



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

## 2010 BELGIAN GRAND PRIX

**FRIDAY PRESS CONFERENCE – August 27, 2010**

**TEAM PRINCIPALS:** John BOOTH (Virgin), Ross BRAUN (Mercedes), Mike GASCOYNE (Lotus), Martin WHITMARSH (McLaren)

### PRESS CONFERENCE

**Q: A question to you all. This time of the year some people tend to wind down on the development of the current car, perhaps work more on the 2011 car. Some people less so as they are still in the championship. Can I just hear what your team's concentration is on for the rest of the season?**

**Mike GASCOYNE:** For us it is very clear that we are fully focused on next year's car and have been for several months now. I think while it is still important for us to try and maintain 10th place in the championship I think the most important thing as one of the new teams is that we make that step and close the gap to the established teams and we are able to race them properly. I think just being on the grid for us was a huge achievement but you are only a new team once and we are not a new team next year, we are a Formula One team and we have to make sure that we are performing as one, so we very much switched our focus onto next year's car. It is quite an auspicious day for us. Today was the day a year ago that we actually first walked around our factory and there were three of us. Now there are 220 of us. We hope that we can do a better job for next year, so that is clearly where our focus is.

**John BOOTH:** For us it is a little bit different. We still have a few steps forward to come this year that we didn't have on the car because of reliability problems at the beginning of the year. The focus has changed the second half, so there is still a little bit more to come this year but working full speed on the new car.

**Martin WHITMARSH:** We are still working hard on this year's car. There is still a good championship ahead and we are pushing hard. Inevitably you have got to have your mind on next year as well but we are certainly pushing hard on this year's car as well.

**Q: Is it just in mind car or have you already started? Have you got another team working?**

**MW:** There is a team working on next year's car as well.

**Q: So they have already started quite some time ago?**

**MW:** Yes, in reality you have R&D programmes which hopefully are going to come to fruition and the resources gradually build. There is a lot of effort to bring performance improvements here and to continue bringing them for the rest of the year.

**Q: Ross?**

**Ross BRAUN:** I think our priorities are clearly with next season. We have not had as good a year as we want. We don't realistically have any chance of competing for the championship this year, so we are pretty strongly focused on next season to make sure we can get into a more competitive position for next year. We have got a little bit of development on this year's car. We have got a few things we want to put right for the remaining races but in terms of development very little and the major work is for next season.

**Q: Mike, looking at the performance so far have you been happy with that? Has it come above or below expectation?**

**MG:** I think it is pretty much where we expected it to be. As I said earlier we didn't have an entry this time a year ago and we didn't know we were actually going to be in the sport, so we missed several months of development. If we had had that I think we would have done a much better job. But our aim coming into this year was always to try and be the best of the new teams, try to close the gap to the established teams and do a thorough, professional job. We had some big updates which moved us forward but in reality we were never going to challenge for ninth place or any of the established teams, so I think we have pretty much delivered exactly what we wanted to do. We would prefer to be a bit closer but time just hasn't allowed that for us. I think we would have been much happier being more reliable. That has been a disappointment to us. Some of that has been out of our control through outside suppliers and we have got to make sure we put that right for next year. But I think we have pretty much delivered what we expected to deliver and on budget as well as my boss keeps reminding me to be.

**Q: Particularly in Germany recently you seemed to have major gearbox problems. Has that been the major problem so far this year?**

**MG:** Gearbox and hydraulics have been a particularly weak area. We haven't had the resources to put all the fixes in place and I think we have been let down by some suppliers who have not done as good a job as they should have done. But you cannot make excuses. You have got to put things right. I think we are now very much on top of it. We want to have solid two car finishes for the rest of the year as I think if we do that we have got the performance and the drivers to secure 10th place. But it is something that has been a disappointment for us as a team.

**Q: John, similar question to you. The performance so far – has it been above or below expectations?**

**JB:** I think it is pretty much where we expected it to be. Very much enjoying our battle with Lotus and overall to be about three to three and a half per cent off the front teams. I think we should be very pleased with that.

**Q: We have also seen some comments in the press on the future of the team. What is your response to that?**

**JB:** This time of year there are always comments from certain quarters but we are here for the long haul. Plans are well in place for next year, well advanced for next year. Our sponsorship base is very good. We have brought eight new sponsors to Formula One this year and we have got a solid base to go forward on.

**Q: So you would rubbish those stories.**

**JB:** Absolutely. Perhaps we haven't kept certain people informed of our position and maybe we should have done but there are no thoughts other than going forward next year.

**Q: Martin, you talked about unlocking the performance in the car. It sounds like a black art to me. If you knew how to do it you would do so but you feel it is there. You have been quoted as saying there is performance in the car.**

**MW:** No, I think at the last race certainly when we dissect the performance of the car. Obviously we know the raw material, we know the data and then we have expectations in terms of corner speed etc. We weren't achieving those in Hungary and I think we needed to have a look at that, understand it and try and get that performance out of it. Too early to say. Today has been an interesting day. A frustrating day, I am sure for all of us, for everyone to understand your car. To do the engineering development programme that you try and do on Fridays when the conditions are this changeable is almost impossible. Certainly to do it quickly. There is a lot of instrumentation on all of our cars, so I am sure most of the teams ran different components, different systems on their car today but most of them couldn't tell you if they have made any progress until they have gone into the detail as clearly the track was evolving one way or the other according to the weather conditions. But overall I am convinced that we can do a better job than certainly we appeared to do in Hungary and we will see as the weekend goes on.

**Q: There is also conflicting statements about whether to use the F-duct or not. Can you give us the reasons behind that, particularly not just here but in Monza as well.**

**MW:** I think you will find we will use it here. It is on the car. It is running. I have not heard that conflicting statement. I have heard some statements about Monza but I don't see, personally, any merit in us declaring what we are going to do to our competitors before we get there.

**Q: Surely Monza is all about straight line speed and the F-duct is all about straight line speed.**

**MW:** Well, as I said, we will see when we get there.

**Q: Ross, the season has been interesting; have you maintained the pace of development that you have wanted to up until now?**

**RB:** Not really, no. We saw some interesting technologies on other cars and it was difficult to understand how much they were worth. We followed those paths and they are worth performance but it wasn't enough to make the real differential up on ourselves and the real front of the grid. I think during the season, some races we get back to where we think we ought to be and other races we're not so good. I think we've had a very deep analysis of our performance this year. I think we understand where we need to make improvements and I can see already, with next year's package we're making those improvements because the fundamentals are all the same. You need a lower centre of gravity, you need less weight, you need more aerodynamic downforce, you need to use the tyres properly, you need a structurally stiff car. The basics always count, and I can see from the progress that we're making with the basics for next year that we haven't done a good enough job this year.

**Q: And has the Brawn mind been hard at work while you've been casting the odd fly on the water during the break?**

**RB:** I didn't do too much of that unfortunately. You never switch off in this business. It's very difficult to switch off – perhaps for a couple of weeks at the end of the season you can turn your mind off if you get away but yeah, thoughts have been flowing on what we need to do.

**Q: Are there any mysteries about the regulations next year?**

**RB:** Not at the moment, but there may well be when cars start appearing because that's the nature of this business. We had the example last year with the double diffuser, we had it this year with the F-duct. People are clever enough to take an interpretation of a regulation to gain an advantage. We haven't found that yet. At least, if we have, we're not going to say so, so the regulations... I think everyone did an honest and diligent job to try and create regulations that achieve the objectives, so the diffuser should be much simpler next year. There should be no F-ducts next year, so first or second or third read of the regulations, that's what we're achieving. But it's the fascination of this business that someone may be able to find a little wrinkle somewhere that they can take advantage of.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Mike Doodson) This is apropos of what Ross just said, actually, because I've got a philosophical question about the future of Formula One. We already have an engine freeze and now we seem to be getting into a pattern of clever engineers introducing technology which they are only allowed to exploit for one year until it gets banned at the end of the year. For example, McLaren gave us the F-duct and I'm absolutely sure your engineers are working hard on the G-spot for next year, but does this mean that Formula One is developing into a stage where technology will be restricted and we're going to have a spec formula?**

**MW:** Well, I think over the last – Ross has been involved longer than I have – but over the last twenty-odd years that I have been involved there's always been that fear. If you think about it... going back a long way we had active ride, we had power braking, ABS braking, we had a whole range of different technologies which have been prohibited and that's the nature of our sport. It's a little bit about cost-control, it's a little bit about trying to give a level playing field and it's deeply frustrating when you're an engineer involved in a particular development because you get

passionate about it and certainly Ross has seen me get passionate over the years, fighting for some of those things. I think now I just accept that that is the nature of our sport and I think that what's fantastic is that there are creative engineers who come up with ideas like double diffusers and F-ducts. There will be something next year, I suspect, on a car and we'll all be talking to our engineers about why they didn't think of it and talking about how they can catch up very quickly. There's tremendous creativity, driven by the competitiveness of the sport. There are restrictions, I think they are probably in the long term in the interests of the sport. We have a duty to put a show on, we have a duty to make it affordable, to make sure that we can get new teams into the sport and that hopefully they can establish themselves, build and thrive, because we need that in the sport. When they happen to you it's deeply frustrating but you've got to really say 'OK, we had a run, now let's invent the next thing that's going to cause controversy in future years.'

**RB:** I think as Martin kindly said I've been in it a long time and you do get frustrated when a concept or idea that you've introduced gets stopped but that is the game, the competition is within this envelope of the regulations: what ideas, how do you do the best job? The thing I constantly tell my engineers is that they're working under the same restrictions as the other eleven teams and the competition is to do a better job within that envelope. I've been fortunate to have been involved in cars with active suspension, with active aerodynamics, with all sorts of things which were fantastic things to play with and really exciting but goodness knows where the cars would be now if we didn't stop it. And we've got to keep it as a sport, we've got to have it as a balance of the driver's skills as against the engineers' skills, that's the fascination of Formula One that it's not just drivers and it's not just engineers. It's that combination which is pretty rare in motor sport, so I don't believe for a moment that it's a spec formula and we just accept the challenge of the new regulations and the regulation changes because it is part of the DNA of our sport.

**MG:** One of the things you've always got to bear in mind is... OK, if you ban something like the F-duct, its advantage has gone away over a few months anyway because everyone's copied it and implemented it themselves. I think history just shows, over the years, that people are still coming up with those ideas. The rule book now for the technical regulations is probably four or five times as thick as it was when I started in Formula One, but it hasn't stopped people coming up with these ideas. Twin chassis cars being banned before they ever raced and all that sort of thing, it's always been this and it just means that you have to think in different areas but you've got to do that anyway to maintain a competitive advantage because people will always be implementing any idea you've put on, so you've got to keep ahead of the game.

**JB:** I think Colin Chapman probably led the way with innovation and it's been part of Formula One ever since and that's the way it should be.

**Q: (Alberto Antonini – Autosprint) Ross, you appear to be the one who started the discussion about flexi-wings and as a follow-up, we're now talking about flexi-skid blocks and possibly dipping noses. Can you just clarify what in your mind is going to happen in the future, and what the consequences may be for some teams?**

**RB:** I'm not sure I was the one who started it, but certainly I gave my opinions and there was a clear obvious effect on the track between certain cars that was not explainable and we sought some clarifications on how the rules were to be applied. When we talk about the process that's gone on through the years, that is the process that we all do, that is the nature of Formula One. I know that some of the teams involved were not very happy with comments I made, or McLaren made, but then I was not happy about comments they made about the double diffuser last year. It is the nature of Formula One. That's the way we are and that's the way we work, and if we see something we don't like on another car, we will challenge it with the FIA, and if the FIA eventually say 'no, that's the way it's going to be' we join the club. It's just that process that happens all the time. I don't know the status with... today we've had a very mixed day, so it's been impossible to judge.

**Q: (Joe Saward – Grand Prix Special) Can we talk about engines for next year? There have been some rumours in the last couple of days about Red Bull getting Mercedes engines next year. We have two Mercedes teams sitting in front of us here; can we have your views on what you think of that idea, given their performance with the Renault engines?**

**MW:** Well, I've heard the rumours but that's it. I think we can continue doing the best job we can with a great engine that we have from Mercedes Benz. I don't know of any plans, I haven't been

consulted or asked and nor do I necessarily need to be. I'm sure Ross is much closer to this than I am – he is a troublemaker by the way! – but I'll let him account for himself.

**RB:** That's the first time I've heard the rumour, genuinely. I wasn't aware of that rumour. I don't think there are any plans for Mercedes Benz to supply more teams.

**Q: (Joe Seward – Grand Prix Special) To the new team representatives, are there any plans to change your engines and how difficult do you think it will be to do that?**

**MG:** We're using Cosworth engines, we've been very happy with their performance this year, their first year back in Formula One. I think as teams we always evaluate every option that's out there but at the moment we're very, very happy with Cosworth and the job they've been doing.

**JB:** Yes, same as Mike. We're very happy with Cosworth. The service has been fantastic and there are absolutely no plans to change at all.

**Q: (Joe Seward – Grand Prix Special) We've got an FIA hearing coming up with Ferrari about team orders; I'm curious to know whether you think that Ferrari did anything wrong in Germany and what you think the punishment should be?**

**MW:** I don't know if you can claim *sub judice* here but the fact is that there is a hearing, I don't have any influence on that hearing and I think I said at the time my own views on it I wished to communicate to Ferrari personally which I did. I think me expressing a public view on it is inappropriate, particularly when there's a hearing just coming up.

**RB:** I think that having been a long term member of Ferrari it would be inappropriate for me to comment, Joe.

**JB:** No, no real comment at all.

**MG:** I think they've said it all!