the sport, drivers and the rest of us, everyone is from

normal backgrounds, work hard and I think actually, if you compare us with – dare I say it, Vijay? – if you compare the amounts that people earn in our sport compared with an IPL (Indian Premier League cricket) or English Premier League (football), it's a much more democratic and much more spread out kind of sport. So I think it's very important, on the eve of our Indian Grand Prix, it's very important to make the point: this is not an elite sport, it's a sport for the whole world. Six hundred million people enjoy it and many, many thousands of people participate in it.

Q. Dr Mallya, what are your expectations from this race?

VM: As far as I'm concerned, we want to put on as best a showing as we can at our home grand prix, and that's going to be our 100 per cent or 110 per cent effort.

Q. With more Formula 1 races being added to the Formula 1 season, what do you think is the ideal number to have in a year?

AP: Franz will just say one a day.

FT: No, as we have 52 weeks, 26 races, every second weekend! No, I think 20 races are OK and that this is the number we should stick to.

F1 Sofa Blog – FP3 in India

It was a quiet morning in India – well, as quiet as Indian mornings can be – as the drivers took to the track for the final practice session at the Buddh International Circuit.

Sebastian Vettel claimed his rightful spot at the top of the timesheets after Red Bull pulled their usual trick of heavy fuel running on Friday with lighter fuel on Saturday.

But claiming P1 wasn't as easy as all that, with the top four runners split by less than half a second. Both Red Bull and McLaren appeared to be strong this morning, with the Ferrari of Fernando Alonso half a second further back.

The gap between the top three teams and the rest of the field was startling. Felipe Massa's P6-worthy 1.26.058s put the Ferrari driver 0.7s ahead of Paul di Resta in P7, while the gap from Vettel to Daniel Ricciardo in P24 was 8.5 seconds.

While tyre saving shouldn't be as much of an issue this weekend as it has been at recent races, expect to see the slower teams in Q3 skimp on runs. With that kind of laptime disparity, there's not much point jostling for position. Or so the strategists think, and their word is law.

The only real incident of note this morning was a spin from Bruno Senna, who narrowly avoided putting his Renault into the barriers.

The track is still dusty, although it has improved over the course of the weekend, but the loss of grip means that drivers up and down the grid have been involved in minor spins and offs.

FP3 timings (unofficial)

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.24.824s
2. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.25.191s
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.25.203s
4. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.25.288s
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.25.784s
6. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.26.058s
7. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1.26.785s
8. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.26.873s
9. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.26.958s
10. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.27.146s
11. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.27.217s
12. Bruno Senna (Renault) 1.27.235s
13. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.27.262s
14. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.27.280s
15. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.27.387s
16. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1.27.749s
17. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.27.793s
18. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.27.875s
19. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus) 1.29.355s
20. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus) 1.29.750s
21. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.30.683s
22. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1.30.900s
23. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1.32.851s
24. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT) 1.33.246s

F1 Sofa Blog – Q1 in India

Shortly before qualifying got underway at India's Buddh International Circuit, news broke that Daniel Ricciardo would be starting tomorrow's race with a five-place grid penalty due to a last-minute gearbox change.

Ricciardo's penalty takes the weekend's total up to four. Vitaly Petrov arrived in India with a five-place grid drop under his belt, the result of causing a

collision with Michael Schumacher in Korea. Lewis Hamilton and Sergio Perez both earned three-place grid penalties after FPI: the two were found to have set their fastest times under double waved yellows.

The biggest concern this afternoon is dust. The circuit is covered in a fine layer of dust that hampers grip, leading to all manner of minor spins and offs. While small incidents will lead to a loss of lap time and a lower grid position, a few bigger incidents have seen cars spin into the barriers this weekend.

The first times on the board are in the 1m29s, and not representative of the expected pole time. On the timing screens, best sector times are dropping by as much as three seconds as the faster cars hit the track.

The two Sauber drivers spend the first half of the session in the pits, emerging out on track with time for only four laps to see the pair through to Q2. Until Sergio Perez and Kamui Kobayashi set times, there's not much point in looking at the dropout zone.

Timo Glock radios that he is having problems with his gearbox; a change at this stage in the game would see the Virgin driver join the penalty club with a five-place grid drop.

With times on the board from Perez and Kobayashi, the dropout zone in the final three minutes is made up of Heikki Kovalainen, Rubens Barrichello, Daniel Ricciardo, Narain Karthikeyan, Jarno Trulli, Jerome D'Ambrosio, and Glock.

But Barrichello saves himself, and puts Michael Schumacher down in the dropout zone. There is real concern that Jenson Button – currently in P15 and struggling with traffic – might be the highest profile scalp claimed this session.

Schumacher saves himself with a last-minute flyer good enough for P11, while Button crosses the line with a last-gasp effort good enough for P3.

Out are Kobayashi, Kovalainen, Trulli, Ricciardo, Karthikeyan, D'Ambrosio, Glock.

Dropout zone

18. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber)
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus)
20. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus)
21. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT)
22. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT)
23. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin)
24. Timo Glock (Virgin)

F1 Sofa Blog – Q2 in India

As Q2 began at the Buddh International Circuit, there were nerves aplenty at the front of the grid. Jenson Button and Michael Schumacher escaped Q1 after two last-gasp flyers put them in P3 and P11 respectively.

The name of the game appears to be tactical running, with teams using the softer rubber to ensure a place in Q3. Button used the soft tyre to secure his place in Q2, and is now not far off starting Sunday's race without any soft rubber.

McLaren are far from the only team facing a similar quandary, and it appears to be affecting the running in Q2, not in Q3 as has become traditional this season.

By the time the session reached its midpoint, Adrian Sutil, Paul di Resta, and Sergio Perez had yet to emerge from the pits to set timed laps.

Felipe Massa looked as though he could be an early casualty of Q2, after a trip through the dirt cost him valuable time on his first flyer, but the Ferrari driver's next lap saw him fairly safe in P6.

With only a few minutes remaining of Q2, the dropout zone is comprised of Vitaly Petrov, di Resta, Sutil, Rubens Barrichello, Pastor Maldonado, Bruno Senna, and Perez.

The two Toro Rosso drivers and Schumacher are out on track, trying to defend their places in the top ten.

Senna is on a flyer, and looks close to securing a place in Q3. But it's not quite fast enough, and the Renault driver crosses the line in P12, just in time to complete one more lap this session.

Sutil saves himself and eliminates Schumacher, but the German legend is still out on track and able to defend himself.

The Mercedes driver crosses the line in P12, and is out. Joining him are Petrov, di Resta, Maldonado, Senna, Barrichello, and Perez.

Dropout zone

11. Vitaly Petrov (Renault)
12. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes)
13. Paul di Resta (Force India)
14. Pastor Maldonado (Williams)

15. Bruno Senna (Renault)
 16. Rubens Barrichello (Williams)
 17. Sergio Perez (Sauber)
-

F1 Sofa Blog – Q3 in India

And we're down to the final ten.

Lewis Hamilton was the first man out on track, while his teammate sat in the pits in his McLaren, saving that precious final set of soft rubber for one flying run.

Hamilton is joined on track by the two Ferraris, who beat the McLaren driver down to P3 with their first timed laps, Fernando Alonso leading Felipe Massa. Mark Webber's first effort sees the Red Bull man cross the line in P4.

Sebastian Vettel is out on track and takes provisional pole with his first flyer. Hamilton crosses the line in his wake, and manages only provisional P2.

With five minutes remaining, Button leaves the pits for his first run in Q3.

It's very close at the front, with the fastest four men – Vettel, Hamilton, Webber, and Alonso – all split by one-tenth of a second.

For the first time in what feels like living memory, all ten cars are out on track for Q3. This is excellent news, and should be an FIA requirement.

Button crosses the line in P6, but is pushed down to P7 by Nico Rosberg.

Seeing all ten cars out on track is all good and well, but we still haven't seen timed laps from Sebastien Buemi, Jaime Alguersuari, or Adrian Sutil.

Hamilton returns to the pits at the end of his final lap, and Vettel secured provisional pole by three-tenths from the McLaren.

But there's drama at the end of the session, as Massa snaps his front suspension strut, breaks off a push rod, and winds up in the tyre barrier at Turn 9.

Several drivers were out on track at the time, setting their fastest laps, so there is the potential of further penalties should the stewards find that anyone's fastest sector times were set under yellow flag conditions.

Provisional grid

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull)
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull)
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari)
4. Jenson Button (McLaren)
5. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren)*
6. Felipe Massa (Ferrari)
7. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes)
8. Adrian Sutil (Force India)
9. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso)
10. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso)
11. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes)
12. Paul di Resta (Force India)
13. Pastor Maldonado (Williams)
14. Bruno Senna (Renault)
15. Rubens Barrichello (Williams)
16. Vitaly Petrov (Renault)**
17. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber)
18. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus)
19. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus)
20. Sergio Perez (Sauber)***
21. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT)
22. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin)
23. Timo Glock (Virgin)
24. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT)****

* Hamilton qualified in P2, but was issued with a three-place grid drop for ignoring double waved yellows in FPL.

** Petrov qualified in P11, but was issued with a five-place grid drop for causing a collision at the Korean Grand Prix.

*** Perez qualified in P17, but was issued with a three-place grid drop for ignoring double waved yellows in FPL.

**** Riccardo qualified in P24, but was issued with a five-place drop for a gearbox change.

F1 Sofa Blog – Saturday press conference in India

It's the post-qualifying press conference at the Buddh International Circuit, but thanks to penalties, we're not looking at the three drivers to line up at

the front of tomorrow's grid – just the three fastest men on track this afternoon.

Present were Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), Lewis Hamilton (McLaren), and Mark Webber (Red Bull).

Q. Sebastian, a new record, 16th pole of the year for your team and, you personally, seemed to have something in hand out there in qualifying?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, it was a good session for us. New circuit, new venue, tricky for all of us first time round in qualifying. I think it was tricky. We have seen all weekend with the dust on the track so in the end we ended up with one racing line clear of dirt and just a little bit out it makes you lose a lot of time so it was quite tricky. But I think we managed pretty well. The car was fantastic, to be honest since yesterday, this morning as well and throughout qualifying. I think in the end there was a little bit left in the first sector. It is quite tricky, I think we saw some people going for two times laps, others only one. I think then it becomes a bit trickier to hit the first sector. There is a long straight as well after Turn Three so you want to make sure you don't lose time so I am extremely happy. It is good to be here. I think it is a very interesting race, a challenging circuit, looking forward to tomorrow and first time in India so excited to race tomorrow.

Q. Lewis, it was close after the first run in Q3, then you aborted your final run and, of course, you are moving three places back on the grid as well so your thoughts really on qualifying today?

Lewis HAMILTON: It was interesting that you smile about that. No, really it has been a good day for me. I am quite surprised that we were able to split the Red Bulls and it is great to be on the front row in terms of how we qualified. Of course, we had the penalty which was a bit of a silly mistake from myself and I have paid the price but from tomorrow we have good race pace and it is a long race with two DRS zones so overtaking should be a lot easier than perhaps other places. I am still optimistic regardless of where I start.

Q. Mark, Red Bull looks good around here. Your thoughts on the race tomorrow and what you can do on this new track?

Mark WEBBER: Yeah, as Seb said it has been a good challenge for all of us, new venue. Tricky to work out the right strategy for qualifying. The tyres weren't easy for one timed laps so we had to work out how we were going to do the strategy. Lots of teams tried different styles to get the best lap time out of the car. First sector it was tricky to get right on one time. I could have done better in the first sector on my only run basically and then I got yellow flags with Felipe (Massa), so I couldn't do my second lap. But overall good job from the team. Came to a new venue but prepared well and have laid a good foundation for a good race tomorrow.

Q. Sebastian, the race tomorrow, any plans for what you will do if you and Mark are running one and two towards the end of the race?

SV: No, we will see. First we have to get there and as Lewis said it is a long race. Lewis starts in fifth I think, Fernando (Alonso) behind and Jenson (Button) as well so they will surely put a lot of pressure on us. We will see. It is a long race. It is a new track, we don't now really how the tyres will respond. It looked as if the tyres should last quite a while but we have seen a couple of surprises so we will find out tomorrow. It is not the time now to worry about those things. First we have to race, race hard, enjoy and then see where we are. I think Mark and myself we obviously target to win the race. Ideally, we want to finish in one-two so it is going to be an interesting race tomorrow.

Q. Sebastian, the pace today just seems remarkable?

SV: Yeah, I was petty happy. Happy with the balance yesterday which I think was the foundation and happy throughout qualifying. Q1 was managing the traffic et cetera but we made it through on the hard tyre which was essential. Q2 I think was pretty smooth, we only needed one lap. Then we decided for Q3 to go, again, one timed lap whilst others decided to go for two laps so different strategies to get the tyres up to speed. Not easy then to hit the lap straight away especially the first sector as there aren't many corners in the first sector so you can't really warm the tyres up there. Second and third sectors are a different story as then you have got a lot of fast corners. But all in all I am very happy. A great session for us and the car was fantastic. In the end the lap was fine but it wasn't 100 per cent, a little bit here and there, but I think you always come out of the car thinking that maybe here and there you could have gained a bit of time. But overall very happy with the result. It is good to start the race from the front tomorrow and I think it is going to be an interesting race.

Q. You have mentioned that going off-line it is very dirty. How much of a hazard is that going to be tomorrow when you are lapping people?

SV: We all want to race so the people who are in the front of the field and the people who get lapped, we all want to stay on the racing line and drive our own race so could be tricky. Off-line it is quite dusty and depending on where you have to go off-line or where you are forced to go off-line to maybe lap another car to make a pass could be critical for the next couple of corners. It is not only you lose in that corner where you went off-line but also afterwards just to get the tyres back to the grip level you had before. In this regard it could be interesting, especially at the beginning of the race it will be quite slippery. We have seen that at the beginning of all the sessions. To be honest, once the dust had gone the asphalt is very, very grippy and the cars stick to the ground. All in all they did a great job. It is a new track and first time we have been other places there has always been a little bit here and a little bit there. I think it was not an easy project, but you don't really see much of that apart from a bit of dust on the cars.

Q. Lewis, you aborted your second run that time. It looked as though you lost a little bit of time in the second sector. Was that the reason why?

LH: No, it just wasn't a better lap. My first lap was very, very good. Probably as much as I could have got out of the car. I think I may have been able to get maybe half-a-tenth or a tenth maybe but it was very much on the limit on the second run. I was a tenth down going into turn 15 but I didn't see much point in wasting the tyres for a potential half-a-tenth or something so I came in. But overall very, very happy with my position. I am starting from fifth but this is as good as I could really have hoped for and the track is actually really great as Sebastian just said. I think real congratulations to the people here in India who have put together this circuit as it is not breaking up and it is really fantastic to drive.

Q. You gave the impression yesterday that there was more to come. Was there much changes made overnight?

LH: I don't think I did.

Q. OK, I got the wrong impression. Was there much changes made overnight?

LH: No.

Q. So you were pretty much straight on the set-up that you wanted?

LH: Yeah.

Q. That hasn't evolved with the track?

LH: No, not really. Through the session you put on more front wing but otherwise not really made any changes throughout the weekend. Simulator - track, the correlation seems to be quite good.

Q. Mark, you might have been starting third but you are starting second. I don't know if there is a clean or a dirty side here yet?

MW: It doesn't look like it, but we will find out tomorrow. It was an interesting session. Quality around here was always going to be pretty interesting given what we saw in P3 and also yesterday with what we saw with the tyres and how they are behaving and how you prepare them and get them ready. We saw some different strategies, people looking to do a few laps, people electing to do one lap. First sector is very tricky when you do one timed so definitely left some change on the table there myself, but after that I was pretty happy with the lap. I haven't seen Seb's second lap as I didn't get to do mine because of the yellow flag so pretty happy with the recovery from P2 when I was in a bit of strife really. Feel much, much happier with the car now and we have certainly done what we can to help it for the race so looking forward to it.

Q. How much did you change as yesterday you said it didn't seem to be so good yesterday?

MW: Yeah, quite a lot. We are also at a point in the season when you can also try and test a few things so we started off very well in P1, both of us obviously, and Seb had a pretty smooth P2. Mine was less smooth just for different reasons because we always try to improve the car and also try to gain some experience for future references so in the end we basically went back to a lot of the stuff. Like Lewis said the simulators are pretty good these days but you just don't quite know how the grip level is going to go on the track, but it is not too bad and it is probably the smoothest track in the world actually. It is very, very smooth and it is pretty quick and exciting. I think the debris off-line will get worse during the race and in the quick chicanes we are going to have a lot of much when people are making some errors here and there so that's going to happen. But, generally, it should be fine.

Q. Sebastian, this is your 28th pole position, just like Fangio. What does it mean for you and is beating records the way you stay motivated for the end of the season?

SV: I didn't know (about the Fangio statistic). Yeah, it's definitely special. I think the difference... I think the time when Fangio achieved that was different compared to today. He didn't do that many races, especially as they had less races per season. I obviously know a lot of the names in Formula One from the past, former drivers and roughly what they achieved. I'm not an expert but it's definitely great, it's special to be part of a sport that has so much history because it always allows you to compare yourself in many ways, which I think is great, and not just today, back 20 years ago it was the same and in another 20 years time it will probably still be the same. But I'm not really jumping into the car thinking "OK, one more and I will equal Fangio" in this case. I think you really have to focus on what you do, and that's the way eventually you get to somewhere like that. But I'm still motivated, even without knowing too many numbers and statistics. But of course, it's very special to hear that.

Q. Mark, it has been suggested that Red Bull might use team orders to give you a victory. Would you be satisfied if you were handed a win like that? And it has been suggested that Red Bull might change focus to ensure that you would win a race. What would be done differently from what has been done earlier this season?

MW: Nothing will be different. There's been a lot of talk from the team but no talk from me. I don't want any positions off Sebastian, for the remainder of the year. Nothing will change.

Q. One thing became quite clear in qualifying as well as in practice: whenever somebody went off line, a lot of dust obscured the track and that put some drivers off. Is that going to be a hazard tomorrow? Is the dust obscuring the track going to be a hazard if somebody goes off line and onto the grass?

SV: Yeah, I think it will affect us. Obviously, if you're right behind the car in front, depending on where the car goes off, it puts up some dust on the line and then you pick up that dust, you lose grip if it's in a corner, and you might lose a little bit of grip for the next couple of corners, so yes, it affects us. On the other hand, we've been practising now for two days and we had people in front of us going off the circuit, joining it again and I think we know roughly what to expect. The real tricky bit is when the people go off so much and put a lot of dust up, so that you can't actually see where you are going, but yeah, the marshals are aware. We've had some incidents over the weekend and nothing happened, nothing bad happened so far, so that's good.

Q. Sebastian, you seem to be making this a habit of sorts. It's almost like you could do it in your sleep now. Seriously, a new track, new country, new situation: is it as easy as it looks for us from here?

SV: I think it's easier for you to sit in a chair and watch. We're still busy out there. It has been quite tricky, as I said, we have to really make sure we stay on the line, and in qualifying you push as hard as you can, trying to squeeze every single bit out of the car, a little bit too much and then you're off-line, you immediately lose quite a lot of time, so the circuit in that regard doesn't forgive your mistakes, which I think is good, it's the challenge we have to face. But surely it's not easy. I enjoy what I do. I was very excited when I came here. I had a bit of time on Wednesday to go around and have a look at different things, offtrack, so that was very interesting. It's a very inspiring country in many ways, it's very different to what we know in Europe. It's great to see that and I think there's a lot of lessons we can learn, we can take on board for the future.

Q. Mark, Christian was speaking on Thursday about the desire within the team to get you second in the drivers' championship. Does that actually mean anything to you? He said he wanted to make it the perfect season for Red Bull.

MW: I think wins are more important for me.

Q. Question for Lewis and one of the Red Bull drivers: I just wondered where you ended up generally speaking on downforce, whether this circuit compares with others, if you can categorise it roughly without giving away too many secrets?

LH: I think the downforce level has been pretty similar for the last couple of races. In Suzuka we were at our maximum, Korea we were at our maximum and here, a bit less than our maximum but very, very similar, same wings.

MW: Yeah, it's pretty high on downforce around here. Obviously, it would be nice to be lower in the first sector but you've got a huge amount of quick corners and big combinations, sort of Suzuka-esque and a quick sort of Budapest if you like, so it's a busy and demanding second and third sector for the car, so you need plenty of load on.

Q. Felipe broke his suspension by going too deep into a chicane, I think it's eight and nine. Either into a hole or kerb - I don't know. Is that a concern?

MW: Haven't seen the incident. If he's hit the kerb... I think Kamui hit it the other day with the middle of the chassis and he went into the air, so

maybe it's better to misjudge it a lot more than just misjudge it by not much. We know there are some high apex kerbs here, which are trying to keep us from doing exactly that, obviously cutting and making the radius nicer for ourselves. I haven't seen the incident yet, but it looks like he's had a failure off the back of the contact with that. Yeah, try and stay away from them, I suppose. That's the best thing but it's not always easy.

LH: I think they're the best kerbs we've had, the actual kerb itself, not necessarily the bollard at the bump at the back but again, the orange parts are a lot shallower – not as high or steep as at some of the other circuits. They've done a great job with them. You can ride the rest of the kerb and they're quite wide. Normally, you can lose a bit of time on them but I think they're great.

SV: I can't think of any particularly danger area. It's the first incident in that style – linked to a kerb – that we've seen this weekend. I haven't seen it but I think it's probably more down to the fact that in qualifying you try maybe a little bit harder, maybe a little bit extra and try to go on the limit, also in terms of how much kerb you take. I think eight/nine is quite quick and it's very easy to maybe be close to half a metre misplaced by going in a little bit too early, which can obviously have an effect, not actually riding the kerb but the bit behind the kerb, too hard. I will definitely take a look, but I think the only thing we can do now in case there's a problem is stay away from them.

Q. Sebastian, you won the first ever Grand Prix in Abu Dhabi, and almost did the same last year in Korea. How much would it mean to you to win the first ever Indian Grand Prix?

SV: A lot. As I've said and many drivers agree, it's a great circuit, a great challenge, a new track, a new challenge as well. Many times before going into this weekend I was asked the question what is the motivation going into this race, why are you here? I even had to explain why I turn up. To be honest, we are racing, we are having the Grand Prix of India here for the first time and every one of us would be extremely happy and proud to be the one to win it, so that's the target for tomorrow and not lacking any motivation, so yes, it would make me very proud.

F1 Sofa Blog – The Indian Grand Prix as it happened

There's drama on the grid at the Indian Grand Prix, as Ferrari make last-minute repairs to Fernando Alonso's car with only ten minutes to go before the lights go out.

Ferrari's front wing has been the focus of media attention all weekend, after practice footage showed sparks flying from the front of Felipe Massa's car as the wing scraped along the ground. The team were concerned enough to take the experimental new wing to the FIA for additional load tests, all of which it passed.

Massa sported a different wing in qualifying, with less evident flexing, but a late crash over the kerbs saw the replacement part fit only for the bin. Ever since, there has been avid speculation about the spec of front wing the Brazilian driver will be fitted with for the race, and whether or not it will last.

One of the front wing endplates on Alonso's car doesn't appear to be properly affixed. The problem was spotted not by the team, but by the BBC as they leaned in for a closer look at the potentially controversial component. Ferrari mechanics have been fixing the wing on the grid, but there is the potential for mid-race problems.

And they're off!

Vettel holds the lead, Alonso makes a good start, and there's contact aplenty at the back of the grid. Button makes it past Alonso and Webber off the start, eventually taking P2, while Massa passes Hamilton.

Kobayashi and Glock made contact at the back of the pack going into the first corner; Glock and Barrichello pitted for new wings at the end of the first lap. Trulli got caught up in the crash, but suffered a right rear puncture.

Kobayashi stops out on track, the first retirement of the afternoon. Perez, who started the race on the hard compound, pits on the first lap for softs. The Sauber rookie is notoriously light on his rubber, and will now run to the end of the race.

By the start of lap 4, Vettel has 2.7s on Button in P2. While the Indian track might be challenging, it's not stopping the Red Bull driver from getting up to his usual trick of pulling out an unassailable lead in the first few laps.

Lap 5, and we have another retirement. Glock has given up the ghost after his first corner crash.

Button and Webber are now fighting for P2. The McLaren driver is 0.3 slower in the first sector, but 0.3s faster in the second. The two cars appear to be evenly matched, and the DRS isn't yet able to make a difference.

Lap 6, and Button sets a personal best in the second sector. But the gap between Webber and the Brit has been reducing lap by lap. Webber is lapping 0.1s a lap faster than Button, and more battling is inevitable.

While Button has been fighting to protect P2, his teammate has been staring at the back end of Massa's Ferrari. Hamilton needs to pass the Brazilian driver, but given the unhappy endings to their recent on track battles, this is an overtake he will approach with caution.

Hamilton and Massa are currently split by 1.5s, but the gap is reducing.

At the end of lap 8, the order in the top ten is Vettel, Button, Webber, Alonso, Massa, Hamilton, Rosberg, Schumacher, Sutil, Senna.

Schumacher had a good start, and made up three places off the line. Di Resta was not so lucky, and is now down in P18. One-stopping Perez has made it up to P19 on his soft tyres, with all bar one of the men ahead due to pit at least once.

Perez and di Resta are both in the same boat – the two drivers started the race on the hard compound, and stopped immediately for their single switch to softs. Perez passed di Resta early on, but the Scot reclaimed his position and has worked his way up to P17 over the course of the past lap.

At the front of the pack, Button is extending his lead on Webber. On lap 12, the McLaren driver extended his lead over the Red Bull by 0.6s, prompting calls for the Australian to pit for fresh rubber,

Lap 14, and Maldonado is out of the race. The Williams driver has parked his car on a service road in the approach to Turn 4 after losing all power to the car. It looked to be a gearbox failure. The yellow flags are out, but there's no need for a Safety Car.

Webber and Alonso pit together at the end of lap 16, followed in by Hamilton. Webber comes out on track ahead of Schumacher, while Alonso slots in behind. The Mercedes driver hasn't pitted yet, but every second behind the silver car is going to cause the Ferrari driver problems.

One lap later, and Massa and Rosberg put together. Massa comes out behind his teammate, leaving both Ferraris frustrated behind the Mercedes.

Lap 18, and Alonso makes it past Schumacher. Next, Massa has to get past if he is to make the most of his fresh rubber. Hamilton is just behind the pair, and needs to get cleanly past two of his season's great nemeses.

Button pits at the end of lap 18, and returns to the track in P2. Vettel pits at the end of lap 19, and holds onto his lead despite the stop.

Contrary to expectations, di Resta pits for a second time. The Force India driver obviously isn't on the one-stop strategy I expected.

Kovalainen should be commended for his performance this afternoon. The Team Lotus driver – who has yet to pit – was running in P10 on lap 21, an unprecedented situation for the team.

The Finn started the race in P18, and while he has benefited from three retirements, his on track performance has been impressive.

On the end of lap 22, Kovalainen pits from P10, returning to the track in P15.

Lap 23, and Hamilton starts looking to make a move on Massa. The McLaren driver is performing much better on his current set of scrubbed softs than he was able to manage in the first stint on qualifying rubber. Massa ran wide at Turn 3, allowing the British driver to close in.

Lap 24, and Hamilton and Massa make contact. The Ferrari spins into the run-off area, while Hamilton returns to the track with a broken front wing dragging along the track.

Hamilton tried to overtake the Brazilian on the inside, but Massa held the racing line, seemingly unable to see the McLaren. After a trip to the pits for a new wing, Hamilton returns to the track in P9.

Massa stays out on track and holds P6, but starts running wide and might be due for a return trip to the pits.

The Massa-Hamilton incident is now under investigation by the stewards.

On lap 26, Buemi retires with engine failure, pulling his car as far into the run-off area as possible. The yellow flags are out, but there doesn't appear to be the need for a Safety Car.

Making a bad day worse, Massa is now suffering gearbox issues.

Massa has been issued with a drive-through penalty for causing a collision with Hamilton. I don't think anyone saw that one coming.

The Ferrari driver serves his penalty immediately, and returns to the track just ahead of ... you guessed it ... Hamilton. Well, not just. But Hamilton passes Alguersuari at the start of lap 32 for P8, and the Ferrari is the next car on track.

At the end of lap 32, Massa pits again, this time for a new front wing and hard tyres. The Ferrari driver returns to the track in P11, miles behind Hamilton. The new front wing, by the way, is the uber-flexible one mentioned at the beginning of this article.

The end of lap 33, and the order of the top ten is: Vettel, Button, Webber, Alonso, Rosberg, Schumacher, Hamilton, Alguersuari, Sutil, and Perez.

Lap 34, and Massa's race comes to an end, thanks to a broken pushrod caused by running over the kerbs. This is the second time this weekend that Massa has suffered the same failure. Yellow flags are out, but no need for a Safety Car.

Meanwhile, further down the grid, Kovalainen has worked his way back up to P13 now that all cars ahead have pitted. Team Lotus are keen to secure their P10 in the constructors' standings, and a P12 or P13 finish for the team would be a great boost to their prospects.

Of the other backmarkers, Karthikeyan is currently running in P16, D'Ambrosio in P17, Ricciardo in P18, and Trulli in P20. Glock retired on the first lap.

Lap 38 and Webber pits for the hard tyre. The Australian driver spent the past few laps losing speed to Alonso, and his rears looked heavily worn in the stop. Webber loses a place to Alonso in the process, but he now has 21 laps – with no stops – to get back onto the podium.

Webber's first laps on the hard compound aren't as slow as expected; Ferrari react by pitting Alonso for his own stint on hards. The Spanish driver returns to the track in P3, and Webber will have a fight on his hands.

It's a quiet few laps, with the only real drama coming from Perez and Petrov, as they start to close up on Sutil in what looks to be a battle for P10.

Rosberg and Hamilton pit together at the end of lap 46, with both drivers switching to hards. Button pits immediately afterwards, also to swap for

hards.

The order of the top ten is now: Vettel, Button, Alonso, Webber, Schumacher, Rosberg, Alguersuari, Hamilton, Senna, Sutil.

Vettel pits on lap 48, and manages to hold the lead.

Webber runs wide at the exit of Turn 3 on lap 50, losing time in his chase on Alonso.

Lap 51, and Schumacher pits from P5. But it's a tactical stop that sees the Mercedes driver emerge from the pits one second ahead of teammate Rosberg.

The closing laps of the race don't offer much in terms of on-track action. While there's the promise of a few battles lower down the order, the margins between the frontrunners mean that it's unlikely we'll see much action in the points in the five laps remaining.

With four laps to go, there have been no changes of position. Lap 57 sees Petrov attempt to pass Perez: the two have been running closely for quite some time but the Renault hasn't been able to pass the Sauber.

Three laps to go, and Senna pits for a run on the hard tyre. The Renault driver returns to the track in P12, promoting Perez into the points.

Last lap, and some of the backmarkers head to the pits to complete their tyre option requirements. Webber and Alonso are running closely, but we're not going to see a battle now.

Sebastian Vettel wins the maiden Indian Grand Prix, in a race that also sees him take the record for most laps led in a single season.

Indian Grand Prix results

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull)
2. Jenson Button (McLaren)
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari)
4. Mark Webber (Red Bull)
5. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes)
6. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes)
7. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren)
8. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso)
9. Adrian Sutil (Force India)
10. Sergio Perez (Sauber)
11. Vitaly Petrov (Renault)
12. Bruno Senna (Renault)
13. Paul di Resta (Force India)
14. Heikki Kovalainen (Team Lotus)
15. Rubens Barrichello (Williams)
16. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin)
17. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT)
18. Daniel Ricciardo (HRT)
19. Jarno Trulli (Team Lotus)

Felipe Massa (Ferrari) RET

Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) RET

Pastor Maldonado (Williams) RET

Timo Glock (Virgin) RET

Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) RET

F1 Sofa Blog – Sunday press conference in India

Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) managed a grand slam at Buddh International Circuit, claiming pole position, fastest lap, and race victory, while also leading every lap of the race.

Joining Vettel in the post-race press conference were Jenson Button (McLaren) and Fernando Alonso (Ferrari).

Q: Sebastian, pole, you led every lap and set the fastest lap. Was this your most perfect win of the season do you think?

Sebastian VETTEL: Obviously it was a very good race for us. I enjoyed the time in the lead very much. I had a little bit of a fight with Jenson. It was always around four seconds and strangely he kept closing in around the pit-stops. I don't know, I was pushing very hard into the box and out of the box but we seemed to lose a little bit there so we need to understand. But on the circuit it was crucial to manage the tyres, make sure that you have enough of them left in the end, so all in all it was a very smooth race. The car was very well balanced. I felt even a little bit more confident on the hard tyres at the end, but overall a fantastic performance. Thanks to the whole team. Thanks to Renault. I think exceptional job so far, the whole season without any problems but to be honest with you it is a little bit mixed emotions. On the one hand I am very, very happy. It is the first grand prix in India and I am very proud to be the first winner and I think we can be as a team but on the other hand looking back to last weekend we lost two of our mates. I didn't know Dan Wheldon but he was a big name in motorsport. I got to know this year Marco Simoncelli and our thoughts are with them. Yes, we are ready to take certain risks when we jump into the car but we obviously pray that every time nothing happens but sometimes you get reminded and it is the last thing that we want to see. So, as I said, it is a bit mixed emotions and our thoughts are with them at this moment.

Q: Jenson, your engineer said at one point 'we can race Vettel' but I guess it just proved a little bit too difficult today?

Jenson BUTTON: Yeah, it was. The last race I really struggled on the first lap and lost a lot of places so I wanted to redeem myself here. Got a good start and was able to get up to second by Turn Four and then it was basically trying to hang on to Sebastian. His pace was very good, he didn't seem to make any mistakes and every time through the pit stops we gained a little bit. I don't know if it was the stop itself or if it was after the stop, but on tyres when I came out of the box I felt very good. I felt very competitive and that was when I could really close the gap down. But as soon as Seb got into a rhythm I couldn't do anything about it really - but all in all for the team I think we have done a perfect job today. We couldn't have done anything else. Yesterday was a disaster for me in qualifying but I think we have put it right here so a good race but, as Seb said, it is a tough weekend for everyone in motorsport. The last two weekends have been very, very difficult. We have had two fatalities so it is very difficult especially with Dan. I knew Dan from a very early age, he was the guy we always had to beat in the early formulas so very sad also so I think we should dedicate this first Indian race to Dan and obviously Marco, another super talented youngster. He was the most amazing guy to watch on a bike so I think we should dedicate this to them.

Q: Fernando, your battle was with Mark Webber and you got him at the second round of pit-stops. Tell us about your race.

Fernando ALONSO: Yeah, we didn't make the perfect start today. To be on a very new circuit and starting on the clean side I think we didn't have the grip that we were expecting and the other side of the grid they started a little better than us and we lost a couple of positions there. Then we race with Mark until the second pit-stop where, a little bit surprisingly, he decided to stop and we did two extra laps so we were able to overtake him so extremely happy to win the podium in this first race here in India. To have this feeling and to taste the champagne is always nice in a first race in a new country. As Sebastian and Jenson said, mixed feelings this weekend with sad weeks for motorsport with the two accidents. I think we all raced for them today and try to go ahead but always remember these two fantastic people.

Q: Sebastian, you have set a new record today for the most laps led in a Formula 1 season, taking over from Nigel Mansell. I bet you just don't want this year to end?

SV: No, I don't mind. I think we can continue. The car is fantastic. The team is enjoying and we are on a run basically since the beginning of the season and it is great. We enjoy every race. The great thing is you walk into the garage every morning and you see the guys and they are flat out. They are pushing very hard and there is no sign of getting lazy and not paying attention to detail. It is really enjoyable to see that knowing that we have already achieved a lot this year, but we are still hungry so we are not lacking motivation at any stage. All the people come back with their questions but we seem to give them the right answers. I love what I do. I think we all do so it is great and in a way we don't want this to end.

Q: Jenson, tell us about your start briefly. You got past Fernando and Mark. Exciting times?

JB: It was. The start off the line didn't feel that good but I think there is such low grip off the start line. Then I was able to get Fernando into Turn One. I think he went a little bit deep and I knew I had to get a good exit out of Turn Three. It is such a long straight. Got a good exit, was in Mark's tow and when you are in that situation where there is a car behind you can't do anything about it. He covered the inside, did the right thing, but I had enough speed to go around the outside and carry the speed. It was an exciting part of the race. Then I had Mark behind me for about eight laps, pushing me really very hard. He tried to get down the outside of me into turn four, we both braked very, very late and both ran wide almost off the circuit but kept the position and then I was able to pull away. I think he damaged his tyres quite a bit. But it was a fun race. A little bit frustrating that I couldn't catch up with Seb, but we did a good job this weekend and that's the important thing. Pace isn't quite there, but hopefully in the last two races we can make that little step.

Q: Fernando, what is your side of the story of the battle at the start?

FA: Yeah, the start was not perfect so the first two or three seconds we lost too much ground there. Then I tried to recover in Turn One, braking a little bit late, but there was not the grip to brake that late and I lost a little bit more. It didn't compromise the race as I don't think we were able to fight with Sebastian at any point. Being second or third in the first lap it didn't change too much the full picture of the race. We are not that super competitive at this part of the year but we keep on having podiums thanks to the fantastic job here by people at the track. Today again we had a little problem with the front wing on the grid and the mechanics did a fantastic job in the last two or three minutes before we start on the green light so again thanks to the whole team for the fantastic effort with the things that we have in our hands. As everybody knows, next year is our main target and the same for everybody.

Q: Sebastian, just sum up the thoughts about this first ever Indian Grand Prix.

SV: It is great, I think, what the people did here in a short amount of time. We heard about it a couple of years ago but to put up this arena is incredible. Surely there are little bits here and there that are not 100 per cent finished but now the people know so they will fix that for next year I am quite sure. I think all in all it was fantastic. I am very proud, as I said, to be the first winner here in India. I think it is a very impressive country, very different to what we probably know from Europe, but very inspiring. If you keep your eyes and ears open I think you are able to learn a lot, the way the people handle things here. It is a big country, a lot of people, but sometimes it looks very different but they get along with it and they are very happy here. They enjoy life and in the end that's what it is all about. If your life comes to an end it is more the thoughts, the emotions, the friends, the friendships you take with you rather than whatever you have in your bank account. Even the people have so little here I think in a way they are much richer than a lot of people back in Europe so there is a lot we can learn and it is a great race, great event. The circuit is fantastic so all in all it is fantastic so thanks a lot to India and all the people here.

Q: Sebastian, quite a few people were questioning your motivation earlier on this weekend. That should put an end to all that talk?

SV: Yes, I think so. I said everything yesterday, on Friday and Thursday regarding these comments. As I touched on the whole team is still very hungry and the best thing is we still have two races to go so we enjoy it a lot today so motivation is not an issue.

Q: You just seemed to set nothing but purple laps. You let Jenson have one or two, but not very many. You were just so quick.

SV: Yeah, it was a long race to be honest. A lot of laps. The circuit is quite challenging. It is one of the difficult ones throughout the season and very easy to do a mistake, very easy to go a little bit beyond the limit, a little bit over the limit, get a little bit off line and you end up in the dust and dirt and you have to fight your way back. Not only in that particular corner but also for a couple of corners afterwards. Not so easy with traffic. Quite a big chance to lose a lot of time and as I was racing Jenson in the distance always around three-and-a-half, four-and-a-half seconds. You want to get through and ideally maybe get a little bit of DRS here and there for the straights to get a little bit of extra free lap time. But the car was great. Start obviously was important. I was focussing a lot on Turn Three, the first lap, to make sure I had a bit of a cushion going on that long, long, long back straight. In the first lap you are vulnerable so it was crucial to have a clean exit which I had as we saw with Mark who lost position to Jenson at that stage. Afterwards I was able to pull away in the first couple of laps, maintain the gap, and in the end I was feeling very happy. End of the first stint I

was able to pull away. Jenson pitted so we had to react but second stint then wasn't that straightforward as the first one with traffic et cetera. Bit more tricky to manage the tyres and Jenson was at some stages very strong. In the end I found the rhythm again and got quicker but, again, Jenson pitted in front of us and we reacted the lap after. Warm up on the hards wasn't too bad and actually I felt quite comfortable on the hard tyre so I was able to push throughout and also at the end with the strong laps. Got some calls from my engineer reminding me what is the target, there is not trophy for fastest lap. Fortunately we were able to get both. The car was great. All in all it was a fantastic event. The race was fantastic. We were in a comfortable position controlling the race from the front, but always to have Jenson in the mirrors and not willing to disappear doesn't make your life easy so we had to push throughout the whole race and it was enough. At the end we were a bit more comfortable but fantastic. I am very happy, but as I touched on in the press conference earlier obviously mixed emotions with two tragic past weekends. For everyone who is a fan of motorsport it was a hard time we had to go through. On the one hand I am very happy and very proud to be the first winner of this grand prix. There were a lot of people, a big event, great atmosphere, all the grandstand nearly sold out so great to be part of that. But on the other hand we have to pay a certain respect to those two guys who lost their lives. Our thoughts are with them, especially with their families. We should never forget those two young, very committed race drivers.

Q: Jenson, you said yesterday you lacked grip in qualifying. What was it like in the race itself?

JB: Well it wasn't too bad, I finished second. Yesterday I struggled in qualifying basically just getting a rhythm. Whatever could go wrong in qualify it seemed to and sometimes you have sessions like that. Sometimes everything goes in your way. The race was very different. I had a good start, got past Fernando into Turn One and then it was about judging where to put the car into Turn Three as I had Mark in front that I wanted to overtake but I also had Fernando behind me trying to overtake me. You have to be very careful where you put the car in the entry into Turn Three but judged it well, got a good run on Mark and was able to get him into Turn Four. Then Mark proceeded to push me for the next eight laps around the circuit, pushed me really hard actually. Had a go into Turn Four, we both braked very late, both ran wide, but kept the position and then I was able to kick in and pull a gap. Then it was about trying to set off after Sebastian. But it was very, very tricky. At the pit stops I think the guys did a tremendous job and we seemed to be good on new tyres or after we had put a new set on and the pace was good. But as soon as Sebastian got into a rhythm we couldn't touch them. But as far as races go I don't think we put a foot wrong and as a team we did a perfect job this weekend but we just didn't have the pace of the Red Bulls and Sebastian. I think we need to say a big congratulations to the Indian people for their efforts on building this circuit because the circuit itself is, I think in years to come, we are going to think of it as one of the greats. It is a very special circuit and I really, really enjoy driving around here. I hope we put on a good show and it is also great to see the excitement in the crowd. The people that are here, as there are quite a few people here, they are really getting into the mood and really getting into the action and it is good to see, really good to see, so a very special weekend and thank you to them.

Q: Fernando, interesting battle with Mark Webber but it seems Mark just doesn't have the straightline speed or DRS or whatever?

FA: Well I think if they have also the straightline speed it would maybe be too much.

Q: At least you jumped him at the pit-stop?

FA: Yeah, we know that with the hard tyres the first two laps maybe they are not as good as the soft and we were a little bit debating on the radio what to do in the second stop. Stop one lap before Mark or wait? The team did the right call, be a little bit calm, wait for Mark to stop and then try to take advantage of the extra lap or the extra two laps expecting some warm up issues with the hard tyre for them. It did happen. After Mark stopped the team told me that we were gaining time so to do an extra lap so we did two laps more than him and we jump Mark at the stop. Then in the last stint it was a question mark as last couple of races we put the hard tyre on and we struggle a lot and we have been overtaken by them quite easy so even if we were third at that point of the race we were not sure and we had to push for 20 laps maximum. Try to defend the position so at the end it was very close. I think Mark crossed the line 1.5 or one second behind me so with more laps I think the podium was getting more and more difficult so the finish arrived in the right moment.

Q: We heard a lot about how good the circuit was in practice et cetera. What was it like to race on for 60 laps?

FA: It was fantastic. I agree completely with Jenson and Sebastian. The circuit is very nice to drive. Okay, it was a very narrow line of normal grip and outside that line there was a lot of dust and low grip but this is normal for new circuits and I think with the years that will improve. The circuit has a little bit of everything. Long straights and very wide entries for the hairpins, which allowed us to try some overtaking manoeuvres and put on a good show on Sunday. Two DRS zones that, I think, worked okay today with more overtaking possibilities and then the second and third sector which is a combination of corners in fifth, sixth gear which we normally love to drive and overall it was a fantastic weekend. A lot of people came, very passionate about our sport, to be here the first time and the circuit was completely finished and in a very good condition in a very short period of time. I am sure that things will improve, but already the level is very high, so congratulations.

Q: Vettel, we have to say V for victory and V for Vettel. Speaking about India, you say that here people don't have money but they're happy, compared to Europe. Is this a very fond memory of the most memorable race of your life so far?

SV: Well, as I said, I think some things are very difficult to imagine for us. If you look where we come from, I think it's hard to imagine things if you haven't seen them. The really surprising bit for us... where sometimes you measure happiness in our lives, in our world, with what you have achieved, what you have etc. For the people here, it doesn't really matter, they're happy with what they have, even if you compare they have so little, but they are happy and friendly, helpful, respectful. Obviously I haven't spent a lot of time here, so I can't judge as well as people from India, but it was very inspiring when I had a bit of time to spend in the country. I went to see the Taj Mahal which is obviously a touristy thing to do but driving there by car, and not falling asleep because the roads were pretty... it was a good adventure, let's say. Keeping your eyes open, there are a lot of things which make you appreciate a lot of things much more than you probably do. Yeah, it opens your eyes, as long as you allow yourself to look at certain things, so I think it was an inspiration and something that you should never forget. All in all, it was great to be here, a great circuit, which obviously - speaking about our job, about racing, that's what we judge most, the circuit is fantastic to drive. I was surprised that the race went by pretty quickly. Obviously I was always trying to keep the gap to him (Button), trying to push but my engineer came on the radio and said 'twelve laps to go' and I was surprised because I thought, bloody hell, that went by quickly. It's a good sign, because you enjoy the circuit and there are some great corners as Fernando said, high speed corners which we usually enjoy a lot, because it allows us to put us on the limit, the cars on the limit so great to be here. Having had debuts in different places the last couple of years, this will be one of the races that settles in very quickly and we will all be happy to come back. Even though there has only been one race so far, I'm already looking forward to next year.

Q: When Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, he said those famous words 'one small step by a human being and one giant leap for mankind.' Any famous first words?

JB: I think it should just be the winner who has these special words.

SV: Dhanyawaad... aapki aankhei bahut khoobsurat hai (thank you, your eyes are beautiful). Obviously that's for the ladies of India. You know the

girls, to all the girls in India, you have beautiful women in this country. They have beautiful eyes.

JB: Beautiful smiles.

SV: Thank you very much. As I said we all enjoyed it, everyone is happy to be here and happy to come back which is a good sign.

Q: India has an advertising tag-line which says Incredible India. Would you guys like to endorse it or add to it after the weekend you've spent here?

SV: I think I answered that question before already. I agree, yes.

JB: Yeah, I agree with Sebastian.

FA: I agree with both.

Q: Vettel, we appreciate you have said good things about India but twice you have mentioned that India is different from what you know in Europe. Would you like to elaborate what impression you had about this country before landing here and what differences you found eventually?

SV: Well, it's difficult to say. Expectations, you obviously only know from what people tell you. To be honest I didn't expect anything really. I heard a lot of good things, I heard a lot of bad things. I prefer to come here myself and take a look, so I took a little bit of time to have a look outside the circuit, as I said. Basically what I saw is very inspiring, it's very different. I think you will find the same if you go there. Sometimes it's difficult to imagine for us, which is why I think you really have to come here but it's a country that I think is very interesting to travel around, because I think there are a lot of things you can learn. Some things you have to get used to because they are so different, but it's not a drama, it's a different culture, the people are different but as I said, they are very helpful, very friendly and happy, so that's a good thing.

Q: Alonso, you said things will improve in future. What areas do you think need improvement?

FA: I think when you host the first race even in a new country, there are things that for sure you learn and you improve. I think the paddock, even if it's finished and it's working fine, I think next year it will be even better, in terms of how the teams will settle, how the electricity will work, after we had some problems on Thursday, which is very normal for a first time that we use an environment like this one. I think the circuit itself will improve as well. There was too much sand on the circuit on the first day and now the circuit is in a very good condition, on Sunday, after the race. I think the starting point next year will be a lot better than the starting point this year. We saw a couple of issues with kerbs with Felipe, yesterday breaking his suspension, today again another suspension, so I'm sure that they will find a better solution for this type of kerb, obviously stopping us cutting the corner but in a different way, to avoid any risk or any accident that it can cause at the moment. As I said, the starting point is already very high, from zero to ten maybe it's nine so it's very good but the ten will be reached very soon.

Q: Fernando, two races left and 13 points behind Jenson, do you still believe it's possible for you to cover the gap and get second place in the championship?

FA: Yes, perfectly possible, that's for sure, because there are 50 points available but as we said a couple of races ago, OK, finishing second is maybe better than finishing fifth. We are four drivers all together: Hamilton, Jenson, Mark and me but it's not a big priority for us. If I finish second it's OK, if I finish fourth it's OK. I will not remember the 2011 season if I finish second or third. I will probably remember the win in Silverstone and a couple of nice starts and a couple of nice races, but the position of the championship, once you are no longer in the hunt for the World Championship win, the other positions are less relevant. I think we will try to do two last good races, try to be on the podium if we can, which is always a good feeling, taste the champagne and take the trophy after a hard weekend, as it was this one. I think I have to congratulate the team, they did a fantastic job to maximise the potential we have in our hands now, we know that the car is not as competitive as it was a couple of months ago but we are still fighting for podiums. Today we had a problem on the front wing on the lap to the grid, twenty minutes before the start, and they worked until the last minute just to put it all together and they did it perfectly right and the car was very well balanced all through the races. Everyone is doing 100 percent of his job to maximise the potential and the podiums are very welcome. In the last two races, I think we will continue in this direction.

Q: Jenson, when you look at the lap times, sector one and sector two were pretty evenly matched, but you consistently lost to Sebastian in the last sector, three to four tenths. It's the shortest sector with just four corners: where are you losing?

JB: I haven't got a clue! That's the first I know about it. I don't know. I'm guessing turn 13, 14, 15 and 16 probably! I don't know why that's different to the other sectors. I'm surprised that I didn't lose more in the middle sector because that's been a little bit of a weakness throughout the weekend but we've obviously sorted that out, but yeah, there are two high speed corners in that sector and two low speed corners so it's strange why there's such a difference.

Q: Jenson, Sebastian's not going to be untouchable in the last couple of races is he? I know, when you get the chance, you can push him hard during the race, and just for Fernando, what is your priority then in the next two races? Have you got one?

JB: I don't have an answer for you really. Is he going to be untouchable? I don't know. I hope not, and we're going to do everything we can to make sure that he doesn't win the next two races but he's obviously been very strong all year. It's very very difficult to challenge Red Bull and Sebastian, but we're doing everything we can and I think today we did everything right but we just weren't quick enough, so for the next two weeks, we've got to hope that we can make some improvements for Abu Dhabi, a circuit where they're generally very quick but then again, they were generally very quick in Japan, Suzuka, so... Hopefully we will work well there and we will get everything right and we can challenge Sebastian.

FA: Our priority will be 2012, car, team, me. I cannot tell you where I need to improve!

Q: Sebastian, I was just curious to know: new circuit, new track. In terms of strategy and tactics, how was this much more demanding for you and your team to get onto the circuit and to emerge the winner straight away?

SV: I think it's always... if you have a debut on a new track, the first time you're here there are a lot of questions to be answered. Obviously the tyre choice, with hindsight, was conservative compared to some of the other races, so we knew that the soft tyre will be the quicker compound, will be faster, just how long is it going to survive? We weren't sure if we would have to pit twice or three times. In the end we only came in twice. As I said, it's difficult to know what to expect. Obviously these days we get a little bit of an idea on the simulator about the track, about the kerbs, about the layout, about the speed of the corners, but it's different when we come here. The circuit was very dusty on Friday, improved pretty quickly on the racing line, once it was clear of dust it was very grippy, the grip level was very high and we could go very quickly and I think the lap times were very quick as well. Obviously for next year we have a lot of things we can take out of this year to improve, to learn, to understand about the car, the set-up. Yes, the cars will change but the circuit is not unknown, so it's always more difficult if you talk about something that you don't know for everything, strategy, set-up. Obviously throughout the weekend it was dry, the conditions were consistent, so we were able to get the information on the Friday which helped us a lot yesterday and today so that made our lives a bit easier but, as I said, if you race somewhere for the first time, there are always a lot of boxes to be ticked.

Q: There is an important meeting on Thursday in Geneva with the F1 Commission. One of the subjects to be discussed is the possibility of one team to supply another team with a car. What's your opinion about that, is that good or bad for Formula 1?
JB: About the car, I think it's something we need to think about. It's not something we should jump straight into and give a comment. I think it's difficult for the teams that do build their own car. They put all the effort into designing a car and working on that car over a winter to suddenly be racing against a Red Bull re-badged or something or a McLaren re-badged or a Ferrari re-badged. It's a little bit unfair on teams that are in the middle of the pack and they build their own car, but I don't know the full extent of the conversations that are going to take place and when this is going to be for.

SV: It's the first time I heard about it as well. I think I agree a little bit with Jenson. Obviously you put a lot of effort in your car, the whole team is pushing. I know there are a lot of people behind us here on the track, it's not only the guys you see here changing the wheels during the race and working on the cars at the race track, there's a lot of people at the factory. They push hard to build these two cars and yeah, obviously if you have a good car... I don't know if the idea is to sell that to someone else. I don't know if it's the idea of Formula 1. It's the first time I heard about it, so I don't know.

Q: Jenson, McLaren sealed second place in the Constructors' championship today. How would rate second place in the Drivers' championship if you get it as well?

JB: First of all, yeah, congratulations to the team for second. It's sad always to say congratulations for second but it does make a big difference to the team, moving into the new season. Second in the Drivers' doesn't mean as much as second in the Constructors'. I think when you've won a World Championship, nothing else will do really except for first place. The important thing is that we're strong; for the next couple of races and every race I'm going into I'm fighting for a win. I'm not going to give up on that until it's the end of the season. I'm very excited about the challenge of Abu Dhabi and especially Brazil - I saw you (Sebastian) look over then! Yeah, that's exciting, very exciting. Second in the championship? You've beaten everyone except one person and it's that one person that you really want to beat.

Analysing the Indian Grand Prix

It's one thing watching races once a championship's been decided, it's another thing analysing them.

I feel for all of the technicians who need to spend the next few weeks analysing data for a championship that's already been won when the 2012 rule changes mean that a lot will change on the car next season.

But needs must, and there are far worse ways to spend one's time than looking back on races past.

In a race that saw Sebastian Vettel lay claim to a grand slam, there's not much point looking at performance at the head of the pack. Instead, the Indian Grand Prix was made up of a couple of noteworthy incidents, a number of retirements, and a few excellent drives.

While Jenson Button was on excellent form, as has been the case for much of the season, and Fernando Alonso managed to turn a poor start into a podium finish, the driver of the day would have to be Heikki Kovalainen.

The Finnish racer crossed the finish line ahead of a Williams for the second time in a row, and at one point was running as high as P10. For the third time this season, the Team Lotus driver finished in P14; only Monza saw a better result at P13.

At first glance you might think that Kovalainen benefitted from what was, to a certain extent, a race of attrition. There were five retirements on Sunday afternoon, and it's not unreasonable to assume that the Finn might have finished slightly lower down the grid in other circumstances.

It's not unreasonable, but it's also not correct.

After pitting for fresh rubber on lap 22, Kovalainen dropped from P10 to P15. By lap 35, the Team Lotus driver had worked his way up to P13, losing only one position over the next 25 laps. While he didn't pass anyone on track in the final stint, he did a good job avoiding the first corner carnage and working his way up into a strong position before stopping.

Thanks in no small part to the chaos at Turns 1 and 3 on the first lap, the Indian Grand Prix saw five retirements. First out was Kamui Kobayashi, who got caught up in the wake Rubens Barrichello and Pastor Maldonado's minor contact.

The Williams pair brushed together going into the first corner, sending Barrichello spinning across the track. The Brazilian emerged relatively unscathed, with a damaged front wing, but tangled with Kamui Kobayashi en route and brought a premature end to the Sauber driver's day.

For his part, Kobayashi picked up Glock on his way out of the race, leading to a new front wing for the Virgin driver. But it was only a temporary reprieve: Glock retired with suspension problems two laps later.

Narain Karthikeyan then rear-ended Jarno Trulli in the approach to Turn 3, partly due to trying to avoid the surrounding chaos.

Given that Sergio Perez managed a P10 finish from a post-penalty grid position of P20, using a pit stop strategy that saw the Mexican rookie pit for softs on the first lap, it's highly likely that Kobayashi would have been in the fight had he not been knocked out of the race by Barrichello. The Sauber is notoriously light on its rubber, and while Perez is better at tyre preservation than his teammate, the difference between the two is slight.

But there were more retirements than the two caused by first lap collisions.

Mechanical gremlins reared their ugly heads for Maldonado and Sebastien Buemi, while Massa's race ended early for reasons we'll get to in a moment. Maldonado was sidelined by gearbox failure on lap 14, while Buemi's day ended with engine failure on lap 26.

In terms of incidents, two of the race's most dramatic moments came about thanks to Ferrari's Felipe Massa.

First, the Brazilian driver was involved in yet another incident with Lewis Hamilton. This time, however, it was Massa who the stewards deemed to be at fault for the accident.

Writing in *The National*, former F1 driver and steward Johnny Herbert explained why he and his colleagues had put the blame squarely on Massa's head:

"When Massa's Ferrari came together with Lewis Hamilton's McLaren-Mercedes on lap 24 of the race, we looked at replays to see if a punishment should be given for the incident," Herbert wrote. "After looking at it from different camera angles and studying all the data available to us, it was clear that Massa knew where Hamilton was before he chose to turn across him.

"You could see that Massa looked in his side mirror, so he knew Hamilton was on his left as they approached the left-hand turn," he continued. "It appeared he was giving up the corner as he moved wide to the right, effectively opening the door for Hamilton to go down the inside on the left.

"Only, Massa swept across in front of him, leading to contact.

"There was nothing Hamilton could have done to avoid it. He did try to get out of the move, but it was too late and the contact was made.

"If Massa had not gone wide – that would have been a different scenario altogether. If there had been contact then, the blame would have been Hamilton's.

"But as it happened, the incident could have been avoided," Herbert concluded. "Massa knew where Hamilton was, he opened the door for him by moving wide, and after doing that he still swept across and did not give Hamilton room. That's why the decision was made to punish him with a drive-through penalty."

Massa's other moment came a few laps later, when the Ferrari driver smashed his suspension rod when riding the kerbs for the second time that weekend. While Massa was a vocal opponent to the high orange kerbs, and called for them to be altered, the FIA inspected them for safety and found no problems. Massa was the only driver to have trouble with the kerbs at the Buddh International Circuit, prompting pundits to ask whether it was the driver who was to blame.
