



An Aside With Joe – Nobody Comes Here Unless They Have To

Christine: This is An Aside With Joe - Nobody Comes Here Unless They Have To.

Me: So here we are the first episode in a brand new show.

Christine: Yeah I mean previously we have packaged this as F1 Debrief but it really deserves its own show.

Me: Oh yes, still with Joe.

Christine: Absolutely.

Me: Although slightly a different vibe to previous weeks due to the fact that Joe is in China.

Christine: It's really hard to talk to China.

Me: They have a notoriously difficult firewall to overcome.

Christine: Yeah.

Me: And therefore the conversation was a bit of a one sided conversation.

Christine: Didn't you say, he has plenty of bandwidth out but he couldn't hear us.

Me: Not for love nor money so rather than a conversation with Joe as we'd normally like to do this is more of a Q&A with Joe.

Christine: Yeah and how are we getting the questions to him?

Me: Typing them .

Christine: On a Skype chat.

Me: So it's a bit confusing but basically we'll try and voice what we asked Joe in Skype and see if it comes across, see if we can call something together.

Me: So the first question we put to Joe was...

Christine: It's Saturday in China when we spoke to him and usually we talk to him on a Friday so we wondered how the vibe differed closer to race day.

Joe: How does Saturday compare to Friday, well, on Friday all the telecommunications systems worked and on Saturday they don't, probably because the Chinese have gone off for the weekend or something I don't know, but whoever the man is pedalling the machine, it's stopped working. How does it compare to Friday as a journalist? On Saturday one gets serious, as opposed to Friday when you sit around and make jokes with each other. Friday doesn't really give you a clear picture of what's happening on the race track because you're not sure who's playing with



what, so it's not really serious until Saturday and often the morning session on Saturday is not 100% clear either. It's just a matter of waiting for qualifying and seeing who's quick but I think what we've learned so far this weekend is that Brawn is still well ahead of everyone else and the Williams and Toyota are there or thereabouts, and all the other people may have bits of diffuser arriving on aeroplanes and all the rest of it but that probably won't make a huge difference. I think the most important thing to say about the diffusers is that some of these teams who got caught with their trousers around their ankles haven't really been able to sort of think the whole thing through and they're hoping that the diffuser will allow them to catch up and I think they're about to have a nasty lesson and discover that actually Brawn is ahead for other reasons not just the diffuser and I think that will be the next look of horror on Flavio Briatore's face, which of course causes some amusement to a large number of people in Formula One because they quite like to see him in pain.

Me: Can I include myself in that list of people who like to see Flavio in pain?

Christine: You do, I'd just rather just not see him at all really.

Me: He's been a bit mean.

Christine: He's been really mean. So mean about the Brawn boys and it's really quite unnecessary and I'm glad they hit back. But our next question is do we think that it's just because he's getting desperate about the lack of results?

Joe: I think we've sort of discussed this before a little bit. My view on the diffuser thing is that the people who complained about it were the ones who needed an excuse for their bosses because their people hadn't sorted the right thing to do, and so they went off to the FIA to have an excuse to be able to go back to their bosses and say "well it's not fair because the other people were cheating," well the FIA said "no they weren't cheating actually it's just you guys aren't clever enough" and now they're sort of left standing in the open air going "ah um what do we do next" so they're at a certain level of desperation in some of the teams that haven't been smart enough to do it originally or haven't even got on the treadmill and started work on it. Most of them seem to be somewhere down the line developing it but trying to lob things on at the last minute is probably not a great idea so we'll see, but I don't think the actual overall picture will change very much here. I think we'll still see the Brawns in a fairly dominant position on the use of tyres. I think the Williams is quite good and the Toyota is always there or thereabouts but I'm still a little bit unconvinced by Toyota but I'm not quite sure why.

Christine: Well the topic of conversation since the diffuser was declared legal has been who's going to get there first?

Me: Oh yes.

Christine: And is it going to make all the difference in the world? And obviously in free practice today we saw that McLaren clearly were ahead of the game, they were prepared for it to be legal. Is it going to make the difference?

Joe: Absolutely no idea, Lewis Hamilton was quick on Friday morning but anyone can be quick on Friday morning. It might have been a sort of confidence boost for the chaps back home, it's a bit like a wagon train. They're all sitting there with arrows in their hats at the moment so I think they need a bit of cheering up. It may be better, it may not be better, they didn't show much in the afternoon session yesterday. I think that the head of the non-diffuser gang is probably Red Bull but they've got a monster job to put a diffuser on the thing because they have a different suspension at the rear end, so that's going to take them a lot longer than some of the others but as an overall package I think they're probably the closest ones at the moment and it'll be interesting to see as their systems come through, how close they can get but you know we're talking already now of upgrades coming at Silverstone time and



remember they're not the only people who are going to be upgrading because Brawn, Toyota and Williams will be upgrading at the same time. It's a question of catching up and seeing whose where and when.

Christine: Moving on from the diffuser thing because god knows we've talked about that enough recently, the next thing we were wondering about was tyres.

Me: The thing that specifically interested me was Alonso's negative comments earlier on in the week regarding Bridgestone's tyre choices for this grand prix.

Christine: But the funny thing is because you were typing the questions to Joe and you were in a hurry and you can't type.

Me: Apparently I type as well as I speak.

Christine: Something got lost in translation.

Joe: Nageev. Interesting word. The thing I don't really understand is, Bridgestone is the sole supplier of tyres therefore they're not in competition with anyone, but they seem to have a bit of a struggle producing tyres that people can use which I don't really get it. I guess it's their first year on the slicks but they seem to be very sensitive and the use of tyres is obviously something that is key this year. We've seen that in Melbourne where Kubica suddenly came alive at the end of the race. He reckoned he was going to win, I reckon that's a little bit pushing the envelope, if you use your tyres in the right order at the right time you can get quite a dramatic result. I'm not sure why it has to be quite that tyre critical. The Brawns use their tyres better than everybody else and that really is the bottom line. That's why they are going so much better, they can go on a long run and the tyres will come off and look brand new. The tyres are not turning Formula One into a joke, some teams use it well some teams don't and when teams don't use things correctly and they're not very competitive they complain about it. That's just the nature of the beast, so it's much better, rather than whinging about it, get down and make the things work. So no I don't think it's turning Formula One into a joke, it's just that they don't like being laughed at by their rivals. So I guess they think it's a bit of a joke because they are in fact the butt of the joke. No I don't think there's any danger involved, I think it's just whining and whinging and gurning on because they can't think of anything else to say and trying to divert the attention away from the fact the car is bog slow.

Christine: Of course another car going slowly is Ferrari, they took KERS out for this weekend.

Me: They weren't looking good. They had problems in the rain.

Christine: After the disasters they had at the last race, now they seem to be going even slower.

Joe: Ferrari is a bit of a mess really at the moment. The car sort of runs around the track barking at every corner. The team is throwing spears at each other so it needs a bit of calming down and getting their head around the problem. I'm not quite sure how it's all going to come together but right now it's just not working at all and it's pretty hideous really. They need to get some technical developments through to make the car better and then maybe we'll see a bit of action, but right now it's a very good illustration of the way Formula One is for the last few years, the level of which machinery is important. It really is a key, 80% of success in Formula One is about manoeuvring yourself into the right car. Jenson Button has waited for nine years for his car to come along and here it is, so he's now using it to the maximum of its potential.

Christine: Button seems to be able to win whether it's wet or dry.



Me: Come rain or shine.

Christine: So far, and seeing as we have a man on the ground in China, we asked what it was looking like outside his window.

Me: It would be rude not to.

Joe: It looks alright, it's a bit hazy, looks a bit Shanghaiey Saturday morning, not bad at all. There's supposed to be rain on Sunday, I think, but the weather forecast is generally not always great about this sort of stuff so we'll see what happens. I don't think it makes much difference whether it's wet or dry as we saw wherever we were last week, Malaysia, the Brawn was quick in the wet and quick in the dry so I think the overall scheme of things it's just down to it doesn't really matter what the weather is doing. Obviously it sort of shuffles the pack a bit but there are no particular geniuses in the wet. Adrian Sutil apparently does better in the wet than the dry but sometimes, people are just born lucky, you never know,

Me: One of the big stories on the web this week was a post Joe wrote about Ron Dennis stepping down from his role at McLaren. Very well received in the comments on our site and also on Joe's site. If you haven't read it yet do check it out on joesaward.wordpress.com, really good post.

Christine: We'll link to it as always.

Me: Absolutely, a link in the show notes. I just wanted to get a little bit more information from Joe on his thoughts about Ron and how the vibe in the paddock is now that Ron has stepped down.

Christine: He's officially gone.

Joe: Ron is such a sort of, I mean he's a difficult bloke sometimes, but he's a giant in Formula One terms, he's up there with Enzo Ferrari in terms of the number of wins under his command and the rest of it and I just don't think that this sort of stuff should interfere with the sport. Whether he says that there's no orchestration in all of this and it's all because he wants to retire and blah blah blah. I don't think there's anybody out there who believes that, I think there's a lot of people who believe Ron has to go in order for things to calm down. Whether that's true or not, you know, who can say but I think that Formula One is better off with Ron Dennis for all his flaws and for all his saying the wrong thing at the wrong moment, we need people who are really passionate about the sport and Ron is one of the most passionate people I've ever met on the subject of Formula One. I think any real fan understands what the passion for Formula One is all about and so we should be sad when a passionate person leaves the sport. It's very interesting in China the atmosphere at the Chinese Grand Prix is ludicrous because of course nobody ever comes here, and the motorhome people for example, they love it because they don't have to work very hard. You'll go into a team VIP hospitality area and there'll just be a few staff sitting round going 'I wonder where all the people are.' Nobody comes here unless they have to. There's a lot of people just sort of with not much to do. Yesterday afternoon I spent an hour and a half just sitting with Martin Whitmarsh, laughing about old things that happened 15 years ago and he had the time to do that because there was not much else to do, and I had Patrick Head at lunch time, I sat with him for three quarters of an hour. People just aren't busy here because nobody wants to be here. Bernie obviously wants us to be here because I think they give him a large sum of money, so I'm told. It's really not a race that generates much excitement within the Formula One community, I think we come here, we do what we're supposed to do and we leave. I think one of the closest races is the one to get to the airport on Sunday night which is kind of sad but there just doesn't seem to be any...the locals haven't embraced Formula One because it's a completely alien world to them, but when you're riding a bicycle around in a totally chaotic, the way everything is



here on the streets, these strange rocket ships that land out in the middle of a marsh and cost a load of money to go look at really are something you can't relate to. I think there's a serious problem of relating to the average man on the Shanghai bicycle. It might happen in 10 years from now, but it's an awful lot of money to be spent to relate to the consumers of tomorrow. I think the idea that we'd be keeping coming here and not going to places like Germany or France or whatever is ludicrous but the sport appears to be run for the benefit of some blokes in suits, fat cats who drive around in fancy cars who don't give a toss about what's going on so that's what we have to do.

Christine: So if China isn't a favourite on the calendar, our thoughts immediately went to the nightlife, as they do, as you would expect?

Me: And food.

Christine: Well yes so our question was "what is your plan on a quiet Saturday evening in Shanghai?"

Me: And where is the best place to eat?

Christine: And we tagged on the end "who does the best paddock packed lunch?"

Joe: Who does the best paddock lunches, that's an easy question. No comment. Because anybody who's ever done a good food guide knows that you make one person happy and ten people unhappy, so no you're never going to get a word as to who does the best lunches out of me because I like having lunch. Saturday evenings are never quiet for me, not because I'm out dancing on the tables, because I am sitting in a hotel room bashing away on the keys of a computer trying to produce an e-magazine which sadly doesn't throw itself together, but we're quite advanced this weekend which is good because we have to get the hell out of China on Sunday night in a great hurry, so it'll be quite entertaining that bit. Hopefully there won't be any protests or anything like that, getting to the airport in order to get around the problems of filing copy we have to leave the country, so it's going to be a rush to get there and the e-mag will be out, I can't remember how many hours flying it is to Dubai but I think it's about eight so it won't be out. Last week we did it in three and a half in Malaysia, which is our all time record. It's not going to happen, it will be filed from the airport in Dubai when we arrive about four o'clock in the morning whichever time zone that is in, I have no idea GMT what that would be, I suppose two o'clock in the morning GMT something like that. No, Saturday here will be making sure that on Sunday everything is running in order so I shan't be out whatever people do in China on Saturday nights.

Christine: Changing the subject completely, a couple of shows again, well, a couple of Joe shows ago we discussed the Science Museum exhibit.

Me: And this week we actually went for ourselves.

Christine: We went there and we saw it so naturally the subject came up again.

Joe: I'm writing a 150 page article, it feels like it anyway, on the technology this week in the e-magazine and I was talking to Patrick yesterday about their KERS system, the flywheel and the potential uses of that. I think the technology is just astonishing and what its being used for is very interesting so I think that Formula One should tell the world more about what we're doing when we put our batman suits on as opposed to burning up oil and running over poor defenceless animals. We are actually there doing lots of good things and creating fancy carbon composite incubators to move sick infants around and I'm not sure that improving the performance of tanks and such things is necessarily a good idea, but protecting soldiers from bomb explosions, all kinds of things that Formula One is doing and helping towards, it is very interesting so if you do get the chance to go down to the Science Museum use it



because it's a fascinating exhibition and I think you know, Formula One, people need to understand what we do a little more.

Me: There was some further discussion in the Sidepodcast comments regarding the ability for the Science Museum exhibit to travel, like a mobile exhibition, so we put that question to Joe.

Joe: I think that would be a very good idea to travel around the world, if someone wants to organise it. It's actually quite a nice opportunity for a sponsor, not that anyone has any money anymore. Here in Shanghai the BMW mobile theme park or whatever it's called is in action behind the main grandstand, which incidentally I don't think anybody is sitting in. There seems to be about 120 people here somewhere, lost among the hundreds of thousands of seats, but we'll see what happens on Sunday in terms of the numbers. One of the problems is actually getting to the racetrack because the transportation is not easy. They didn't get round to building the train tracks, there's a station here but no trains that run into it and I don't think there's any railway line either. The intention was to have public transport delivering people here, which is good, so they can go stand outside the gate because they can't afford to get in. There's a number of things that need to be done here, one is getting people in and out and two is finding ways of making it pay, either that or just importing loads of schoolchildren making the grandstands look full, which they have been known to do.

Christine: They definitely seemed empty today.

Me: Yeah, desolate. A few more people turned up to free practice in China than they did in Malaysia, but not that many.

Christine: So that wraps up our chat with Joe this week, it was difficult but we overcame the odds.

Me: Oh yes we hope it was enjoyable.

Christine: Apologies if there was any pings from Skype. Big thanks to Joe as ever, you can catch him at joesaward.wordpress.com, and don't forget to subscribe to the excellent magazine grand prix +. Hopefully we'll catch up with him again in Bahrain.

Me: And hopefully the technology will work for us this time.

Transcript by Amy.