



An Aside With Joe – What's the Point of Having Three Championships When You Can Have One?

Christine: It's Friday evening and we are keeping our fingers crossed that Turkish technology works better than Monaco, as we are joined by Joe Saward for our regular chat. Hi Joe, how's Turkey?

Joe: It's very nice, sort of, in a fashion. I've sort of learned how to do it now, because a couple of years ago we all used to start out going, oh my god it's Asia so let's stay in the European side because it's one of the few cities in the world, I don't know if it's the only city in the world, but one of the few cities in the world where you can change continents by driving over a bridge, so half the city's in Europe and half the city's in Asia. And, for some reason, which is completely beyond me, we just decided, everybody decided originally, that we would all stay on the European side and drive to Asia every day. And then, after years, sitting in endless traffic jams, endlessly to get across the bridge, and you would spend 2 hours a day, at least in traffic jams, we actually hit on the amazing idea of actually staying in hotels on the Asian side and suddenly things became a bit easier. And we even discovered that there was an airport on the Asian side, and so, I think it was yesterday, or the day before, I can't remember, I flew in and arrived at a fairly empty airport and almost, probably ten minutes after we arrived we were at the circuit, which was absolutely delightful. So, I've had no Istanbul traffic, admittedly I haven't gone to see bazaars and Agatha Christie's hotel or all the other things they've got down there, it's all very pretty and nice and lovely, but the again I've had plenty of time to enjoy myself out here, as opposed to sitting in traffic jams looking at strange smelly, diesel driven monsters that come from near the Iraq border.

Me: Is it just yourself that's cottoned on to this revolutionary idea, or is it generally the entire paddock that have come to the same conclusion?

Joe: Well, pretty much the entire paddock has reached the conclusion, there are still a few who tug into town. Actually, one year we decided it was all too complicated and we decided that we would solve the problem's of Istanbul by hiring a local cab driver, because the cabs here are pretty cheap, and so we just said to this guys, well it was pretty difficult to say to him, since we didn't speak a word of each others languages, but we made lots of hand signals and we had a hotel receptionist who did some translation work for us, and basically the deal was, 'you come and get us in the morning, take us out there and bring us home at night, and be there waiting for us and we'll pay you X amount per day. And we had a terrific cab driver called Senol who spoke not one word on English, I spoke not one word of Turkish, we got on really well, and on Sunday night he arrived at some late hour to take us back to Istanbul, of course we were in a bit of a rush to get back and work but Senol had it in his head that he really had to take us out for dinner. It was a most bizarre thing, it was, Peter Ustunov should have been in there somewhere, we ended up visiting a sort of road side stall which his, I don't know some cousin of him owned, and he'd bought us dinner. He understood we were in a hurry, and so he gave us these strange road side food, which was very delightful, and cans of this and, he'd paid for it all, I guess that we were giving him such a lot of money that he was very happy about it, but he said the traffic is really bad, you can't get across the bridge, it's impossible, so we're going to go by boat, and so we actually sailed in to Europe on a ferry boat on a Sunday night, and it was most bizarre sort of circumstances (Me: genius) and we were delivered pretty much to our hotel in a, much quicker than it would have take us to drive over, so It's a kind of wacky place. Istanbul is fascinating if you are into archaeology, Byzantium and Constantinople and Istanbul, and they've got more fortresses here, they're all falling down, of course everything is falling down, but it is an interesting place, but the circuit of course is sort of 20 miles out in the middle of nowhere as all racing circuits are, and it's sort of the large strange thing that looks like it fell out of space. The Turks haven't really got the hang of motor racing at all, I don't know if it's because the tickets are too expensive, I don't know if it's because it is too far out of town I would guess the tickets are probably very expensive, but the word is, this year, they've sold a massive 9,000 tickets which pretty much guarantees they won't hit the necessary targets financially,



which they need to pay Bernie, and so everybody is here, walking around, sort of going 'has there ever been a paddock this quiet in formula 1 history?' I mean there might have happened in the mid fifties perhaps, but it's a bit like High Noon, when you're walking the paddock there's no one about, there's the occasional person lurking behind the odd motor home, but it's very, very quiet.

Me: It's a large paddock as well, isn't it, at the bet of times?

Joe: I would say vast, actually, it's just incredibly quiet and it's a different time of year to normal, and the other thing is, of course, it's an awfully long way to get everything out to Istanbul from England. I actually did the sums the other day and it's something like 2,700 miles of driving to get everything out here, and of course 2,700 miles back again, so this is a pretty major undertaking, and for example, Red Bull, they have this mammoth motor home and it's not here, they've sent the testing motor home along, which is almost as ridiculous but not quite, but simply because in Monte Carlo the main motor home was on a floating pontoon thing and it was actually impossible to get the whole thing off the boats, it was on, on trucks out here, and built in Turkey and then taken down and taken to Britain in 10 days from now, this thing is just like building a house every time you do it.

Me: Sure

Joe: And they even have trapeze artists and things like that who fly about in the air, joining. It's a most bizarre world we live in, Formula 1.

Me: I kind of liked, I preferred the new one, or the temporary one, to be honest with you, than the really expensive, plush Formula 1 motor home.

Joe: Yeah, I don't know, the temporary, if you fancy that, the temporary, plush formula 1 one is apparently at Le Mans next week as I guess Dietrich Mateschitz of Red Bull has decided to loan it, or lease it or sell it or whatever to somebody else, because they are on the way from Monte Carlo to Silverstone, they might as well make some money on the way, so I presume that's what it was all about but it's all to do with the logistical impossibilities of it all. But it is, this is a well out there kind of race in terms of travelling, because it's not like 'throw everything in the boxes and fly it', it is very much, it all comes across on the trucks, and that's a long way, but I don't think that has anything to do with the quietness of the paddock, the quietness, I think, is due to the fact that no one is interested at all. You come out of the circuit to get to where we're staying, down on the Sea of Marmara, which is quite nice, but they've built all these roads, there is this fantastically wide open road going through, it's like a motorway, going through these hills and every so often you come around a corner, there'll be a bunch of goats in the road or, last night we were coming by, and I don't know what was going on, maybe they were all piling out of the Mosque or something, but the road was, there were just sort of clumps of women in all the gear walking down the road, and their sense of road safety is a bit interesting, so Muslim ladies meet mad Formula 1 journalists is a bit of a, at speed should be added too, it's a bit complicated, with occasionally some goats thrown in as well. It's certainly a bit lively.

Me: Was it the circuit organiser who was, I read, complaining, it may have been yesterday, that the government not only has the nation not got behind Formula 1, but the government hasn't appeared to support it much either. Do you think it would help if they got behind it?

Joe: No. The bottom line is, they've got more important things to do ere, there's an awful lot of infrastructure work that needs to be done in Turkey, because their aim, ultimately, is to join the European Union, which is a novel idea. There are arguments to and from as to what is important, I think the Grand Prix was some sort of idea of being some sort of shining light, to show the world what an enlightened place Turkey is, and blah blah blah, well of course, they blew it massively, when they orchestrated a man from Cyprus to go up on the podium as a result of which they got



fined a massive amount of money by the FIA and basically didn't have any money left to run the racetrack, so the racetrack is now under Bernie's wing; the local government and the chamber of commerce and the rest of it still have to pay the fees, and basically the whole thing is just a massive, loss making thing, and it's got two years to run, and I don't think anybody believes we'll be back here after that.

Me: It's a shame though, because it's quite a good circuit in terms of new circuit builds, it has a lot of decent corners, it got elevation changes, the drivers seem to like it, and it's left handed.

Joe: Yes, they do seem to like it and it is a decent circuit, as the new circuits go, in the finest traditions, but it's just in the wrong place. It's a bit like, I want to say Spa Francorchamps, it's nothing at all like Spa Francorchamps, but Spa is a fantastic racing circuit, but with the exception of a few anorak wearing Formula 1 extremists fans who like to go there and sit in the rain in their caravans, people don't go there, and so it's almost impossible to make that race pay, given the fees they have to pay. So, building racing circuits in the wrong places is something that, nowadays, if you're out in the country like Silverstone or Magny-Cours everything is moving away from that, everything is moving towards these street races, where basically, you take the racing to the people, rather than people going to the racing, 'cause the answer is that people don't go to the racing unless there's a really, really good reason to go.

Me: There was a great quote in the last edition of GP+ Magazine, which, I think it closed the magazine, the quote was "Half the worlds F1 spectators are coming to races disguised as empty seats."

Joe: Ah well that's a, I have to tell you now, Mr Tremayne, actually, we were having breakfast this morning, it was his line but it wasn't really his line, he stole it. 1991, I think it was, we went to Phoenix, Arizona for one of the silliest of all possible Grands Prix and it was a line that one of the local columnists came up with and David has, he absolutely loved it, and actually at breakfast time this morning he was explaining about this, and how he'd purloined it for his most recent column, so, I think it was, what is it, they say that copying it the best form of flattery, well he was flattering a man in Phoenix, but none of us can remember the name of the man in Phoenix, apart from the fact he might have been called 'Jack', but there you go. Thank you Jack, in Phoenix.

Christine: David's been waiting over a decade to use it.

Joe: Oh, I think he might have used it once or twice along the way, because the good stuff, you have to bring out occasionally, it will work on the principle that if you repeat yourself once every five years no one will notice, but there are, every so often thing just come along and they do fit. I remember there was a similar sort of line being used when we used to go to Jerez and nobody ever went there, in southern Spain, in fact this afternoon, one of the German reporters came running up and looked at the window and said 'look at that, look at that, there's more people in the press room than the grandstand', and he was absolutely right, and the press room's half empty. We are talking about a race that has no raison d'être, it doesn't achieve anything, it's just here because there's a contract that has to be completed. In a way, it's sort of like Shanghai, you just don't see where it's ever going, it might in ten years, it might build up a following but you'd think there'd be more of a starting point, here there just seems to be no interest at all.

Me: Talking of the press room, we had a couple of comments, people would like put to you in terms of what you see during the race and whether you have BBC commentary feeds or do you just peer out the window or are you completely blind, what's your race experience like?

Joe: Actually, at a number of races the press rooms do not have visibility of the racetrack. This is a sort of a daft idea, somebody without too much thought has got, it's kind of strange, but generally speaking you see more from TV than you do by looking out of the window, and the other thing is, of course, you have all the timing screens, which



are hugely valuable because you can see who's catching who, in different sectors and you can read a race much better of the TV screens and the replays and all these other things you have, so it's kind of bizarre, you travel the world and you watch it on TV, but you do get a lot more information, so you can, in fact, very quickly after a race produce a fairly decent summary of what happened in the race, and obviously it's a lot better than the average person at home gets, but if they ever get round to doing the full, all singing, all dancing HDTV and, people keep talking about 'red buttons' which I have no idea about because I live in France, so this sort of thing whereby you can get access to lots of different things, I'm sure that there comes a point in which you do have to say 'well in terms of pure race reporting I can do that from home', what you can't do from home, of course, is go around and chat to people in the paddock and know what's going on, on real cutting edge stuff. I think, all things considered, the costs of going round the world are endlessly going up, they don't really want big press corps travelling to all the races, they just like to keep it to a minimum because it makes life difficult, these nasty smelly press men wandering around getting in the way. I've had conversations with Bernie about it over the years and I've said to him 'well look, if you don't want the press corps it's very simple, you just, you employ a bunch of people, not very many, maybe ten, five to ten who do an absolutely brilliant job of all the coverage you could possibly want and you will wipe out probably 60, 70, 80% of the media coming, because they just won't need to, and why spend that kind of money if you don't need to. Now, obviously you are always going to get people that want to have their man who talked exclusively to Lewis Hamilton, blah, blah, blah, I mean nobody talks exclusively to Lewis Hamilton these days, that's always done in clumps of eight to ten, it's very, very rare you ever get any one-to-one's with the big stars, you can do if you're willing to wait several months, and again, a little bit it depends on the clout you have, if you are the BBC and have a global audience your going to get stuff other people don't get, if you're representing the Watford Gazette, you're, I'm sorry if there isn't a Watford Gazette, or if there is, I don't know, a newspaper somewhere in a small provincial town your chances of getting a one-to-one with Fernando Alonso are pretty small, really. You are what your numbers are if you like, and there's an awful lot of people who don't really have to be there if it's all provided for them, so it's one of these swings and roundabout arguments, at the end of the day no body actually wants to fund a media service. The FIA used to have a media service that covered every session and basically people didn't have to do any work at all, it was just delivered to them and relatively quickly at the end of a session, and in different languages, but that costs money and they just decided at the end well, it's not really worth it anymore, so there are all kinds of arguments as to what's the best way of doing it, but, in terms of what we do is, the only real value of being at the races is to be able to talk to the people behind the motor homes and find out the real stuff that's going on, who's going where, and who's signing for who, and this kind of stuff, but with the internet a story goes out, if I put one out or AUTOSPORT puts one out or whoever its like ripple on a pond, it's quite fun to watch actually, as I've ranted and raved in the past about people, sort of, 'thieving' is the word really, thieving stories, there's a whole bunch of people just sit there and thieve, so it is, drop a pebble in the middle of a pond and then the ripples just expand and expand and expand, that's what Formula 1 journalism is like. The question is, how many stones you need in the middle, really.

Me: It's a fair point, do you not think they're will be, I guess you could argue there's isn't a huge amount of balance now, but wouldn't it just become a propaganda war if Bernie was in charge of what was being said, and what was being put out?

Joe: Absolutely, because you wouldn't then have any sort of, the people who would be employed would be the ones who didn't rock the boat and didn't say the wrong things, so yeah, it doesn't quite work like that, when all is said and done, people read whatever website it is for content, content is king, that's what has always been the case from the beginning of the internet revolution. The more controversy, the better so long as it's reasoned and sensible, so, yeah you're right, but then again how many people are actually dealing in that kind of news, and the answer is very few, people are just satisfied with cobbling together what they can get without rocking any boats. It's swings and roundabouts really.



Me: To stretch the metaphor, seeing as you've brought it up, of rocking boats, it looks like Force India did just that, today. There was a big boat, and there was a lot of rocking.

Joe: I don't know if they rocked a boat, I think they just jumped off.

Christine: That is the worst segue I've ever heard, by the way.

Me: I do apologise, but I just can't help thinking of Flav's great, great big yacht in Monaco. Literally, you're right Vijay [Mallya] just leapt from it, didn't he, today.

Joe: Well, there's an expression about rats leaving a sinking ship, but the question is whether you believe the ship is sinking or not, but Vijay threw himself, bodily over the side of the ship today, for his own reasons, and as he was floating in the water, was trying to tell everybody he was actually still on board which is kind of a daft thing to say but there you go. He's trading to an Indian media that listens to every single word he says and reports it verbatim and there aren't many of the who actually question him and say, 'what on earth are you talking about' they just sort of accept him as being the Richard Branson of India, and everything he says must be therefore, true. It's down to money at the end of the day, he's frightened that if the entries are handed out to these new teams, he's going to have to buy one, which is going to cost him a load more money, and while he likes to play the billionaire and have the big boats, and all the rest of it, actually large lumps of cash maybe hard to find. If you go and check on the books of Airbus, for example, you'll find that Mr Mallya has more options on Airbuses than any other man in the history of the world, which is not a great thing to have right now, in a receding market. You really don't need that many aeroplanes. So cash is not always necessarily what he's got a lot of. He's got a lot of assets and all of the rest of it, and I think basically, they're just protecting the speed more than anything else, which is what Williams were doing. Williams jumped off the thing because 'we go racing, that's what we do, we can't sit around and hope that FOTA will come up with a better deal or start a new championship, we just have to go where the money is, Bernie Ecclestone is the man who pays the bills, we're sticking with Bernie. Maybe you could get more in the long term, in the overall scheme of things, but frankly we're happy enough getting what we get and that's why we're going to do it. I think, all these arguments that are going on at the moment are basically to do with money and to do with who makes the decisions. It's nothing to do with budget caps and all the rest of it, these are just the symptoms of the disease, the disease is that the sport is, the revenues are divided in an inconsistent way with most sports, and the means by which decisions are made are rather more, how shall we say, robust than in other sports. In other words, Max says we're doing it this way and everyone else says, well what about the Concord Agreement well that doesn't exist anymore, therefore, we're doing it my way. That's what it's all about, it's about Bernie and Max, one gets a load of money and the other one gets to tell people what to do, and neither one of those things sits very well with the big teams and when they are putting that much money on the table they have a, one can argue they have a bit of a right to sort of say, 'well hang on a minute we'd like to determine, as we're putting down these hundreds of millions of dollars, we would like to determine where these things are spent, but everybody agrees that you need to cut back on the money, that; fairly clear and the funny thing is that the FIA says we're going to do it this way, the teams say we're going to do it this way and at the end of the day if those, if the cuts that they're both proposing are probably, if you work it all out they are only about \$5 million apart in the actual overall scheme of things, in terms of, I mean the manufacturers ideas, they wouldn't be capped, but it would be reduced, it's really just sort of arm wrestling.

Christine: When I first read the Force India story, I said 'oh dear this looks bad for FOTA. What do you think's going to happen' and my partner in crime said 'ask Joe', so what do you think's going to happen?

Joe: That depends on whom you talk to. I think I've talked to most of them in the last couple of days, and the fundamental question is 'will FOTA hold together?' he said, as Force India's jumped out the window, and if you look at it and you say 'well what's in it for Brawn, why is Brawn still with FOTA, why is Red Bull still with FOTA?' And the



answer is that, from a Brawn point of view they were supported when Honda pulled out last winter, the other teams came to their rescue, the FOTA manufacturers came to their rescue, they were offered engines at great, cheap prices, they were able to get the whole thing together, and so them sticking with FOTA is a sign of loyalty for what was done for them, to help them. Now obviously, they're doing so well this year that they are a team in demand because the FIA, if they decide to declare the people that they want in their championship, there's bound to be a space left for Brawn because they've done so well. They are the Robin Hoods, if you like, or David and Goliath, great story, so they're in demand whichever way you look at it, in fact a lot of people think that Brawn may actually be the lynch pin if they go the whole thing might crumble or not, as the case may be.

Me: Interesting

Christine: Rather than Ferrari?

Joe: Well, that's an interesting point, isn't it, I mean, Ferrari, there's supposed to be this contract with the FIA, Ferrari says the contract was broken and the FIA says 'no it wasn't', because it's in, the French courts said it's a perfectly valid contract, Ferrari came back and says, well if it's a valid contract this means we have a veto, which means you can't not allow us in, and round and around we go, so I don't really know, it depends how mad they all get, really, as to how bad it gets. What I don't see is any realistic possibility of a rival championship, it doesn't make sense, and I think the sensible people are saying, look Max may be Max and he might have some interesting views on the meaning of the word democracy but we have to work with him because he's in power and shifting him from power is a hugely negative thing that would serve no good purpose. Now, if they are left out of the championship which may well happen they might change the view and they might say, 'well, now we've had enough of his and we'd like to tear out Mr Moseley's throat' and then we'll have to see what happens but my feeling is that, probably, there won't be any compromise between now and the 12th, I don't think that he will get, I don't think the teams will get the Concorde agreement they want because that would involve Max backing down, he could get up and say 'for the good of the sport the FIA has achieved all the goals it set out to achieve and, therefore we are going to graciously have this compromise settlement' blah, blah, blah, but, beneath all of that Max will know that he's lost because what he set out to do was want to have a Concorde Agreement in place, because that was what the boring thing was getting decision made was a nightmare, and they couldn't do it and that's why, ultimately, he started doing his own thing.

Me: Yep.

Joe: That would actually be a defeat disguised as a victory and I don't see him doing that and I think it's more likely that he will name the teams I call the 'paper tigers'. I think you'll see an entry list which has Williams, Ferrari and then a bunch of paper tigers, how many I can't tell you because it depends on what sort of a mood Max is in as to how many spaces he'll leave for negotiation. There are some of the paper tigers who are actually not capable of building cars, designing, building the whole thing, it's a joke, some of them are. What it does do is it creates this sort of threat to the existing teams that, well, what happens if that happens, and these people get entries, then the entries will have to be bought off these paper tigers so they'll have made a few quid from just, they put down some money, if they get granted an entry some of the existing teams might have to buy them out, to get in the championship, and there's all kinds of problems associated with that. But I don't see the big manufacturers, Toyota, Renault and BMW, if that happens, I don't see them sort of saying, oh well, I'm going to go and buy something, I can just see them just turning and walking away and saying 'that's it, not going to do that anymore'.

Me: Will there be any engines left if they do that, sorry to interrupt, but just a thought, if the manufacturers go, who's going to supply that many engines, are Cosworth even capable of supplying a grid's worth of engines, if required?

Joe: Well, anything's possible because the importance of the engine's somewhat limited these days because of what has happened with the engine regulations but you have Mercedes which is keen to supply more engines, you have Toyota which, even if they pull out they've got all these people sitting in Cologne, well, what are they going to do, they've got to do something there will always be engines available, how good they are is another matter, but the last Cosworth engine in '07 I think it was or maybe '06, it was actually a very good engine and given the fact that the engines have been detuned since then, it's not a huge amount of effort to have Cosworth producing perfectly good engines in a fairly short space of time. The funny thing is that a lot of people in Formula 1, when you talk about Cosworth they say 'well, who's at Cosworth anymore, because most of the people went up the road and went to work at Mercedes Benz', and so a lot of people say the Mercedes Benz engine is actually a Cosworth it's just, sometimes, you have these shifts of people and so that the technology sort of went up the road with them.

Me: It could come back, though, because there was talk today that Mercedes were maybe having to let a number of people go from that very factory.

Joe: I think they were worried about getting people go, but then again when they got two teams as customers they were able to get those people working on a different element of the engine process rather than all working on research and development to produce engines for one team, they're producing engines for three teams, so there is logic in re deploying people and there's logic in expanding engine supply to meet the demand. I don't think engines are really the biggest problem of all, I think, from one source or another engines will become available, I think it's far more difficult to get people capable of building competitive race cars from scratch.

Christine: We had a comment, a question a while ago from RG, he said 'what about the drivers in all of this would they follow a breakaway series, or remain in Formula 1?' And, I guess if we're not expecting a breakaway series, would they remain loyal to their teams or would they quite happily go to the paper tigers, as we're calling them?

Joe: Out it this way, n racing driver right now is going to do anything because nobody knows what's happening. They're all just sitting and they're going what's happening?'

Christine: Aren't we all?

Joe: They are all going, 'well we're not quite sure what we're going to do,' No body is deciding anything about drivers because no body knows which teams will be there, what engines they'll have, how competitive the cars will be, it's really just a matter of, we wait for all the things to fall and then things will start after that. I don't think any contract will have much value because, I'm sure somewhere in the contracts the words will be written 'I signed for this team to compete in the FIA Formula 1 World Championship', well if there isn't a FIA Formula 1 World Championship that the team is competing in, the that contract becomes invalid, doesn't it. In the absolute worst case scenario, which I don't believe will even happen, because I don't believe it is possible to have rival championships at this ate stage, you know you could have stages where drivers are leaving teams were they seemed to be, or they were thought to be nailed in, but I don't think we've got to that stage yet. And I think the feeling is among the sensible teams, and we heard it this afternoon I the press conference, all the FOTA team people are saying 'listen, we don't want war, we don't want fights, we just want a sensible compromise, let's get on either. We're damaging the sport' because, you try to talk a sponsor into Formula 1 right now it ain't easy because nobody knows what the hell's going on. There's a lot of people that are sort of pushing quietly saying, 'come on, we've got to sort this out because this is a mess, and it's affecting the sport, and I know, if I o out into, oh my god the real world, and you go to a party and you talk to people and they say 'you're I that motor racing thing, aren't you. What on earth is going on?' and you say 'well, blimey, it's a bit of a mess really, I can't be bothered to explain it all, but it's a very long story and they're fighting over money and power.'



Me: Yeah

Joe: But, you know, most people don't care. Formula 1 is to see cars race and if these people, who are causing these problems don't understand that, they are fools. But they do to some extent understand that, it's just a matter of, they, it's a bit like the crusades really, we must do this because it is for the greater glory of whatever, and if we kill 1,000 people on the way well that's just collateral damage, awfully sorry, by bye, sort of thing. What's the point of ruling over a ruin at the end of the day it's not much good. Somewhere along the way some sort of sound logic and commercial sense needs to be brought into it, that's what's happening. There will be a back swing, fairly dramatically, if it goes on much longer.

Me: Talking of that, before the next race, obviously there is some racing to be done this weekend, before we get to Silverstone the 12th will have happened, the new teams will be announced, can you see this ending swiftly and will we get back to racing, or how long do you think this can actually be dragged out for?

Joe: Oh, it could go on for months. I think the chances of a swift settlement are pretty slim. We really don't know where it's going to go. Logically, everyone would stay together and we'd have 13 teams next year and that would be what it should be. Will that happen? Don't know. It's really impossible to say because logic is not being used fully here.

Me: Do you think the track action will be enough to distract us, in the meantime, because the championship is almost, it's looking a bit of a run away, what are the chances of Brawn being overhauled this weekend, and maybe Red Bull making a fight of it?

Joe: Well, very often on Fridays we see some rather strange things. Today we've seen Brawn being no where and McLarens and Ferraris in the front and Williams's and all kinds of funny things, and I prefer to reserve judgement until the qualifying session ends, and that way we see who can actually go fast, and who can't. My feeling is that the Red Bulls will be quiet quick here, I think the Ferraris will be quiet quick here, Massa has won, I think, I don't know if he's won them all, every time we come here he seems to win so.

Me: He's always on the top step.

Joe: He always seems to be wining in Turkey, so obviously he likes the place, he's good round here and watch out, because we keep saying Friday's 'the Brawns are no where, they're going to get beaten', well come the end of Q3 and there goes Jenson, 'pop' and Rubens goes 'oh no, not again', and off we go. I think Friday's relevance is pretty minimal, the other thing is, of course, the track, no one ever races on this track here, seriously, so it's dirty and hell and so today's really a bit like hovering, they haven't really got down to it yet, so I think we'll be in a better position on Saturday night to have a guess at where things are going, particularly when we find out fuel loads and all that sort of stuff. You can actually get quite accurate of this sort of calling but right now I think you'll see Red Bull, and Brawn and perhaps Ferrari at it, I'm not sure McLaren or any of the others are going to be up there but we'll see.

Me: Did you happen to catch Formula 2, by the way? I know we were talking about it a couple of podcasts back, did you manage to catch any of that racing last weekend.

Joe: Well I know it happened, I know what happened, and did a bit of analysis on the lap times to see how fast the cars were.

Me: Was it successful or was it not.



Joe: I think it sounds quite impressive, it sounds quite successful but the lap times were a bit slow to my tastes, I mean it was a bit too close to Formula 3 level and not faster than the World Series by Renault, so I think they need to up the speed of the cars a bit to make it a sort of, a fully fledged Formula 2 but I think in terms of the budget of what it costs compared to all the other championships, it's got them all licked, and if you're a young driver on your way up are you going to pay 1.5million to go to GP2 or are you going to pay 310,000 (dollars we're talking here) to race in formula 2, and you can get super licence if you finish in the top 3, it ain't rocket science. If you've only got 400,000 what are you going to do? It's still a lot of money, but in terms of what you can get for your money, you get a hell of a lot.

Me: Do you think it's simple to up pace, literally, is it just a case of tweaking the engines, or will they have to throw more money at it, and will that sort of blow the budget out of the water slightly?

Joe: I don't know, because I'm not really any engineering skill, but I'm sure you can tweak the engine up a bit, it's turbos so I'm sure they can get a bit more out of it, maybe they can get some more out of the tyres, that's usually the way that you can speed things up a bit too. Perhaps a little bit will be downforce, whatever. I'm sure they will come up with the right solutions so the whole thing is perfect, you know for a first attempt there are almost no mechanical problems, given the speed at which these things were built, it's pretty remarkable really. All in all I think it's been quite successful.

Me: We did manage to catch, I think, 1 race didn't we, we saw the Saturday race.

Christine: Yes

Me: It seemed pretty good going, actually, they were sensible guys, damn sight more sensible than the GP2 races, there was no explosions.

Joe: Yeah, some of the GP2 races are a little bit on the large wallet side, but that's, when you get into these heavy budgets, you're bound to get that, a little bit. I think the front guys in GP2 are pretty useful, but the front guys in most of the series are pretty useful, it's just a matter of making sure, trying to get everybody in the same one, really, rather than proliferating lots of different ones. What's the point of having three championships, when you can have one?

Me: OK, we should probably wrap it up now. What does the rest of the weekend entail, just before we go?

Joe: I just write a lot, probably, I dare say.

Me: And do you want to give us an update on where GP+ is or would you rather not talk about that?

Joe: Well yes, there's a couple of pages in it.

Christine: Every time you ask and every time it's the same answer.

Me: It's just a vague hope that you might be ahead of the game and say it's already wrapped.

Joe: I have actually written analysis of Sebastian Bourdais and why it's a mysterious thing that he's been so poor in Formula 1 and I laid all that out and the pages are all laid out so it's done and dusted but beyond that, I have to say it's a little bit thin on the ground at the moment.



Me: We wouldn't have it any other way, would we?

Joe: Well, you know, it's all part of the joyous experience of crashing things out and by Sunday night, I'm sure it'll be done.

Christine: Well, we'd better let you go then, let's hope for a good race in Turkey even if there's no one there to see it.

Joe: Indeed, well hopefully some people will watch it on TV.

Me: Thank you for your time, as ever, Joe.

Joe: Alright.

Transcript by Rachel.

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