



Sidepodchat – I hear he’s quite handy with a pencil and some CFD

Mr C: Welcome to Sidepodchat - I hear he's quite handy with a pencil and some CFD. So we are joined here, it's Wednesday evening following the Turkish Grand Prix, and Formula One has woken up. The very, very quiet season that we've been having thus far kicked off with an almighty bang this weekend, with controversy at Red Bull and at McLaren, and it seemed like a pretty good time to bring up an idea we've been mulling over for a while, and that is to bring back Sidepodchat in a mini, compact version. And that is, what we'd like to do is to pick one subject, something that's on people's minds and people may have an opinion about one way or the other. We're going to record for exactly ten minutes, and the discussion will be with three, maybe more people, and we'll do our best to stay on topic and focus on one issue of the week. I think we've probably, this week, over-analysed the Red Bull situation and we've also... there's a chance that some people might be just a bit sick of it. We've also discussed in depth things going on at McLaren. What happened today though, is quite interesting, and that is Lotus came out with a statement that they are aggressively employing members of other teams, notably members of the Force India team. And so this week's discussion is to do with what's going on at Lotus, what Mike Gascoyne is up to, what we think is going to happen to Force India now that many of their key employees have exited or will be exiting soon. So on the call right now we have with us Jon Waldock.

Jon: Hello.

Mr C: We have Chris.

Chris: Hello.

Mr C: We have Lukeh.

Lukeh: Hello.

Mr C: And somewhere in the background, although we can't hear him at the moment, he is on the call, we have Steven. Although he can't say hello. Also listening in, unable to talk because she is at work, we have Kathi all the way from Iceland, which is fantastic to have Kathi there, so hello Kathi.

Jon: I hope they're both saying hello even though we can't hear them.

Mr C: We can imagine it. I'm not sure this works so well on radio, but you know, it wouldn't be Sidepodcast if there wasn't some kind of major disaster going on on Skype. Does the premise of the show make sense to you guys and are you happy to begin discussions as to what's going down at Lotus/Force India?

Jon: Yep.

Chris: Yep.

Lukeh: We can try.



Mr C: Good stuff. I will start the official Sidepodcast stopwatch now. And let's kick off with events that happened today. It became apparent that firstly, Force India taking legal action against Mike Gascoyne and Lotus because they say that the Lotus team have used their chassis design in the wind tunnel without their permission and therefore the car is a carbon copy of the Force India. Now following on from that, a number of key employees have been announced as new recruits to the Lotus team, notably all working for Mike Gascoyne, who they all appear to get along with very well. So who would like to start the discussion?

Jon: I think it's really interesting to see how Lotus have come in this year and just completely wiped the floor with all of the new teams and they're not that far off some of the back of the older teams as well, and so if I was Force India I'd be right to be worried, I think. To have a team that's come in from pretty much nothing, especially given the timeframe that they had, a lot shorter than any other team, I think they have a right to wonder if something's up, whether it is or not is a different question. And I think it's clear from Mike Gascoyne's intentions that Lotus aren't gonna be sitting around just happily being at the back part of the new teams. Because they all came in and said that we want to be better, the new teams. Lotus are now the best of the new teams and they go well, what's next?

Mr C: Now one of the key employees...

Lukeh: I just find it a very odd situation, that's all. Just a very odd case between two teams, it's usually something else, like you stole my mechanic or you stole my car or...

Jon: You put powder next to it, yea.

Lukeh: It just seems like a very odd argument, really.

Mr C: Are you surprised, Lukeh, at how well Lotus have done in the face of much adversity? I mean, they came into Formula One very late, they had very little time to get a chassis up and running. What they came out with wasn't spectacular but they've done... apart from I think in Turkey was a double no finish, but apart from that they've done very well.

Lukeh: They have done really well so far, haven't they? They've obviously clearly improved over the last couple of races and I suppose you can try and make something suspicious out of the fact that they've definitely closed the gap quite quickly compared to the other teams who are still struggling, and have had a longer amount of time so... there's definitely something to add to the argument with that. It is surprising that they've closed the gap already, well they haven't closed it all yet but they're definitely catching up far more than the other teams. So, it is a bit surprising I suppose.

Chris: One thing that's worth mentioning for Lotus is, they've got Mike Gascoyne who is a renowned car designer for previous teams. They've got two experienced drivers and they've got quite a lot of money with Tony Fernandes, so I'm not surprised they were the best of the new teams, just because they've got all this experience and money.

Lukeh: Yea.

Steven: Hello, can you hear me this time?



[Cheers]

Mr C: Do you want to pick up from where we are? Mark Smith has been the key name that's moving from Force India to Lotus, he's been head hunted by Mike, what are your thoughts on that happening?

Steven: It's Mike Gascoyne's usual method of operation. He did the same when he moved from Jordan to Renault. He did the same when he moved from there to Toyota, so I'm not at all surprised that he's gone and pulled his own guys back again. These guys for whatever reason seem to enjoy working for him, and for all his reputation as being very aggressive and whatever else, every time he moves he takes the same people with him, or some of the same group with him, and every time he does it he gets results, so they've got the choice of... particularly in this case, of staying with Force India where they've made a bit of progress but you may have the McLaren tie up which is an issue there for these guys, because it may be McLaren will look at putting their guys into this situation at that time. And it does seem odd though that someone that's been a technical director for the space of a few weeks wants to suddenly leave and take a more, or what on the surface seems a more junior job, with a brand new team.

Mr C: That's a very good point. Another thing that, there are three key employees. Mark Smith is obviously the main one, you've got Lewis Butler and Marianne Hinson - names, I'm not familiar with either of those names, anyone else?

Jon: No.

Lukeh: No.

Steven: I've never heard of them, but of course James Key's gone there and Dieter Gass who was at Toyota with Gascoyne has gone as well.

Mr C: And it's a bit of a Toyota meet up really, in that respect. I didn't realise, I only found out today that Gass was already there. In terms of a working relationship, I mean, how long do you think it will take before these guys start making a difference to the Lotus car? Is it going to make a difference this season or are we talking next year now?

Jon: I think it depends where they get put. If they get put somewhere that impacts on next year, I think if they, if Lotus as a team stayed where they are, maybe even fell back a bit, then everyone would say actually that was a pretty impressive first year. So if these guys come into the team and Mike says, actually we'll put you on next year's car, and then next year's comes out and they're mid-pack, around where Williams and Force India are this year, I think you'd definitely see the impact. But I guess it really just depends in what areas that Lotus really feel the most work needs to be done, and I guess there's an argument for both sides.

Steven: Sorry to interrupt, but I believe Gascoyne actually came out last weekend and said they're not going to develop this year's car, they're going to put all their concentration in creating a proper mid-field car for next season.

Jon: Yea, it doesn't surprise me at all. Like I said, with all these new people and with the legal action as well, you kind of have to wonder. But yea, it'll definitely make an impact.



Mr C: Do we think the legal action is more than sour grapes? Is it Mallya just being upset or do you think there is some... he has a genuine case there?

Chris: I think it's convenient that both announcements were made in the same day. As if Lotus were trying to get their revenge slightly. But I don't know if it's sour grapes or not, because Gascoyne would have had some input in the '09 car because he was fired in '08, so there will be some design similarities because the same guys worked with him.

Steven: There's also the thing that Lotus have got some kind of indemnity from Fondmetal because of the legal case, because Fondmetal was doing the work as a sub-contractor. So I don't think there's actually a case directly against Lotus here. But it certainly, some of the photos that were released before the season started showed what appeared to be Force India parts, I think it was tyre moulds or wind tunnel tyres or something like that, were actually used on the Lotus photographs. Now whether they were actually used in the wind tunnel or whatever, I don't know. It seems odd that it's taken them this long to decide it's a court case.

Jon: What I find very interesting about all this is that Force India have brought it into the Italian courts as well, and as we all know the Italian courts have a tendency to get these kind of things in their teeth and not let go until they find someone to blame.

Mr C: I didn't realise that, so it's UK and Italian?

Jon: Yea.

Mr C: And were both of those brought at the same time?

Jon: I don't know, Autosport is saying that it's the team confirms that it's being instigated in the UK Civil Courts, and it's believed in Italy as well.

Mr C: What do we think, we don't know what's going to happen in the court case, but what do we think will happen to Force India's progress now that these key employees are looking to get out? Bearing in mind one of their employees has already gone to Sauber, three more are now following him out the door.

Chris: It does sound slightly worrying that they've had four people leave in such a short space of time, at least. Possibly they might have some... be able to claw it back a bit, but personally I'm slightly worried for them now as a result.

Lukeh: I think Mallya just needs to do the right thing and get people in to replace them. If he's got the money he says he has, then you know... it depends if he just wants to undertake this court case just to get more money for the team, or just because he's genuinely concerned at the thing. We've got another court case in Formula One, so all is well.

Jon: It's been a while.

Lukeh: It has.



Mr C: It has been a while.

Steven: One thing I'm curious on the outcome of this is whether this will lead to McLaren parachuting some people in to Force India short term.

Mr C: Good point.

Lukeh: Jenson.

Jon: I hear he's quite handy with a pencil and some CFD.

Mr C: That brings us to the end of our very first micro-show. I shall stop the official Sidepodcast stopwatch, and I shall say goodbye everybody. Thank you, thank you for joining us on this first show.

Lukeh: Okay, thank you.

Steven: Thank you.

Lukeh: Bye!

Jon: Bye!

Chris: Bye!

Steven: Bye!

Mr C: Goodbye!