



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

**2011 ABU DHABI GRAND PRIX**

**THURSDAY PRESS CONFERENCE TRANSCRIPT**

**10.11.2011**

**DRIVERS - Sebastien BUEMI (Toro Rosso), Paul di RESTA (Force India), Timo GLOCK (Virgin), Heikki KOVALAINEN (Team Lotus), Vitantonio LIUZZI (HRT), Vitaly PETROV (Renault)**

**PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Q: Tonio, one or two changes in the team. Have you seen differences within the team and how the team has reacted.**

**Vitantonio LIUZZI:** I have to say the team is changing, on-going at the moment, the structure is improving every time and I think there are a lot of changes for next year, plans on-going in the next month. I think the structure improved a lot during the 2011 season, we are focussed on 2012. We want to improve and get better in the field and I feel these changes are going in the right direction for the future. Still nothing completely clear how will be the line-up for next year in terms of the set-up of the team, but I think we are going forward.

**Q: Your future? Would you just clarify that? Did you say something has not been decided yet? VL:**

No, I was talking about the team, not about me or the other drivers. For me I always said I have a long-term contract with the team. We started with this adventure and we knew that it could not be just a one-year situation if we wanted to improve. The team hired me to help them develop and bring experience in the team and I think everything is going well and everything is looking positive for the future so not much to say about it.

**Q: So you are hopeful of staying and going forward?**

**VL:** Yes, I believe so.

**Q: Heikki, both drivers have been confirmed for next year. You seem to still be making progress as well with the team. Again, a certain amount of optimism I would have thought?**

**Heikki KOVALAINEN:** Yeah, absolutely. I think we made more progress than the other two new teams in these last couple of years especially this year. We need to take the next step, but I think the team is making the right kind of moves back at the factory and in terms of the structure of the team to go forward so I am confident and I am optimistic that next year we will move another step forward. It has not been too far away, actually, in the last few races. I have been able to race some of the cars ahead of us so it is not that much we need anymore to join the pack and then the middle of the field and to be ahead of them we need a bigger step. Hopefully over the winter we can make another gain compared to the teams directly ahead of us.

**Q: Tell us your view of the way Tony Fernandes works. He seems to be a particularly dynamic guy running goodness knows how many companies. Not only the racing team, Caterham and even Queens Park Rangers.**

**HK:** Yeah, he is an exciting guy. He is not afraid of making decisions and taking an adventure into an unknown. I think that, quite often, is how the good leaders and successful businessmen, how they work. To make a successful business you have quite often got to do something different to what the group of people is doing and he is certainly doing that. This morning was a good example of how Tony operates. I sent him a text regarding Caterham, his car company, and I said we

should do that. He just texted me back, 'Done, tell Riad (Asmat)' and so, the deal was done. That's how he works and I believe he meant that. I really enjoyed working with him and it was one of the reasons I joined the team and I have enjoyed these last two years. He is a funny guy.

**Q: Timo, do you feel you have done a good job this year overall? Obviously it has been a very difficult at the back of the grid and what are your thoughts on next year as well?**

**Timo GLOCK:** Yeah, I am happy with my performance in general. I think I got the maximum out of the package we had. I just did my best in qualifying and the race. Sometimes we were a bit unlucky in the race, like in India at the last race. In general, as I said, with the package we got it out most of the time and now we have to keep concentrating on working for next year and make improvements like Lotus did this year and move on.

**Q: And looking forward to this race. We have got two DRS zones here. I know there is not a lot overtaking going on at the back, but what are your feelings about two DRS zones here?**

**TG:** I think you are right, you have to ask the guys in front, it is difficult for me to say. But I think it will be good possibilities here to overtake, especially with DRS and it could make the race quite interesting. Let's see, maybe we can overtake on the back of it as well but the possibilities are much higher here.

**Q: Paul, you are probably better prepared for this circuit than any of the ones we have been to so far as you did about 110 laps in a Force India this time last year.**

**Paul di Resta:** Yeah, I think coming here obviously having a bit of experience isn't negative having done the Pirelli test last year. But, really, it is all about the work you carry out on Friday and Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon in this case. We want to try and maintain position in the Constructors' Championship and our performance has been very close to Toro Rosso and Sauber and Renault if we get it right and really that's our focus at the moment.

**Q: So it is quite tight between all you guys. You still feel there is potential for change there?**

**PdR:** Yeah, I don't think you can really give up on any approach. I think you have got to be fairly aggressive. Already this year we saw it change a lot. We are in a strong position at the moment but we are very focussed on trying to get our performance level and equally bring new updates if we can. Really just to try and maintain that. These guys seem to be very strong in the race and really me and Adrian (Sutil) are doing our utmost to try and grab as many points as we can and race against these guys.

**Q: Given that no announcement has been made about the drivers, although that has been brought forward, I am sure you put pressure on yourselves anyway. But does that put more pressure on you?**

**PdR:** I suppose it does in a way. I have always said you always want to know as quick as you can but you have to respect Mr (Vijay) Mallya's decision and really he has said he is going to change. But, at the moment, I have a contract for the year so I am focussed on doing the remaining two races, which we should be, and really the future will take care of itself hopefully.

**Q: Sebastien, we only have to look at the last few races to realise the team has made a lot of progress. So you feel, probably, in a position where you can fightback?**

**Sebastien BUEMI:** Yes, now we have got the same amount of points as Sauber so it is already good for us. We are 10 points behind Force India. It was a shame what happened in India, but still I think we can continue to fight and, like you said, the car is really quick now. We have a good qualifying pace. We were both in Q3 in India and then, also in the race, we are normally quite quick as well so hopefully we can finish in the points and be in front of Sauber by the end of the weekend. Then for the last race we will see what we can do.

**Q: The problem in India, does that have consequences for the rest of the year? Are you going to have to use a ninth engine perhaps?**

**SB:** No, we were not planning to use this engine anymore so it is not going to be a problem at all.

**Q: And your thoughts about the future, for next year?**

**SB:** I don't think too much about it right now. Let's say I try to get the maximum out of myself and the car in the remaining two races and then we will have enough time to speak about next year. I

believe we have got to be concentrated. We have a good chance to achieve a very good result for the team so I think it is really important to dedicate ourselves completely to this before thinking about anything else.

**Q: Vitaly, we remember you last year with your red shadow. Would it have been very different with DRS?**

**Vitaly PETROV:** Definitely, and with new Pirelli tyres.

**Q: It would have been very different, would it?**

**VP:** I think we need to forget already what's happened last year here. I know I did a good race by myself to improve and to show the team I could stay for next year. It was not to use tactics for Fernando (Alonso), and with the lack of overtaking here he couldn't do anything.

**Q: There have been a few changes in the team this year; is that something that affects you most recently?**

**VP:** I don't think anything changes for me. I think it will be better for the team. It's like football; when a new coach joins a team, what he does first of all is look at the team and watches where the players are playing. Then he puts the people in the right places, where they should be playing. Then teams become more competitive and play stronger. This is actually what we try to do inside the team. The team principal tries to change some people, to move them around and try to profit from this.

**Q: What's the situation for next year, your future?**

**VP:** For me, everything is clear. I have a contract for next year, I don't need to be worried, so I just try to do my job, try to gather a lot of information for next year for us in these last two races. I and the team are fully concentrated on the team for next year also so I'm quite clear.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) Heikki, does the change of name to Caterham mean that your business car will be very fast but not very comfortable?**

**HK:** I've been waiting for the Caterham already this year. They haven't sent me one yet but I'm sure I will get one soon. I'm quite looking forward to taking one to Finland; I have a fantastic road leading up to my log cabin house, so I'm going to test it there, I think, when there's a little bit of snow banks around, on studded tyres.

**Q: Will you have to build your company car yourself?**

**HK:** No, I don't think so. I have a good car crew; they will do it for me.

**Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) Heikki as a Finnish driver, your main target may be the Williams team next year?**

**HK:** For next year, the target ahead of us doesn't change – whoever is driving in different teams. Obviously you're referring to Kimi at Williams; I have no idea whether that is happening or not. What's going on there... it doesn't matter who is driving the cars in front of us. We are targeting the cars ahead of us, joining that group and hopefully sometimes being ahead of more than one team if we have a good day. That's all I can say. If Kimi decides to come back, I think the main difference for me will be that the parties after the races will be a little bit better.

**Q: (Michael Stauble – SRG/DRS) After 17 races with DRS, how would you rate it, has it improved the racing in your opinion?**

**VP:** I think that it's definitely a big step forward. I think we will keep this for many years, five or ten years. I think it's a good chance for us to overtake and good for you to write something about overtaking, so I think it's a good step.

**SB:** I think it's definitely a positive. We've seen a lot more overtaking; we've even seen some overtaking in Monaco. It's definitely good. Sometimes it feels like the DRS zone is not long enough but I definitely think it's going to help a lot this weekend.

**Q: From a lapping point of view, is it better that the people who are lapping have DRS? Is that better from your point of view?**

**TG:** In general, it's not that big a difference for us. In general, it's quite difficult overall, in the race, to keep out of the (way of the) top five, especially if you have a safety car and we are in the middle of the pack and it's just a big mess. DRS doesn't make a big difference for lapping cars.

**HK:** The only difference I see is that maybe sometimes they give us a big tow in a straight line when they go past, so it's definitely better for us.

**Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Sebastian, is the increased performance from your car related to the development of the blown diffuser?**

**SB:** Yes, I think it's mainly because of that, but in general I think we improved the car very well from mid-season to the end now. I think we're now improving the car race after race and this is why we can actually catch up the other guys. We were maybe a little bit too slow developing the car in the middle of the year, but now I think we're doing a good job. It's only the second year that the team is building the car, so it takes a bit of time to get into the rhythm but I think we've definitely got a lot of lap time through the blown diffuser.

**Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) Vitaly, you mentioned the football team but which one of the team would you prefer to be your team-mate next year, stay with Bruno or maybe change or maybe Robert will be back: your personal preference?**

**VP:** I think that if you had asked me this question last year, I would definitely have chosen the most experienced guy, because when Robert was with me in the team, I learned quite a lot from him, so I analysed the data, watched the video, listened to how he talked to the engineers and what he... At the moment, now, for me, it doesn't matter, to be honest. I already know how to improve the team in general, to set up and how to work with my team, so this is why for next year or for this year, it doesn't matter at all.

**Q: (Gaetan Vigneron – RTBF) Timo, what is your opinion about your team-mate for next year? Is it important for you to have the same one because it's better to improve the team or is it better to have a new one or it doesn't matter to you personally?**

**TG:** In general, I think it doesn't matter to me; it's a decision to be made by the team. Sure, on the other hand, if both drivers remain, then you have more consistency in the team but on the other hand, it doesn't matter to me, as I said. We have a long road in front of us so it's up to the team to decide.

**Q: (Muthyalu Satyanarayan – Gulf News) Most of you have grown up and raced in your early careers in Europe. Now, two or three years back, we had Abu Dhabi and now India, so how is this experience with venues shifting to this part of the world, Middle East and Asia? What's the experience of racing in these new venues?**

**HK:** I have a good answer for this one. I much prefer to be at these kind of warm races because the golf courses are fantastic. I would happily stay near Bangkok and just race from there; the golf courses are great. I arrived here on Monday already and I've played four rounds of golf already, so I'm happy for this direction.

**VP:** It's a good answer!

**VL:** Maybe it's much colder in Europe but I prefer the European races. For sure, we have a different kind of circuit here in Asia, it's completely different, much more modern, beautiful circuits but I still love the historical circuits like Spa, Monza and the European races.

**SB:** I think it's good to try some new circuits, some new countries to visit. I think it's definitely a positive to come to these races and I think what we experience here is completely different. It's the best infrastructure in the world and it's definitely quite nice to be racing here, starting the race when it's still daylight and then we finish in the dark. I definitely think it's a positive.

**PdiR:** Yeah, I think it's always a good experience, but I think the questioner talked about drivers as well and I think given where junior categories are in Europe compared to Asia, it's not quite there yet but I think that is just generally through time and I think it builds up, the whole experience, how popular racing will get. Given how many people there are in India, I'm sure that with the first Indian Grand Prix, that will generate interest and for the future, you never know where that might lead to.

**Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) Sebastian, as I understand it, you used to live in Bahrain, do you still live there?**

**SB:** No, I've lived in Monaco for two years but part of my family lives in Bahrain and that's why I moved there three years ago.

**Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) Is all OK there now; do we have a chance to go back for the race next year?**

**SB:** I hope so. Bahrain is a nice circuit and I enjoy being there but first of all it has to be safe but I didn't hear anything bad for a few months now.

Ends