



## An Aside with Joe – You want something, you go get it

---

Mr C: Welcome to An Aside with Joe - You want something, you go get it. Off the back of a thrilling Brazilian Grand Prix and ahead of a final championship showdown, we've managed to get hold of Joe. Joe, you're back!

Joe: I am! Yes. I'm alive and well, vaguely. And yes, ready, about to leave to wherever I'm going, Abu Dhabi. It's the championship showdown and about time too!

Mr C: But it's the race we've all been looking forward to and the race we want, because Abu Dhabi, not known for the greatest and the most classic of grand prix but this should prove to be must watch television.

Joe: You'd want to hope so, but it would have been better if the two were equal on points, I must admit. I was watching the NASCAR showdown the other day and I have to say that their idea, and I know it's not purism and all the rest of it, but four guys going for it at the last race really does make for a good showdown. Actually, it was pretty exciting because it all ended up on the last lap and a half.

Mr C: Okay, and this is their race for the chase cup thingy, right?

Joe: Race for the chase cup thing, yes, well something like that. I guess that'll do. I expect loads of people will write in and say 'who are these barbarians who don't understand the chase concept?' but they just have a different idea. It depends what you want. If you want to do TV showdowns, this is a better way of doing it. There are four guys who go into the last race all of them able to win the championship. Now that's true that the one who finished nineteenth in the third round doesn't really matter any more, but it's a classic argument of sport versus entertainment. But they do win on the entertainment front sometimes.

Mr C: Did you watch the whole race?

Joe: Don't be silly. I was asleep. I watched the... I woke up in the middle of the night, because of course it's quite a long difference in hours. I woke up in the middle of the night and watched it on digital data flowing through.

Mr C: Aha, yes.

Joe: Which is the only way to do it because, I'm not sure, you probably can do it somehow in Europe, you know you can watch on Twitter, that's fine. You get the picture.

Mr C: Presumably, you were still on something of Brazil time. Or have you recovered just in time?

Joe: No, no, no, no, no, I came off Brazil time on the day I got back. It was on Florida time, so it's massively different. It's six hours difference, but I don't see six hours as being that big a difference, so there you go. Maybe that's because I'm dysfunctional.



Mr C: Formula One did manage to hold its own in Brazil though, it was a good race. It was worth tuning in for.

Joe: Oh no, Brazil was fabulous. I just, I hope that Abu Dhabi will be fabulous as well but it doesn't, as you said, it doesn't have a history of great races. We've seen the same race four times now, for the last four races which is Lewis Hamilton has to win and something has to happen to Nico for him to lose. And Lewis has won three and if he wins the fourth one, Nico can still win unless he's fourth I think it is. That's not a cakewalk because things can always blow up but it is a little bit too, sort of, episodic.

Mr C: We know how Lewis Hamilton has to approach the weekend. He's got to go out there, he's got to do the best he can and hope for the best. How would you approach it if you were Nico Rosberg?

Joe: I don't think there's any harm in just going for it anyway. To be fair, Nico has done that for the last few races as well. He hasn't held back, he's just gone for it. He may have held back a little bit in the races, but I think all he has to do is stay out of trouble so he doesn't want to be knocked off by some mad Dutchman or, as some people would say, or some Australian with his shoe full of champagne, you know. The other thing he's got to watch out for is mechanical failures, or even, it's always possible he could just spin off on his own and have an accident, but it's not very likely. He's been pretty strong this year.

Mr C: You'd struggle to hit anything in Abu Dhabi, if you spun off, wouldn't you?

Joe: Oh, probably, yea. That's true.

Mr C: There's enough run off.

Joe: Yea, it's kind of dull in that respect but it is what it is, that's what we've got and we have to make the most of it.

Mr C: Just looking back on Brazil, it was obviously a late running race, there were a lot of red flags. We'll talk about that in a second, but how did that affect you in terms of getting out? Were you late for your plane? Did it delay you or anything?

Joe: No, we weren't late for the plane, we just did everything in a great big hurry. We got to the airport with enough time not to be too stressed but it was a stressful operation, you know. Trying to crash out magazines in half the time originally planned is not a perfect scenario. Anyway, we did it. The less time you have, the less care you can take, so it's probably better to have a little bit more time. I mean, we're talking silly stuff here, because we're still 12 hours, 14 hours, I don't even know what it is, ahead of anybody else who is doing it. We can really afford to have gin and tonics on the way, but it was quick. But it focuses the mind.

Mr C: You're well versed in it now.

Joe: Well we are to some extent, but there are still things that go wrong from time to time. As much as you don't want it to, these things happen. We try to avoid having to rush for planes late on Sundays, but on this particular occasion, we thought we'd allowed enough time for it and we obviously didn't.



Mr C: And in terms of the red flags during the race, how frustrating was that for you knowing that you were against the clock but then, certainly in the case of the second red flag, it seemed slightly over the top and unnecessary.

Joe: Yea, I think it was. I'd like to find out why. There have been a number of theories, one of which I think is that the safety car needed refuelling.

Mr C: Huh?

Joe: Well, the safety car was refuelled during the second red flag, and nobody I know can figure out why the hell it was stopped for any other reason. Now, I went out, because I don't know if you read but the media centre in Brazil was in a bunker.

Mr C: It changed it.

Joe: As was Race Control. You actually couldn't see anything, and so you really didn't have any idea how intense the rain was and when I saw the drivers complaining and the crowd complaining, I thought I'll go and have a look and see how bad this is. I walked outside and thought, why on earth is there a red flag? I didn't get it. But the fact is, there's lots of things nowadays that we don't get. One has to take into account the fact that there are worries about liability and these kind of things that didn't used to exist in the old days. People went out and raced and nobody worried about who might sue who afterwards. Having said that, the racing was still pretty fraught later on but at the beginning of the race it was rather dull.

Mr C: How much has the ongoing litigation from the Bianchi family weighing on these decisions?

Joe: Is there any?

Mr C: Is there not?

Joe: Well they say there is but I haven't seen any sign of it yet.

Mr C: Ah, okay. So you think that has nothing to do with it?

Joe: I don't know if it has nothing to do with it but I think the Bianchi family has been, I mean, I understand... I think we've discussed this before. I understand how they feel and all the rest of it, but at some point somebody has to accept that that's what your son wanted to do. He wasn't doing it because he didn't want to do it, he was doing it because he did want to do it. He'd signed all the paperwork away, and you can't try and blame somebody after it happens just because it went wrong. It's one of these things that unfortunately the American justice system has created monsters in respect of liability. You can't have people playing in your tennis courts in case they slip over and sue you, this kind of crazy stuff that goes on nowadays. If I want to go and, I don't know, ride a rocket to the moon, I'm not allowed to do it. I can sign away my life but if somebody in my family wants to say I wasn't right of mind when I signed it, they can. Mind you, if I did strap myself to a rocket to go to Mars, I probably wouldn't be sound of mind, it has to be said.

Mr C: But you don't think any of this is weighing on Race Control when they call these red flags?

Joe: Oh probably subconsciously, yea. I just think the whole thing's out of kilter and needs fixing because you can't have racing... you know, either we have proper racing or we just give up racing. That's the bottom line, if you're going to have things like that. How is it that motorbikes can still do it? How is the Isle of Man TT still going and yet Formula One can't? That's what I don't get.

Mr C: The thing is, how much of this comes down to tyres because you can drive your car in the rain, I can drive my car in the rain, Christine can drive her car in the rain. All of us can drive our cars in the rain, the only people who can't drive their cars in the rain, it seems, are Formula One drivers.

Joe: Well, I don't think we're going as fast as they are, for a start.

Mr C: Their cars are built to go that fast though.

Joe: Um, I don't know. There is an argument that says that Pirelli should do a better job with tyres, and perhaps they should. But Pirelli do what people tell them to do, they're not making it up on their own account. And maybe their wet tyres aren't very good, but somebody should tell them 'your wet tyres aren't very good, make better ones' because so far whenever Pirelli's told to do something they have done it. And often people blame Pirelli but they are doing what they are asked to do. Now, they don't always do it well but nonetheless they are doing what they are asked to do.

Mr C: If you could change anything on Sunday, would it simply be just to let the cars race? Should people be looking into changing the regulations to make racing in the rain easier?

Joe: No, I don't think so, well, I do actually think we should never, ever, ever have safety car starts. Safety car starts make Formula One look stupid. When the drivers are saying on the radios, we can go now. Okay, maybe three of them are saying we can't go now because I'm frightened. Most of them are being sensible and just saying, okay we can race in these conditions. And you heard it on the radio calls that came through in Brazil. You even heard Max Verstappen saying this is worse than before. So these guys know when they can race and when they can't race and the minute they start saying 'we can race' we shouldn't have to wait three more laps to do it. That's where it's wrong and that's where one questions the over-safe nature of the sport.

Mr C: Talking of Verstappen, bit of a highlight during the grand prix. Certainly his best drive, probably one of the best drive either Christine or I have ever seen.

Christine: Yep.

Joe: It was fairly spectacular, it has to be said. He did show a lot of people that it's time to retire, I would think. That's what motor racing is all about, it's about supreme talents coming along and doing amazing stuff. It was fantastic to watch, and let's have more of the same. I don't believe in throwing tin tacks on the race track or pouring water on as some people do. Certainly you see talent coming out when the grip disappears.

Christine: All eyes were on Verstappen, but, uh, wait, I forgot what I was gonna say...



Joe: All eyes were on Verstappen, because they couldn't be on Grosjean because he crashed. That's what you were trying to say.

Mr C: No!

Christine: I didn't want to talk about Grosjean today. The one time I don't want to.

Joe: Well, I have to say that it was most unfortunate that Romain crashed before going to the grid, yes.

Mr C: Can we at least blame that on Pirelli?

Joe: Nope, you have to blame that on Romain Grosjean driving too fast, I'm afraid. That's the bottom line of it. I'm sure that he was bashing himself around the head as a result of it.

Mr C: The other battle that was essential viewing in Brazil was that going on between Manor and Sauber.

Joe: Indeed, yes, absolutely.

Mr C: For the final wedge of cash is probably the best way of rounding it up.

Joe: No, this is a misnomer because they weren't fighting for a wedge of cash, they were fighting not to lose the cash. There is a subtle difference.

Mr C: Go on.

Joe: They weren't fighting to gain more, they were fighting not to lose because up until this year, well up until this year... in 2015, we had ten teams therefore all the teams got the full prize money. This year we have eleven teams and one team will not get the full prize money, and so they're fighting to preserve what they have, not to gain more.

Mr C: And how much are we talking about saving?

Joe: I did do the sums, I think it's about \$11 million. That's only for the first year, because obviously 11 million... the prize funds are really complicated and we're not supposed to know what they are because they're all supposed to be secret.

Mr C: You can tell us.

Joe: I can but I'm not sure I've got the time nor the patience. There are two basic prize funds and they are about \$500 million, no hang on, it's about \$550 million for the whole prize fund, so it's about 275 in each prize fund. Column 1 it's called, the first prize fund, it's 275 equally divided by ten, which comes out at 27.5. Okay?

Mr C: Mm-hmm.

Joe: Column 2 is the same amount of money but divided on a different scale based on performance, so the



world champions get 19%, and the tenth place people get 4%, and they go down through a series, I think it's 19, 16, 13, 12, 11, something like that. Now, when you do all the sums, the tenth place in column 2 comes out at \$11 million, and that's what's up for grabs. Now, the difference between the two funds is that column 2 is based on the previous season only, and column 1 is based on the results in two of the previous three seasons. In other words, if you finished in the top ten in two of the previous three seasons, you qualify. If you've only done it for one, you don't. So this year, Haas has turned up, they will at the end of this year, have qualified for one year in column 1, but they won't get column 1 money. But if they do the same next year, they will then get the 27.5 or whatever the number is next year, because it changes every year which confuses matters, it being a percentage and all. At the moment, they stand to gain some money and it won't be 11 because they'll be higher up the order than that, but everyone else below them will gain a little less. However, if you are the 11th team, you get zero, as opposed to 11 million. So that's what I'm talking about, basically they're all fighting not to lose money rather than to gain it.

Mr C: So all the drama in Brazil has come about because Haas has joined?

Joe: Yes, yes. And next year it'll probably be even worse because then you're fighting for a lot more because if you have, it's the same two teams next year... let's just assume that Manor finishes 11th this year, if they finish 11th again next year, that means they won't be in the top ten for two of the last three seasons, which means they'll lose 27.5 in addition to the 11 they've already lost. This is why the top ten is very important because you are talking about 38.8 million that can be lost. And also you must bear in mind, depending on the way the seasons have gone, that that can mean two year's of money as well. So sometimes when they're fighting for tenth place, for a point, it can be worth 60 million.

Mr C: Can a team such as Manor afford to lose that much?

Joe: No, probably not. That's why they have to do well.

Mr C: Right. That's why it matters so much.

Joe: That's the rules of the game, and if you don't want to be part of it, you leave, it's as simple as that. Nobody's forcing you to be in Formula One. You take on the rules of the game and you go and try and win. Now, is it fair? That's another question. Because when I talk about that prize fund, that's only the basic prize fund, there's a whole bunch of other stuff which is quite complicated but it means, for example, that Ferrari get 60 million more than anyone else before you even start having a prize fund.

Mr C: Which is wrong.

Joe: Well, I don't see how it's right. That's not the same as being wrong. They got it by being in the right place at the right time and negotiating, but do they deserve it? Based on their performance in recent years, no they don't. Are they valuable to Formula One? Yes they are. Do they get more money because they're more valuable? Yes they do because people buy their hats. People don't go around buying Manor hats.

Mr C: Right, yes of course.

Joe: So Ferrari has an inbuilt advantage from being around for a long time so why should we give them 60 million extra just because when the negotiation happened it was in the interest of the Formula One group



to give them more money. The Formula One Group can justify all this based on, it's all to do with the longest standing team, brackets, which is always Ferrari because they've been around forever. And there are other bonus schemes and championship, I can't even remember what they're all called, but we're talking about huge sums of money. It would be so much wiser and better and smarter if you gave the money to the teams that performed least well, then you would balance up the performance levels. Now obviously it's good to give the people who win a bit better money as an incentive but when you get to the kind of budgets that Ferrari and Mercedes have, these incentive payments are not that important.

Mr C: Since we last spoke to you, you gave us a whole bunch of predictions on how the driver market was going to shake up, and...

Joe: I think I was right in all respects, wasn't I?

Christine: It was incredible.

Joe: There you go.

Mr C: Pretty much everybody you said, whoever you named and whatever seats you named has all fallen into place, is that right? Since we last spoke.

Joe: Now you're gonna ask me the same question for the last three and then I'm in trouble, I'm telling you now.

Mr C: You've set a high bar.

Joe: The final three is more complicated. I've always called it the final three, because I never considered the possibility that Marcus Ericsson would go anywhere else. Apparently they've confirmed him yesterday.

Mr C: Yep.

Joe: But I've never even considered him on the market. So the question is, who goes to the last Sauber and the two Manors? And in that respect, that's really tough because it depends on who comes up with the most cash.

Mr C: I see, okay.

Joe: If I was a gambling man, I would say that Rio Haryanto will go to Sauber and that Manor will have Pascal Wehrlein and one other. And that one other will either be Nasr or it will be Gutiérrez and I may be wrong on both of those, and it could always be Jordan King but beyond those four, I can't see a huge amount of possibility otherwise.

Christine: Who would you like it to be?

Joe: Doesn't really matter, who deserves it is another matter. I thought Nasr did a terrific job in Brazil and it would be ironic and appalling in lots of ways if Nasr ended up driving for Manor who he's just deprived of 11 million.



Mr C: Nasr finished ninth, right, which gave Sauber the two points?

Joe: Yes. Exactly.

Mr C: That would be cruel.

Joe: It would be cruel and ironic, but there seems to be a problem between Felipe and Sauber and there shouldn't really be, he's got money, they need money, he's a good driver, they need a good driver. Sometimes these things happen, in stressful situations, relationships get broken. I think they're busy trying to fix it at the moment, and the fact he drove and save them 11 million...

Mr C: Helps!

Joe: Is a bonus, yes. I'm sorry, there's no emotion in Formula One, you know, Ron Dennis built a big racing team and they kicked him out as well, so.

Mr C: Hold on though, we'll talk about that in a second, just stick to the Sauber one, that's a whole other story.

Joe: I don't know, we have to see. The thing is that I understand that Sauber were offered Mercedes engines in order to take Pascal Wehrlein and basically said no thanks, we don't want them. Which I think rather shocked Mercedes, because they think everybody wants their engines.

Mr C: But they don't want Wehrlein?

Joe: I don't think they mind about Wehrlein, they just want the cash. There are times in the history of racing teams when you need cash, and times when you need engines, and times when you don't need either of them and you can choose. And I think that the Sauber situation requires cash right now. Why that is the case, is another matter. You have to say, there are more things where we need to see some more jigsaw puzzle pieces fitting in. So I'm not speculating, ultimately, on who's going to drive where, because I'm not sure.

Mr C: Not a problem. We won't push you any further on that one. One thing I did want to ask you, actually, in the Business of Motorsport letter 44, I think it was, you said: "Force India decided against employing Wehrlein, largely because of his attitude."

Joe: Yes, they did.

Mr C: What's that about?

Joe: I think he's rather big-headed.

Mr C: Oh!

Joe: And I think they went, no, we don't like that. And I think that, I don't know if it's big-headed, that's not



fair to be honest. There is something wrong with his attitude and they didn't like it, and I'm told that they told him in fairly unsubtle terms what it was he'd done wrong. And this actually helps a young driver get himself sorted out. You may remember 143 years ago, Felipe Massa arrived in Formula One, did one season and then was rested for a year because he wasn't ready to do it again. And sometimes it's very good for a driver to get a good kicking, get his head in gear, come back and do it properly. I think Wehrlein's got into that situation. Obviously it's tough for him that Ocon has got the Force India drive, but there's a reason for that and that is that Force India believe more in Ocon than they believe in Pascal. But I do believe that they've explained in very short words to Pascal what it is that's wrong with him.

Mr C: Now it's up to him.

Joe: Fundamentally, it's up to him and you know, if Mercedes stand by him and there's no reason they shouldn't, I think he's obviously got a lot of talent. I have to say his socks were blown clean off the bottom of his feet by Ocon in Brazil.

Mr C: Yes.

Joe: And his boots too. In fact, I think he probably lost half his toenails. Because that was a hell of a performance from Ocon as well.

Mr C: It was, yes, someone to watch out for in the future.

Joe: Oh well I think I may have said that several hundred times already but yes, he's quite remarkable.

Mr C: I think that's the first time we've been able to see it quite so visually though. Obviously, you know, but as passive observers at home, that was a strong performance.

Joe: I don't know but I listen to what people say, I see how he works, I see the guy. I watch the guy and you can see that there's something a bit special about him, and if you look at his record, obviously, he's the guy who beat Verstappen in Formula Three. Now, you say, okay, he was in his second year blah-de-blah, but it wasn't quite as clear cut as it would have appeared to be. I think Ocon is very special, yea.

Mr C: You mentioned Massa, briefly. He got a nice send off at his home race, his final home, his penultimate race of his F1 career.

Joe: It was all a bit weepy for me. A bit love story, you know?

Mr C: Too much?

Joe: Um, well I'm not Brazilian, you know. I'm not into weeping a lot, but it was kind of sweet. What was really nice was when he walked into the pit lane and the other teams spontaneously applauded him, which was very nice because he deserves that. He did crash, mess up and crash. I think half the weeping was because he'd screwed up but there we are, that's another story.

Mr C: And the same for Jenson in Abu Dhabi this weekend.

Joe: I'm not sure you'll be seeing as many people standing around weeping but yea, he'll be off. I don't know, it's just Felipe... remember that Felipe's the guy that stood on the podium at Interlagos and lost with such grace that people still think of him as a champion. That was part of the emotional response. Jenson, it's not quite been the same really, as that. Jenson's a terrific racing driver from time to time, and he won a world championship, good for him. But I don't think there's the same level of emotion around him as there is around Felipe.

Mr C: Let's, shall we tackle the big subject of Ron Dennis then? Ron Dennis, McLaren, Zak Brown. Go.

Joe: Well, once upon a time there was a racing team that was very successful. It was all run by a chap called Ron Dennis who was brilliant in many respects and a clod in many other respects. You never quite knew what you were going to get. Blah-de-blah-de-blah-de-blah over a period of years, McLaren hasn't won much in the last twenty years, when you boil it down. Sorry, fifteen would be more reasonable I suppose. But apart from Lewis Hamilton's championship, they haven't won a manufacturer's this century, which is now, I believe, it's 17 years since they last won a manufacturer's championship. In the meantime, they've built an amazing McLaren car company, and they've taken on shareholders who now because of the way things have worked out and the amount of money that the original shareholders have put in the bank, have got control of the company and the shareholders decided that Ron wasn't the right person to run the team anymore. And Ron didn't agree, obviously. This has been going on for quite a long time, and eventually they said, well, we don't care whether you agree anymore, we're going to throw you out. He tried to get an injunction, lost, and they threw him out. And I believe there was still a period of time after that where they allowed for a graceful exit clause. Ron decided not to go gracefully, so it all got ugly. Now, I understand why you wouldn't go gracefully from the team that you built. But you have to also look at it from the other point of view which is that that team is not your team anymore. 75% of it is owned by somebody else because you sold it. And if you sold it, and you don't do what they want you to do, then they will throw you out. That's fundamentally what happened. That sounds harsh and difficult, whatever. But there are a number of things that have gone wrong in recent times. Obviously, there's been discord among the shareholders but that's not really the problem. One of the problems is, I think, that Ron came back to Formula One in 2014 with some ideas that were perhaps not really in keeping with where the sport is now. His idea of sponsorship rate cards was far too high. In consequence they lost a lot of sponsors that wouldn't pay the numbers that he wanted. He felt that there should be people paying that but there aren't. It's as simple as that. Johnny Walker, I think, offered 45 and he wanted 70, so they lost 45.

Mr C: Right, yea, okay.

Joe: ExxonMobil, I think they were paying 35, they fell out, 35 is gone. These are all big numbers and while McLaren is still a very profitable company, I think that the shareholders feel there's a better generation who are more attuned to how Formula One is at the moment. Now, whether that's right or fair is another matter, but that's what they think, and they have the power to think that way. We can feel a bit sorry for Ron for being thrown out but at the end of the day, there were choices that he made that made it an ugly scene when it didn't have to be. He's 70 years old next year, you don't have to retire at 70 but a lot of people do. I don't think Ron's one who is made for retirement, but if you're not going to retire, you've got to be able to hold on to the company you're dealing with, so it's unfortunate, the whole process. I don't really think anybody's particularly to blame, I just think that everybody's done things for what they think are the best reasons and those different reasonings don't add up. As to Zak Brown coming in, it's an odd situation because Zak Brown is not a motorsport team leader. He's a marketing man. He's been given a job



which is Executive Director, which is magnificently vague.

Mr C: Right.

Joe: In the finest traditions, even in McLaren terms, that's magnificently vague. So what exactly does an Executive Director do? He directs executively. Right. So the Chief Operating Officer who is on an equal footing with the Executive Director does what? He operates in a chiefly manner. So what does it all mean? It's just a bunch of titles at the moment and I think we need to find out... they still haven't announced a Chief Executive Officer for the Group, and until they do... when they have that we'll have somebody that they all report to. Right now, they're reporting to each other which doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

Mr C: And any names in that hat?

Joe: None whatsoever. I haven't even thought about it. If it was me, I would promote Jonathan Neale who is the COO, I think he's entirely competent and capable of doing it, knows the team, doesn't have to have a learning period, but it's a question of whether he wants it. Jonathan has always been a guy who likes to get the job done but doesn't need the limelight that goes with it. So maybe they can't do that because he doesn't want to do it. It's a tough one to fill, it's, I don't know how you describe it really. I think I wrote somewhere, or quite a lot of places actually, in the history of the automobile industry, many, many, many, people who built great companies were thrown out of those companies by the financial people. And you can't say that it was the wrong thing to do, because Maserati is still around, Bentley is still around. General Motors is still around, Peugeot is still around, Citroën's still around. All these companies had their bosses thrown out. The only one who is not still around is Horch, although that's part of Audi, and Audi was set up of August Horch was thrown out of his own company, which was called Horch. And in fact, in the end, Audi took over Horch. So these things happen and sometimes the financiers are right, sometimes the financiers are wrong but it's their money and that's the key point.

Mr C: But we don't just want McLaren to be around, we want McLaren to be winning.

Joe: Well, in that case they need to find a new engine.

Mr C: Really? It's unfixable?

Joe: It's not unfixable perhaps, but it's taking an awfully long time to fix and that's largely because the Japanese don't want to have people coming in from outside, teaching them how to do things, because that's not the way it's done. I mean, if it works, it's fine, and Honda will be ahead and nobody can catch them, because obviously there won't be any overlap with other people. But it's taking them an awfully long time and it's getting rather dull. If you were a McLaren sponsor, you'd be rather bored with the words Honda at the moment because they're not doing it. If you look at Renault, or sorry, we're supposed to say Tag Heuer aren't we? You know, the Renault engine is quite competitive now in the Red Bull, even if it's the Red Bull that is more competitive than the engine. The Ferrari is neither here nor there, either which way, but they are nearly there. Honda seems to be stuck out there trying to figure out what the hell to do. The answer's very simple, go steal somebody from the other companies and make a good engine.

Mr C: It came to light today in an interview with Mr Zak Brown that despite taking on this new McLaren role, he isn't planning to relinquish any of his other commitments.



Joe: I think he will be.

Mr C: Okay, right.

Joe: I would be very surprised if McLaren was particularly interested in him continuing to be a non-executive or executive, I can't remember which, chairman of a media company. That doesn't make an awful lot of sense because people will just accuse you of this that and the other, it's a bit too close to home.

Mr C: Of course, yea.

Joe: Cosworth is another thing, I think he's on the board of Mark Blundell's driver management programme, so if there's a driver choice to be have and Mark Blundell happens to be representing one of the drivers, that's another problem. You see, there's all these things that are problematical. Let's face it, if he's doing the job at McLaren properly, he shouldn't have an awful lot of time to do the rest of this stuff. So in the end, the other people should say, well, actually, bog off we don't need you, brilliant though you may be, we need more of you than this. I don't think it's wise to do that, there is a conflict of interest if you're head of a team and you're also head of a media organisation writing about a team, and you're involved in the act of reporting or the concept of reporting, then that doesn't make sense to me.

Mr C: Previously, when Matt Bishop left McLaren... no, when Matt Bishop went to McLaren...

Joe: I was gonna say, has he? Goodness, I missed something there.

Mr C: When Matt Bishop went to McLaren, he quit his post at F1 Racing to avoid exactly this situation.

Joe: Well, I don't think he had a choice. He wasn't, he was actually working there and sitting at a desk every day, at Haymarket Publishing as was. I don't think you... it's a difficult one, isn't it? Well, it's not that difficult. It's down to your personal sense of morality. And your personal sense of morality, you have to know whether you are in a conflict of interest. It's not hard to spot. And if you think you are, you shouldn't do it. And if you don't think you are, you should do it. Other people will judge you and they may be right, they may be wrong. There are some fairly clear guidelines of what conflicts of interest are.

Mr C: The Cosworth thing, you couldn't see a McLaren-Cosworth relationship striking up in place of Honda?

Joe: With what?

Mr C: True.

Joe: Who is going to pay? Cosworth is, I mean they do have a Formula One engine programme somewhere. They did have three or four years ago, it would be a long way behind now. But they need someone to pay for it, and as far as I can understand, there's nobody willing to pay for it because Mr Kalkhoven seems to be far too busy reducing his involvements in motorsport instead of increasing them.

Mr C: Let's quickly talk calendars, there's been some furore this week, mostly stoked it seems by Bernie



Ecclestone.

Joe: Really? How surprising.

Mr C: He's stirring that pot quite vigorously at the moment but the Malaysian Grand Prix looks like it will be done and dusted after 2018, there will be no more Malaysian Grands Prix.

Joe: Yes, I think that's a fair comment and I understand why. The government is in all kinds of a mess, the economy's in all kinds of mess. Donald Trump hasn't helped by saying he's going to cancel all the Pacific trading deals that exist. The Malaysian Ringgit has gone through the floor against the dollar and of course, if you're paying in the dollar, it costs you more ringgit. Not to mention the fact that the government is up to its neck in corruption charges, allegations should I say. The whole thing is a mess, that's got nothing to do with why Formula One would leave, Formula One will stay anywhere, corruption or otherwise, if the money's there. But at the end of the day, the money's not there anymore and obviously the Malaysians have forgotten why they had a grand prix in the first place, which was all about selling the image of Malaysia to the world being all about technology, as opposed to being all about corruption. And so that's what's happening, that will come to an end. I think also, when Singapore came along, Malaysia was made to look like rather a poor cousin and I think that hurt their feelings.

Christine: But now even Singapore might want out, and there's rumours...

Joe: No, that's a negotiation ploy, I'm sure, by the Bernard.

Mr C: By the Bernard or by the Singapore organisers?

Joe: By everybody, you know. At the end of the day, it's very simple. Singapore was a private-public co-operation. The government didn't want to take all the risk, didn't want to pay all the money. However, it was a massive boost for Singapore, changed the whole place. As Bernie himself said the other day, it turned it from being an airport to being a tourist destination, which is an absolutely fair point. I absolutely agree with that. Now the people who wanted that to happen have realised they're not making enough money, the private enterprise, so they want to get out. The government want to go on because it's great for Singapore. So what's really happening is the private people want to get out, get the government to pay more money, but of course the private people will still be making money because they own all the hotels and restaurants and all the rest of it.

Mr C: Yep.

Joe: So all they're doing is trying to cut back on their amount of spending, and make the government pay for it. Will the government pay for it? They ought to because that would be the smart thing to do because it's done fantastic things for Singapore and will continue to do so. When you see Singapore on the telly, you go, wow, now that's a place.

Mr C: Yes.

Joe: If they take that away, what are you going to watch, basketball? It's not going to set the world on fire, is it? That's the choice they have to make. My feeling is they'll probably do it, it being a government-only



race, they would probably have to alter it a bit to cut down on the disruption that goes on in the town but there's no reason that couldn't happen. It's really a commercial decision, but I think it's worth every penny that they would need to pay for it. They can always hike the taxes on the hotel owners anyway.

Mr C: What about the future of the Brazilian Grand Prix?

Joe: That's in more complicated matters, the new mayor of São Paulo wants to sell the circuit, unless Bernie's lost his mind he doesn't want to buy it. He wants somebody else to buy it and then he wants all the governments to pay for it, I can't really see how there's a solution going to happen there. São Paulo, does it need a grand prix? Not really, but it helps. I mean, why else would anybody go to São Paulo? No. Let's face it, nobody goes to São Paulo for tourism anyway, unless they're bonkers. I guess it's to keep them as a global city or something and obviously there are more important things that the new government thinks they want to do. Formula One, it's a bit more essential that we have a race down that way. There are no options at the moment, because Rio de Janeiro, they decided to dig up the original racetrack and turn it into an Olympic village, which is now completely useless and no doubt will be a bus shelter before long. So maybe there's another place in Brazil that will rise to the occasion and create a Formula One circuit from something they already have or whatever. It's probably more likely that Buenos Aires will come on song as the economy in Argentina improves but it will be a shame, because Brazil has been an integral part of Formula One for so long, so we don't want to lose it but at the same time, it's a business and if they don't want to play that's their fault.

Mr C: Sticking with the subject of Bernie for just a few minutes longer, this week he said, he suggested that what Formula One needs right now is two shorter races to replace one long race. That being two 40 minute races, with a 40 minute race in between.

Joe: Well, I don't... that's an interesting one, isn't it? It just depends on what you... it's a bit like the conversation we had at the beginning about NASCAR and how they settle championships, you know, how do you want to do this? Do we think that an hour and a half, two hours races, are too long for the poor people who go ooh shiny anytime anything goes past the window? I don't know the answer. I don't see anything wrong with there being two races, if one is a qualifying race for the second one, but only if the second one is the only one that counts. I don't think that you should have points for the first one, for example. The first one should be just about setting the grid for the one that actually counts.

Mr C: And then dropping qualifying?

Joe: No, no, you have qualifying as well. So you have qualifying for the first one, and then you have what amounts to a qualifying race.

Mr C: Oh, okay, right.

Joe: And then you have a race and in that way you can have two flat out races because the fuel flow stuff doesn't matter anymore. Without changing the machinery too much, because that's obviously what



they're trying to avoid. They're trying to avoid having to change the machinery massively, while using it so that it can be raced in its most extreme form. It's not a stupid idea, but I don't want a situation where you have, like in Formula Three, you have 37 races a year and you get all kinds of people winning races who shouldn't necessarily be winning races. I hate the idea of things like reverse grids, they're hideous.

Mr C: I guess two shorter races would solve any potential problems with the safety car running out of fuel.

Joe: I suppose it might.

Mr C: Maybe that's why he suggested it.

Joe: I'm not even sure that's the real reason for it, because there's no reason why it should run out of fuel. But you can sprint if you've got a 45 minute race. To go back to the NASCAR thing, these NASCAR races are 400, 500 miles and when you actually watch them, you get about 400 miles where they're not cruising along but they're not going flat out, then the last 50 they all go bonkers. To some extent, a lot of this distance is based on tradition and not really necessary, but it does depend a little bit on the kind of machinery you've got, how easy it is to overtake and all these kind of elements. But you've got to have something where it's clear and not too complicated. I think that's one thing where they are right, is that there are far too many rules in Formula One and sometimes it just gets plain silly. I don't believe that you should put tank traps on the corners like Bernie does, but you have to find ways of letting the racers get on and race.

Mr C: How much of what Bernie's currently saying and has been saying these past couple of weeks is just him making sure that he's still in the news and people are still thinking about him with this Liberty takeover?

Joe: You'll have to ask him that question, won't you? The thing with Bernie is, he just starts talking sometimes and sometimes he thinks he's having fun and telling jokes but of course, it's never reported as jokes. It's reported as he's serious when he said this, it's actually not good when you have a lot of silly stuff... I think he did a lot of damage at the start of the year talking about how he wouldn't have his own family going to races. I think he drove away a lot of people, saying if he wouldn't do it, who the hell will? This kind of thing is just daft, you shouldn't say stuff like that. That's real Gerald Ratner stuff. Some of the time he's just saying it because it's the first thing that comes into his head, he does that sometimes. He just looks at you, and goes, what does this guy want, he wants a story, I'll give him a story. And sometimes I think there should be a little bit more media strategy involved in the process. I know that the words media and strategy are not necessarily always used together and Bernie certainly doesn't understand very much along these lines, but he does know how to get his name in the papers.

Mr C: This weekend it is your 500th Grand Prix.

Joe: Well, yes it is. It's my 500th working grand prix, actually. I think it's my 504th actual grand prix, but I don't count the ones I didn't work at so there you go.

Mr C: According to your own official metrics then, it's your 500th grand prix this weekend.

Joe: It is.



Christine: That's brilliant, it's so many.

Joe: It's a lot of years, yes. It's, I think I did work it out, it's my 489th consecutive as well. So I've still got a few more to go to get to 500 consecutive.

Christine: We should definitely make you a trophy.

Mr C: There should be a cake.

Christine: Yea, cake.

Joe: No, there's lots of people who have done 500 grands prix, I'm not particularly special. Well, I say lots of people, probably a few dozen. You know, there are people who have done 750, come on. Let's get real here. They are older than I am, I should add.

Mr C: There can't be many who have their 500th grand prix, at a championship showdown, at the end of the season.

Christine: It's good timing.

Mr C: You've timed that really well.

Joe: Yea, it was all my own doing. Ever since I started in 1988, I've been planning for the 500th. I've been manipulating calendars to make it happen. Let's get serious here, it's just a fluke. It's nice that it's happened like this. The only thing is, of course, at the end of a long season, everybody wants to go home. To be honest, it's a bit like being awarded a long service medal, you know, I'd much rather get a medal for bravery, but for being around for 35 years, looking after a bus stop. It's true, isn't it? There's something much more interesting about getting medals and awards and recognition for not just being around for a long time. The thing I like about it is the fact I'm 55 years old and I've got to 500, I don't think many people have done that that young. I'm sure Herbie Blash did, but it's easier to do grands prix now too anyway. Because there are now 21, as of this year, 21 a year. There used to be 15 or 16.

Mr C: Can you see yourself doing another 500?

Joe: Oh, I think so. I don't know, what else am I going to do? I can become a busker I suppose, except I can't sing, can't play any musical instruments, can't even tap dance. What else do you do when you've been a Formula One... I've always wanted to be a Formula One reporter and that's what I am, so if somebody says you've got to stop, you go, what am I going to do now?

Mr C: We don't want you to stop, who's telling you to stop?

Joe: Nobody's telling me to stop, but just in case life does.

Mr C: Okay, don't stop.



Joe: Okay, very good. I want to be an astronaut though, I forget to mention that bit. It's a bit late in the day for that. You know, I once met an astronaut, he was brilliant. Absolutely fantastic human being. Talk about inspirational. I saw him talking to a bunch of kids, and he was saying 'when I was your age I wanted to be an astronaut, and here's a picture I drew when I was ten, of a rocket going to the moon.' He pulled it out and it was brilliant. And he said 'so I went along and I said how do I become an astronaut and this guy said well you take this degree' so he took that degree, got it, and he went along and Nasa said no thanks, so he said well what do I do now? They said take another degree. And he did five degrees and finally in the end Nasa went in the end, for god's sake, we can't get rid of him, can we, so we'll make him an astronaut to finally get him up there into the sky. And that's the story of his life, but it's a great story of you want something, you go get it. That's how I feel about Formula One, I always wanted it, I was lucky to get it, I'm still doing it, and I can't think of what else I'm gonna do.

Mr C: And you're still enjoying it.

Joe: Of course! Oh yea, absolutely. If I wasn't enjoying it, I would have stopped and become a dustbin man or a truck driver maybe. Or a chef, I don't know. Who knows? Maybe I'll become a psychologist.

Mr C: Well, this is kind of therapy.

Joe: Yea, therapy, there's a good word for it. No, I don't think I'll do any of those things, but whatever, I still love what I'm doing and as long as I do, I'll keep doing it.

Mr C: That's good to know, we obviously very much appreciate it. Enjoyed your Business of Motorsport newsletter this week, must give that a plug. I think, Christine are you favouring the motorsport newsletter at the moment?

Christine: I like the business side of it, yea.

Joe: I think, there are so many things happening, you read stories about Volkswagen coming to Formula One and then you read stories they're laying off 150,000 people, and you think ah wait a minute, yes, there may be that. It's relating stuff to the real world, and there's not enough of that in the Formula One media, because a lot of people live in bubbles and don't relate things to what's happening outside the bubble.

Mr C: I should say that just because we do enjoy the Business of Motorsport newsletter, it's not a slight on Mike Doodson or David Tremayne or Peter Nygaard's pictures, still love all of their work and love reading their columns, but the Business of Motorsport newsletter is new to us this year.

Joe: Well, I'm very pleased to hear that. Anyway, GrandPrix+ is also an extremely good publication. This next one is going to be absolutely jam packed with stuff, in fact we have way too many things going into it.

Mr C: Can you give us a teaser?

Joe: No.

Mr C: Go on.



Joe: Yes, of course I can. We'll have bye bye to Felipe Massa stories, we'll have whoever's the world champion stories, we'll have probably a Herbie Blash story, might have a bit of stuff about the SS, just for fun. We'll have a race report, we'll have columns, and lots of lovely pictures, and it will all be out about six hours after the motor race. And if that's not good enough, well, you can go fly a kite, as far as I'm concerned.

Mr C: Will there be an end of season review?

Joe: Of course, yes, there will. As we're going into the Christmas period now, and Christmas present time, there are some good books out there. I'm sure lots of fans want to buy the Damon Hill book or the Johnny Herbert book or blah-de-blah. There's quite a few decent books out there, but I would say if you haven't ever read it, you have to go and buy *The Grand Prix Saboteurs*, because it's still the greatest ever story told about Grand Prix racing.

Mr C: I second that. We'll put a link in the show notes, if you're interested. It's on Amazon, you can't miss it.

Joe: It's a Christmas present, a brilliant Christmas present because it's for people who are mad about racing, mad about the war, and all kinds of just good stories. Anyway, that's enough plugs.

Mr C: You can never get enough plugs. We like the plugs.

Joe: Okay, good, alright.

Mr C: We asked you this only two weeks ago but I'm going to ask you this again, and you're probably not going to like it but still. What are your championship predictions for this coming weekend? There is one more race.

Joe: Well, there's two choices and as I am not god, whoever that may be, whatever that may be, I don't get to choose whose engine blows up or whatever. If it's down to pure racing talent, it should be Lewis Hamilton. If it's down to determination, grit, hard-work, Nico Rosberg might win. If it's down to luck, Nico Rosberg has already won it. I can't tell you who is going to win it. My gut feeling is... it's a really difficult one actually because pure talent is one thing and pure determination and grit is another, and both of them deserve recognition in a lot of ways. And so there are some people who say that Nico Rosberg deserves it this year because Lewis has had the last two, and I don't know, in that particular thing, I don't really have a preference. I think they're both worthy champions. If one wins, well, one is going to win and the other's not going to win, and we'll find out who it's going to be. I do think that there will always be a question mark over the luck that Lewis has had, the bad luck, if Nico wins. But that's life, that's part of being a champion I think.

Mr C: Is it easier for Hamilton to chase than it is for Rosberg to defend at this point?

Joe: No, no I don't think so, it's just that they both have the same mindset, which is we've got to do as best as we can. And that's very clear to me, they're both utterly focused on doing the best they can and that will ultimately, it will be decided on other matters.



Mr C: Joe, it's been a pleasure.

Joe: It has, indeed.

Mr C: I would say don't be a stranger, but it was only a couple of weeks ago we spoke to you.

Joe: Yes, I just had a moment to spare so I thought why not? You never know, who knows when the next one will come?

Mr C: Well you know where we are. If you have a free moment, always happy to speak to you, especially after a race where so much happened and there's so much to discuss.

Joe: Well, yes, it's was certainly a lively one, Brazil, hopefully Abu Dhabi will be the same.