



An Aside With Joe – It's About Providing Interest and Excitement and Entertainment

Me: Welcome to An Aside with Joe: It's about providing interest and excitement and entertainment. It's been a while, it's more than several weeks actually and a couple of races have passed so I'm sure we've got a lot to catch up on but we have managed to track down Joe, where are you right now Joe?

Joe: Where am I? I'm sitting in an arm chair with a glass of wine in one hand a telephone in the other, and I'm somewhere lost in France which is very pleasant.

Me: Sounds lovely.

Joe: I don't actually get home very often but I'm here now and I have a glass of wine so that's good.

Me: We haven't spoken to you since around the time of the Hungarian Grand Prix. You've been to two races since then, how has the Formula One world been treating you in that time?

Joe: Well that's only in the last week. Well I was in Budapest, and oh yes that's right, I then drove a Ferrari California from Budapest to Maranello with my partner in crime David Tremayne, we had a lovely time driving through Slovenia which I highly recommend to everyone and if the Slovenian Tourist Board is out there listening well please feel free to send us money. No, we had a lovely time, it was a super car, we'll never be able to afford one, they're a hundred and whatever they are, it's way beyond the earnings of your average Formula One journalist but it's nice to be able to do it, so that took a couple of days. We got to Maranello just in time to hear that BMW had pulled out and so we spent actually most of our time in Maranello sitting in the mini board room thing in their media area, we were sitting there actually typing about BMW which was quite strange but that was the story that day. Then we left to go to the airport to fly back to our various things. I suppose we left about one o'clock, Michael Schumacher must have arrived at about three and so we missed actually bumping into him which was a bit of a shame because it would have been quite a good story to get that before it actually broke that evening. We had all that kerfuffle for a while. I wasn't really around because I'd gone somewhere else but I can't remember where I went. I was in Dieppe at one point, I remember that.

Me: Was much drinking involved?

Joe: No not really, I went there, an old retired Formula One journalist I'd known and travelled with for years lives up there. Actually it's inside the 1907 Dieppe Grand Prix circuit, so it's a sort of historical journey, you have a nice time, eat a lot of seafood and generally chill out and talk about Formula One.

Me: Is there much left of that circuit, what does it look like now?

Joe: Oh there's nothing at all, it's just public roads. There's one monument to Clément Junior of the Clément Bayard car company, I can't remember his first name off the top of my head, unfortunately he hit a farm truck or something or rather at a vast speed in 1907 and died as a result of that. So the only actual thing left on the entire race track is a monument to him. What else did I do, I've got no idea.

Me: How did you prepare for Valencia?



Joe: Oh Valencia that's right, I knew I'd been somewhere else. No, then I went to the Basque Country and I went to visit Epsilon Euskadi who are one of the teams that would like to have a Formula One entry but was not willing to accept the terms on offer when they were available, and I went to see their factory which is stunning. Actually, astonishing is a better word, because with the exception of McLaren it's the best Formula One factory I've ever seen but it's not actually involved in Formula One so there you go.

Me: What sort of stuff do they do there at the moment?

Joe: Well they might be next week, who knows, we have to wait and see what the future is for BMW Sauber. Once that's decided they'll see if there's an entry available or not, but I mean they're running out of time now, we're talking about a maximum of a week or two before they'd have to have a decision, otherwise it becomes an impossibility to make the cars. And then after that I flew down to Valencia which was much the same as Valencia was last year, the grandstands looked a bit fuller because they had fewer grandstands, quite clever really. Reduce the number of grandstands, concentrate the people, it looks busier, but it wasn't really. And the race was, uh, what happened, I can't remember. Anyway, somebody won, I actually can't remember this is very worrying, oh Rubens Barrichello won didn't he? And then I came back here so yes, that's basically my last few weeks, it's been fairly busy.

Me: We did have a question from Nick in the comments, following allegations or rumours about Valencia not being the safest place in the world, did you get robbed, assaulted, conned, mugged or any bad things happen at all to you in Valencia or was it much better than they made out?

Joe: Did I get any of those, no, the only thing I was mugged with was the hotel price which wasn't too bad but it's still ridiculous for what it is. I got mugged in the press office as you do because they always hit you for wireless internet which is I always think completely scandalous when you can go to any McDonalds and get it for free and unlimited, I have no understanding of why one should pay large sums of money to race organisers when McDonalds will do it for nothing, but this is one of the little quirks that need to be ironed out because they seem to think the press corps is a bank that will give them money when they need it. But apart from that no I was fine, I wasn't mugged at all. It's quite a nice city actually, if it wasn't for this noisy race running through the middle of it. It's a bit sleepy as Spanish towns go. I think one of the problems they've had is that they've hosted the race during their summer holiday and lots of the Spanish chaps, I don't know where Spanish people go on holiday, because the English, the Germans have taken over their beaches so I presume that they rush off to Iceland or somewhere but a lot of people aren't there, I mean, it's quite remarkable if you think about it that there are restaurants that are actually shut during the Grand Prix weekend because they've gone away on Summer holiday. They just don't even bother cashing in on the Grand Prix.

Me: That's crazy.

Joe: Well no it's not crazy it's just rather bad timing or bad information or just bad really, I mean Valencia is not a well organised event. I don't mean that, everything runs fairly smoothly but it's not very well promoted in my opinion. It's a lot better this year, the TV shots gave a much better impression of Valencia as being a nice place whereas last year it was just a tunnel of concrete.

Me: That's true.

Joe: And I think they worked hard on trying to get some of the nice buildings into the TV shots and to give a better impression of the place, I think they succeeded in doing that.

Me: There is talk that they would like a different slot for next years calendar.



Joe: There is yes, but lots of people would like different slots on next years calendar as well. The problem is they don't want to be later in the year and they don't want to be too close to Barcelona so you're basically screwed. You can squeeze it into June probably but you can't really go any closer to Barcelona than that. Added to which, I'm not sure, they got a pretty small crowd and if they're going to make it, they're going to make it as long as the government is there giving them money but to make it a successful race they need to have big crowds coming in and they've got a ways to go before they learn how to do that. I think the best thing that could possibly happen is a bunch of people from Valencia get on a plane and go to Melbourne to see how they do it properly and learn, because when you get off an aeroplane in Melbourne you know you're in a Grand Prix town. If you get off an airport in Valencia you wouldn't know you weren't in any other Spanish town during the summer holidays. They have to embrace the race a lot more and they haven't done that.

Me: Talking of Melbourne, there's a lot of vaguely calendar related news, there's talk that maybe Bahrain might replace it as a season opener again.

Joe: I think that's a definite, I think the season will start with Bahrain simply because from a cost effective point of view it's absolutely insane for people to fly cars out to Bahrain to test then fly them back again to Europe or send them out to Australia, once a car is there its logical to leave them there for a couple of weeks and then race them and then take them off somewhere else afterwards and so my understanding is that there'll be a test in Bahrain probably in the first week of March or the last week of February.

Me: And you attended, the Bahrain Grand Prix started the season in 2007 or 2008, I forgot which year it was.

Joe: One of those two.

Me: Did you attend that and what was the difference between starting in Bahrain and starting in Australia?

Joe: It's a bit stressful for the teams because some of them haven't built their cars in time and that sort of stuff. It's just a nicer city to be in, Melbourne, I don't mean that nastily about Bahrain, it's just there's a lot more to do in Melbourne and it's more entertaining but ultimately we go to these places to work not for entertainment so it really doesn't matter that much. I mean, I spent a week in Bahrain this last time in between races and it was perfectly fine, but it's not the kind of place you frolic on the beaches if you know what I mean, because they're hard to find, I mean there are lots of bits of sand that go into water but they're not sort of beachy things you know.

Me: No.

Joe: To give them credit, it's quite an entertaining town if you know one or two of the places to go to, once you get used to it I think it's, you can survive most things, we survive Shanghai, we even survive, I don't know, other places, I can't think of any at the moment. Next year we'll probably be surviving South Korea as well.

Me: That seems likely. The news today that they've got funding I think, is that what happened?

Joe: I don't know actually because I've been out most of the day and I haven't been chasing up. I don't think there's a problem with South Korean funding, the government is paying a humungous great chunk of it and I think the race fees are being paid by one of the big Korean companies, I don't think there's ever been any real problem about that at all. The only question mark is whether they can build it all in the time available and as far as I know it's all on schedule. I spoke to Bernie in Spa about the calendar and asked him about Turkey specifically because nobody really wants to go to Turkey and if the truth be told the Turks don't really want Formula One to come because it's not achieving anything for them now. Doesn't matter why that is or the whys and the wherefores, if it isn't working for



everybody what on earth is the point in going on? I presume there's negotiations trying to find some sort of financial settlement or something. Bernie is very keen to stay there because he thinks the track's a great track, but it ain't Spa.

Me: No. One bit of calendar news that has just sort of come to light is that Abu Dhabi is now a twilight race. Given what happened at Melbourne this year when drivers struggled to see as the sun went down is that a smart thing to be doing?

Joe: Actually it's interesting because Abu Dhabi is not really going to be a twilight race it will start in the daylight and will finish in the dark but they'll have lights on all the time. So in actual fact it will be like Singapore, the actual lighting of the race track won't change at all, what will change is the vision that one sees on television. In particular they have this strange hotel thing, I think the circuit goes underneath it or through it or whatever, but it sort of changes colour during the night so at some point it's a red hotel, then it turns to blue.

Me: Oh, I didn't realise that.

Joe: Maybe it's a bit pink from time to time. I think that part of the reason for going to the night thing is to make Abu Dhabi look glamorous and exciting as opposed to a sort of place that's been built on a sand island. Good for them, nice idea, see how it works.

Me: Was it FOM who requested that it become a night race or was it purely Abu Dhabi wanting to cast themselves in a better light?

Joe: I would suggest probably, um, they're not very far ahead of Europe, they're only an hour or two ahead of the main sort of Formula One markets so 5 o'clock start will be middle of the afternoon in Europe. I think it will be fine, I mean, it's a world championship decider, if you work on the time zones you always want to be in the east coast of the United States of America because that's going to guarantee you the biggest audiences around the world because that will get you the Americas at a sensible hour, it will get you Europe absolutely on primetime and it will get you Asia at just about doable times. Tough on the Australians, but they need to move their island somewhere else if they want to get the right time zone. Formula One is all about TV viewing figures therefore you have to play with them a little bit. We'd all love to go racing on the west coast of the United States but in terms of the TV audience you're going to get with a west coast race it's pretty small until America wakes up to this thing called Formula One.

Me: Sure.

Joe: Because at the moment they think it's a hair treatment so there's a bit of work to be done.

Me: USF1 have been in the news, I think today, I don't know if you've caught up with it but they've said they're interested in joining FOTA and they might want in on that collective. Do we have any more news on USF1 and how they're getting along at the moment?

Joe: They're fine, they're plugging away in Charlotte, I think the car is on schedule, I think they're putting together the factory there, they're going to have a base in Spain, they're recruiting people as and when they need them as opposed to getting a bunch of people there and have them sitting around doing nothing. I think it's developing, I think it's fine, I don't see any real problems there at the moment so long as the money keeps coming, they will be there and I think they're looking for a bit more money as always but isn't everybody?



Me: Brawn GP said last week that they were absolutely fine for money for next year but they didn't really announce how or why that's happened.

Joe: They're not going to either, they're going to announce it, well, I had a conversation with Ross Brawn about this in Belgium, and he said "we're going to announce it at the start of next season" and I said "well I shall do my very best to announce it before you do," and he said "good, let's see if you can" more or less so there's a bit of a challenge going on there. They've got one big sponsor, someone in the Middle East I believe, there's been a bit of speculation about Emirates, that was a deal that was quite close before Honda pulled out. I don't know if it's them or not but whoever it is doesn't want it to come out just yet, they want to make a big impression and not filter out. All I know is there is someone who is not in Formula One at the moment but is a big enough name to be recognisable although I'm told not hugely recognisable which mitigates against it being Emirates. It might be one of these, a global company with a low profile but I can't think of any off the top of my head to prove my point.

Me: Sure but what's the benefit of waiting until then, surely if the team are in a potential position to win the championship wouldn't they want the entire of the off season to capitalise on that?

Joe: Maybe, I don't know. I think it's to do with the marketing aims and desires of the sponsor in question, they're quite happy to run around in a white car with a bit of Virgin on, which incidentally won't be there next year because Virgin is going to be the sponsor of the Manor team. Word on the street is that they're probably going to be called Virgin F1. I don't know if that's definite yet, it certainly hasn't been announced yet but that's my understanding of what's probably likely to happen. Virgin F1 are two words I wouldn't put in the same sentence but such is the way of the world.

Me: Do we know when they might be ready to do any kind of announcement, is that going to be forthcoming before the end of the season or will it be a winter thing?

Joe: These things are dependent on other things, like driver announcements I think are dependent on the drivers they want perhaps having other options that have to disappear first so I'm not really expecting anybody to say much. I think the dominoes will start to fall properly at Monza because there may be or may not be a Ferrari announcement, depending. The driver market has a habit of, it is very much like one of those, you know those TV shows of dominoes falling over, it's really like that because it falls as far as a driver who hasn't made a decision, it goes down the pecking order so I think everyone is assuming that Alonso's going to be at Ferrari which means at the moment the key figure on the driver market is Robert Kubica because he is judged by the Formula One world to be the next best thing. There is some talk about whether or not Kimi Raikkonen might show up somewhere else if he does get ousted by Ferrari. A couple of wacky rumours about him going to McLaren I think.

Me: Have heard that one but there's also the crazy talk that I think it was Luca di Montezemolo came up with last week whereby he wanted to bring in three Ferraris for next year.

Joe: Well that's possibly because he's got too many drivers. There's a beautiful irony going on at the moment. We've got Ferrari 2009 which doesn't have enough drivers and Ferrari 2010 which has too many. It's kind of wacky.

Me: Hadn't thought about it like that.

Joe: They don't know what the hell to do with the second car but in 2010 they seem to have three drivers under contract and they don't want to lose any of them so they are banging on about third cars but Formula One is not quite that weak although BMW, without wishing to be unpleasant, is peeled by some very stupid people on the Board of Directors who didn't sign the Concorde Agreement and by doing so they fundamentally threw away \$80 million because the team now doesn't have the rights of the Concorde Agreement. You go to the other teams and



you say “please can we have our rights back” and you’d imagine that one or two of them will be a little bit churlish on that subject. If BMW had of been smart they would have signed the Concorde Agreement and then they could have sold the team because it wouldn’t have cost very much. As it is Peter Sauber is trying to find money to buy the team but then he needs the budget to run it as well so really, BMW, I have to say it’s one of the most strategically flawed moves I have ever seen in Formula One, I cannot believe how and why they did it, I understand they pulled out because they have to go and build green cars to make European politicians happy but if you’re going to pull out first of all don’t tell the formula one world you’re going to stay forever and you love it and then just suddenly dump everyone in it at the last minute. Secondly if you’re going to pull out at least give a decent dowry to the people who you’ve left in the lurch so all things considered BMW have gone down in estimation of quite a lot of people in Formula One so it’s a very flawed way of going about business.

Me: But they’d already seen how Honda did it and Honda didn’t exactly do it in the best possible way.

Joe: Honda didn’t do a very good job, hello we’ve got a white Brawn driving around there, dollar from Mr Honda that keeps that thing running. They paid for the whole of this season. They also settled up with all the necessary redundancies and all the rest of it. Honda played a very correct game as indeed one would expect them to because they are a big manufacturer. I hope that BMW will play a similar game but there are no signs they’re going to help any new buyer right now. It looks like it’s going to be touch and go if they make it or not, it needs a decision very quickly obviously they’ll switch to Ferrari engines probably, they can build the car in the facility that is in existence, they’ve got a sufficient number of engineers to do all that so really it’s just a question of finding the money.

Me: It’s interesting that when Honda said they were going to pull out that the drivers essentially backed the team and said we’ll do our best to stick by Honda. When BMW announced that they were out of it both drivers immediately said “we’re on the market, come and get us.”

Joe: Well I think in part it’s to do with timing. I think by the time Honda made the decision in December, Jenson and Rubens really didn’t get a choice, there was nowhere for them to go so they basically had to negotiate to stay and the reason they’re taking so long to re-sign is they’re now renegotiating the contract the other way to push the money back up again having produced a spectacularly good year although that’s another argument vis-à-vis Jenson in recent weeks but in terms of timing it doesn’t surprise me at all. If you were Robert Kubica, what would you do? Would you sit around and wait and hope that this team would take you to race victories or go to a team that can pretty much guarantee them. Robert Kubica only wants to do one thing which is win races, he’s got enough money, he doesn’t care about the money. He cares to be treated fairly but it’s not his prime motivation in life, his prime motivation in life is to add victories because he knows if he has victories the money will come.

Me: With Ferrari essentially oversubscribed.

Joe: Rather more than oversubscribed because Giancarlo Fisichella is trying to get on the bus there too, Michael Schumacher wants to be in the drivers seat, Massa, Raikkonen, Alonso, it’s well oversubscribed.

Me: Presumably with McLaren having a number of options based on their performance and the way that they’ve managed to pull their season back this year, they look like a team who aren’t ready to rest on their laurels so where else can Robert go?

Joe: I think Robert is going to Williams myself, that’s just a twisted and strange view that I have. I think they’re made for each other. I think that Robert has the right attitude, I think that Williams have the same attitude which is the racer attitude, the cars have been pretty good this year, there’s always a question mark over the two drivers, you don’t know how good Rosberg is because Nakajima is rubbish, in the nicest form of the word, he’s rubbish with a big



cheque that comes with him so he's not entirely rubbish but we haven't seen him looking like doing anything spectacular for quite a long time but at least he's stopped removing his front wing every race. On a scale of 1-10 his future in Formula One if Toyota is not there is completely 0, if Toyota is there he's probably got a 5 chance of hanging on but the future of Toyota is by no means certain either. These are difficult times for car companies and even if they stay, the amount of money they're going to have to pay in redundancies because the teams have agreed amongst themselves to reduce the number of staff. I can't remember the exact figure but it's something like 300 per team which means Toyota for example is going to have to lay off 700 people because it is wildly overstaffed.

Me: Ouch.

Joe: How it got to that situation or whatever is really not relevant but they have to lay those people off and each one of those people under German law is going to cost a lot of money. There are all kinds of things that need to be taken into account. Toyota is idling plants around the world and doing all kinds of funny things. There's a new chairman too which makes it more confusing. My feeling is that the new chairman will give it a chance for a year or two just to make sure it's entirely useless and after he's done that he will then conclude as everyone else in Formula One has that they're wasting their time or maybe he'll say well we need to fix it and actually get around to fixing it but it's been 10 years and nobodies managed to fix it yet and I think that's to do with the way it's run more than anything else. I don't think it's to do with the people they have necessarily I think the attitude is Toyota is always successful because they use their philosophy of Kaizen and that's something that Formula One's been doing for years and they do it quicker, so Toyota is just a funny operation I don't really understand the whys and the wherefores sometimes but there's something wrong there because they just have a real problem producing any results.

Me: As we saw again in Spa.

Joe: I'm afraid everyone can say its luck but in the finest traditions there's a lot of people in Formula One who believe that there is no such thing as luck, you make your own. And of course there is the Bernie Ecclestone theory about if you have an unlucky driver there is no point in saying "oh dear poor you," the answer is fire him and get a lucky one.

Me: Didn't know he thought that!

Joe: It's just one of his things, there's absolutely no point in having an unlucky driver and he's right too. What's the point, if you're unlucky, get rid of you. There's a reason most people are unlucky or appear to be, it's because things aren't 100% right. Sometimes it's down to luck too.

Me: Fair enough, the problem I guess Williams have this week which they presumably didn't have last week, if rumours are correct and they're going to swap their Toyota for a Renault, Renault aren't guaranteed to stay in Formula One either given the revelations that have popped up from the FIA at the weekend.

Joe: Let's look at it this way, let's rewind to the start of that sentence. Williams' choice of engines. I think they've looked at the available engines on the market and they've gone "what is the best engine to have in 2010?" I think the conclusion they reached is probably Mercedes Benz because everybody is reaching that conclusion.

Me: Yip.

Joe: To do with weight distribution, availability of KERS, efficiency and all these things but I think most people have concluded that the Mercedes Benz engine is a good one to have. For reasons that I'm not entirely clear but it seems to be an agreement between everybody, engine manufacturers are restricted to a maximum of four to supply. I'm

sure that if one went to the European Commission and said “is this acceptable?” They’d probably say no but Formula One doesn’t worry about things like that. There is a restriction of four. At the moment we have McLaren, we have Brawn, we will soon have Red Bull and Force India apparently has a contract although there have been lots of exciting rumours about the teams lack of payment and interestingly enough they haven’t been denied. I think that generally speaking when things aren’t denied it generally means they’re true. It’s something worth watching, I think, I don’t think the teams not intending to pay people I think there’s problems getting money about and in the finest tradition of billionaires with cash flow problems there comes a point at where you have to stop playing silly games and actually front up with the cash so there’s a possibility that that engine supply could become available, theoretical. Now if I were Williams I’d be holding on in hope that would happen because then they would come to you and say ‘please can you take our engines’ but if that doesn’t happen the second best choice would be Renault and yes there are some things that need to be looked at with Renault but even if all the nastiest possible scenarios take place for Renault and you look at all the money you’ve invested in Formula One over the years you’d try to stay on as an engine supplier and I think Williams-Renault is a good brand so I would think, I mean the engines with all the restrictions the engines are not as big a problem as they were in the past, certainly price wise and all the rest of it, most of the engines are pretty evenly matched and they cost the same so, they’re not interchangeable exactly but they’re sort of close to that and they’re not a huge investment for the manufacturers who already have them so I would see that as being the way forward which is returning Renault to what it was before which is an engine supplier and an engine supplier that enjoyed an enormous amount of success. The actual Renault F1 team won two championships in ’05 and ’06 which is fine, achieved a great deal but since then has looked very unconvincing and the allegations about whether or not the team ordered Nelson Piquet Jnr to crash in Singapore to enable Fernando Alonso to win, well it could be true, there’s no immediate evidence to suggest it is true but obviously at the time it was very suspicious. A lot of people in Formula One were suspicious there’s no question about it but you can be suspicious about lots of things but if you can’t prove it you can’t say it. We’ll have to wait and see how the Piquet story develops. I think there are a number, if Nelson Piquet Jnr gets up and says “I was told to crash the car by X and X” or whoever that’s something but it doesn’t amount to a tin of beans in a court of law because obviously Nelson got fired by the team so therefore it might be construed to be in his interest to make them look bad so that’s not really enough. Having said that there are traces of throttle control, there are traces on the steering and there are radio calls between the car and the pit, obviously there’s nobody coming on the radio going “crash now” that won’t be what happened, but there may be indications things were going on which were just odd, and I would think that there has to be some evidence available somewhere for there to be the need to investigate anything because anyone can walk up and make allegations. If the FIA is investigating what happened, and they are, clearly there were a bunch of interviews going on in Belgium at the weekend which were sort of out of sight but not really. There were people being seriously questioned about what had happened. There’s all kinds of elements, this is a very ugly story if it develops into what it is claimed to be, it is a very bad thing for Formula One. Having said that if it is what it’s claimed to be, Formula One needs to clean out things like that and not to try and hide it so I think if the stories are there it’s good to get them out in the open to get them fixed to find out what’s really happening and so long as we feel that the resulting investigations and conclusions are correct then everything will be good because Formula One will have shown it can clean out or not as the case may be. In that respect, self policing, it gives the sport the opportunity to police itself. If the sport chooses not to do that then it must take whatever it gets but I think sometimes the sport has let itself down by not policing itself well. I think last time the European Commission came to look at Formula One there were a lot of changes that need to happen. There were a lot of questions going on at the moment as we know about the selection process for new teams which the European Union is supposed to be looking at as well, there’s just a lot of negative things happening around the sport which are really to do with the changing political scene and it’s a time of change and times of changes have, there are positives and negatives, I think there’s an awful lot of negative happening in Formula One but at the same time on the race track we’re having all the positives.

Me: Absolutely. Spa was quite a revelation in terms of mixing up the order, certainly in qualifying.



Joe: Utterly bonkers, utterly bonkers.

Me: What was the feeling on Saturday when the big guns went out in Q2?

Joe: If you've read GP+ this weekend, I don't know if you have, but I think the headline on qualifying sums it up perfectly, "Looney Tunes" just could not figure out what the hell was going on, it was like sort of, wait a minute the grid is back to front here, something mad is happening here.

Me: And it wasn't raining.

Joe: And it wasn't raining, I mean It was cool but you wouldn't have expected it to be like that but in the end I think Fisichella summed it up pretty well in the press conference somebody said "how did you do that" and he said "I don't know" and it's to do with, fundamentally it's down to tyres, there's no question about it, it's down to how the tyres work on a car and this is something I find most extraordinary because I don't really understand Bridgestone's strategy in Formula One. They pay a lot of money to be the sole supplier and they produce tyres, obviously they don't want tyres that are easy for everybody otherwise it would be dull but sometimes they produce tyres that just turn, make the whole thing, people complain about the tyres all the time, I think this is an example of perhaps cars that are, some cars are harder on tyres than others, it's a bit like why is Jenson slow and Rubens fast and the answer is because Jenson is a very stylish and smooth flowing driver in the tradition of Alain Prost and Rubens is a bit rougher and tougher and Rubens can get heat into his tyres and Jenson doesn't seem to be able to do that and these things are so delicate that they can change over a few degrees of temperature so at a certain temperature the Brawn is faster than the Red Bull and at a certain temperature the Red Bull is faster than the Brawn and the McLaren comes steaming up on occasion and I think that Spa is the first sort of high down force, sorry, low medium down force I suppose you'd call it, it's the first track this year would you believe where it has got this sort of specification and certain chassis work better because aerodynamically that's where they're at their best so suddenly we have Force India, BMW and Toyota all doing things they haven't been able to do it at all on the other tracks.

Me: You were talking, I read I can't remember where it was, it might have been on your blog or it might have been on GP+ but you mentioned that one of the problems Ferrari have with their replacement driver is that these tyres are so picky in terms of how they're used and how they get warmed up, just working the tyres is an art form now.

Joe: Well I think that's what's been wrong, I mean Luca Badoer, OK he's been out of the car for a long time blah blah blah but he ain't that bad, and he's been made to look absolutely awful. You have to say that it's down to, I think it's down to a couple of things. One is that it's down to this very critical tyre warming issue and if you get it wrong a couple of times your confidence is going to be shot to pieces because you just don't know how to handle it. I think that's what happened, if you look at Badoer, he went out on Friday morning and he went off a couple of times quite quickly and you think 'hello, he's now learning about warming the tyres up' and even the guys who have been doing it all year, if you look at what happened to Heidfeld in the race, he went barrelling into the first corner and having decided on the wrong tyre choice really, so he went sailing straight on leaving the gap on the inside for Kubica to go through and basically causing a bit of a rumpus behind him. He didn't do it deliberately, it was just because his tyres were the wrong, they weren't working as he'd anticipated they would be so I think the whole thing can be explained in a scientific and logical fashion but it's certainly a very dramatic change. Having said that as well, we're talking about a lap here of one minute 45 or whatever and the whole field with the exception of Badoer were covered by one second. That's astonishing if you stop and think about it, it's astonishing that Formula One is that close so a little temperature change can suddenly turn everything on its head. We thought on Sunday "well OK we've seen the loony stuff on Saturday now it'll all go back to normal" but it didn't, Force India was very close to winning a race. I had to keep shaking my head and going 'what.' I say that but that's the truth. If Force India had been able to get ahead of



the Ferrari in the pit stops for example, I don't think the Ferrari, it might have done, KERS was actually quite, you can see it working and I think the faster everybody has KERS the better. In a way that's true because you don't want the KERS guys running away with all the races but KERS is one of those technologies that once it's been developed everyone can have it relatively cheaply and it's one of those things that won't just disappear and become something that everybody has got, because the glorious thing about KERS is that you can use it at a different point so if everyone's got the same system it doesn't mean everyone will be using it in exactly the same places. Sometimes they're using it in rather surprising places so I think it's a terrific technology, I think it does Formula One's green image, brackets, what there is of it, a lot of good and I know people are saying we don't want it for next year but I think it's probably a wise thing to have it.

Me: Do you think it will be standardised next year or will it be competitive in the sense that it is this year?

Joe: No I don't think it will be standardised I think you can have your different KERS systems and they work in different ways but fundamentally they deliver you a punch when you need it, then it's a matter of who uses it where and I don't think, if you look what happened at the restart in Spa, they go downhill Kimi sits behind Fisichella, they go uphill, Kimi punches the button and woomph he is gone, he is gone. Having some guys with it and some guys without it means the starts are much more exciting than they used to be.

Me: Yip, much.

Joe: Because before everyone was pretty much going off the line in uniform fashion with the exception of people who couldn't push the buttons in the right order, of which there are a couple. Having it has spiced up a bit and having said that, it also creates situations where you have accidents because you get four abreast and the Formula One grid is carefully designed to avoid getting bunches of cars too close together. They don't really want four cars going abreast into the corners because inevitably only three will come out the other side, if that. So there are swings and roundabouts in all of these things but I guess getting rid, I'm not sure is a very wise idea.

Me: Red Bull have been talking that they might be able to introduce it, presumably with the aid of Renault, do you think that might give them any extra advantage versus Brawn who have said there's no chance they've got any hope of bringing KERS to their car?

Joe: I think that they'd be stark raving bonkers to bring it in to be quite honest.

Me: Why's that?

Joe: Because theoretically it's going to give you an advantage but there's 150 things that could go wrong which normally they'd go out to the test team and they'd sort it out but there are no test teams anymore. You go to the race track and you test there. This is why engine development, even if it's, even the fact that it's controlled if you like but any new parts which they are allowed to put on the cars, there are still some they are allowed to play with, but these engines now have to last for X number of races and therefore every one of these modifications has to be tested to that level of kilometres. If you stop and think about it you can put it on the dyno, sure that's fine, and then you take a risk thereafter. While on the one hand you are saving some money on various things, the amount of engine testing going on is probably more than it was before now because everything has to be validated to the right distance because you're not just screwing up one race if you mess up.

Me: Of course.



Joe: Vettel is in the situation now where he's running short of engines already because you have your maximum number of engines you're allowed to do before you take a penalty and he's had a few blowing up on him. That's the risk you take. There is all kinds of, it's like shutting down the factories over the summer. If you talked around the teams and said "do you think you saved any money?" the answer is no, we all got a holiday but the work that had to be done was done before or afterwards with overtime so it didn't change the amount of work being done the only thing it saved was a few thousand pounds perhaps in electricity bills.

Me: You don't think it saved them any money at all then?

Joe: That's what they're saying I don't know I'm just merely reporting back what people tell me about what was saved or not saved and the answer is no probably didn't save a great deal.

Me: Do you think they'll do it again next year?

Joe: They don't know what they're doing next week let alone next year.

Me: Sorry, daft question.

Joe: There are limits, if you can find someone who knows the Formula One regulations for next year you're halfway doing well. While there may be a printed version from week to week there are constant updates to it and in the finest traditions of the Formula One media we are not actually party to this so the rules are a mystery to a large extent I mean obviously we know the basic stuff but you never know any of the clarifications until they come up in a dispute.

Me: Do you think any of the cost saving measures they've introduced this year have helped close the field, I know you just said just a minute ago that obviously the field in Spa was closer than it has been in a very long time. Could the fact that the big teams can't just test and test and test and test?

Joe: But they can test and test but they can only do it in a virtual fashion. I think the fact that McLaren have come forward as they have may be something to do with the fact they've got a very very good simulator for example. People think of simulators as being extremely large toys but they're not, these simulators nowadays are actually working on performance and there has to be a reason that McLaren has been able to leap forward this much. I think it's the fact that these things have been pounding around virtual race tracks for as much time as is possible.

Me: Gotcha, OK, and that's why they've made a bigger performance increase than anyone else?

Joe: There's a reason Ferrari are spending a fortune on a new state of the art simulator that will be ready in December. There's a reason that red bull have got one that's right up there with the McLaren one now and I think that when track testing gets knocked out there are other ways of testing things and you know these simulators are astonishing in what they can do, I mean they're never going to be the same as driving around on a proper test but they will give you an awful lot of the same stuff.

Me: Looking ahead we've got Monza not this weekend, weekend after.

Joe: Thank god.

Me: It's the last, have you got anything planned before then or is it a case of recovering?



Joe: I was thinking of going to a hill climb, funnily enough, which is the next village from where I live they have a hill climb at the weekend which I saw advertised in a banner going across the road.

Me: Any drivers we know taking part?

Joe: I would think possibly not, no. I should think probably the biggest name would be the local farmer I should think.

Me: Oh.

Joe: I don't know but it's a sort of jolly local event and every so often it does you good to go to a motor racing event that isn't too serious just to remind you what it's all about. I'm not definitely going to do it because I did it about 10 years ago I had an absolutely delightful afternoon watching people do daft things in cars and enjoying themselves and doing it because they like motor racing.

Me: You're not thinking of taking part though?

Joe: Oh god no that's a distinctly bad idea.

Me: Then what happens between then and Monza?

Joe: Absolutely no idea, I shall just keep writing as I do on a fairly daily basis and wade my way through the probably four foot of paperwork that I need to get sorted out.

Me: It's the last tour in Europe, the last grand prix before you fly away.

Joe: That's always bad because that means because there is sort of five weeks where nothing gets done at all. It's very hard to keep up with general living when you're doing the kind of mad lifestyles that we have and if you let it go which I did a year or so ago, it's really hard to catch up and sometimes it's just sort of you get back from one place and you've got a day to do stuff and you just don't really have the urge to do it you know. You can always find excuses to do something else, I've always found and dealing with all the boring stuff is one of the banes of existence unfortunately a lot of people have staff to do it, I sadly don't. I was thinking of training any stray children who wander by to be slaves to do my paper work for me.

Me: You need an intern.

Joe: Absolutely, good plan. That's a nice word for it, intern is another word for slave.

Me: Exactly. Just one more thing then on the championship battle on the drivers and what's going on. Jenson Button, not had a stellar couple of races the last five races he's not scored the points he could have or should have. It's closing up slightly, ever so slightly, any idea who you think advantage will go to in Monza?

Joe: Well I have, I mean it's an interesting question I think that the cars that did well at spa will do well at Monza I think one of the things that may have confused matters is that Giancarlo Fisichella is looking at an embarrassment of riches. He's spent his whole life wanting to be a Ferrari driver and this is his opportunity on the other hand he's got a Force India that might even win him a race which is a ludicrous position to be in but that's where he is so I don't know is the answer, I mean last year we had a Toro Rosso win at Monza so who knows? All I know is its going to provide us with much entertainment and it's a hell of a lot better than Michael Schumacher winning 15 consecutive races so I don't care.



Me: Good point.

Joe: When all is said and done, I think we've had six different winners in six different races and good on them, that's what it's all about. It's about providing interest and excitement and entertainment and Formula One is delivering that very well this year.

Me: Agreed. Joe you are a legend we've missed talking to you, we've missed these chats.

Joe: I'm not a legend, I need another glass of wine that's for sure.

Transcript by Amy.

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