



Sidepodchat – I'm not saying they're champions, I'm just saying they're there

Christine: It's time for Sidepodchat - I'm not saying they're champions, I'm just saying they're there.

Mr C: You are joining us today for a bi-annual Sidepodchat, as it happens to have turned out. The plan was for a weekly show.

Christine: Yep.

Mr C: Or maybe a fortnightly show at worst.

Christine: Last time was June.

Mr C: Yea. Plans haven't gone exactly as expected. However we return!

Christine: Well, I don't think I was in the last one, so bonus!

Mr C: Excellent. More Christine.

Christine: Yea.

Mr C: We are joined on this Sidepodchat by Christine.

Christine: Yes, hello.

Mr C: Steven.

Steven: Hello.

Mr C: Lukeh.

Lukeh: Hello.

Mr C: Pat.

Pat: Hello.

Mr C: Gavin.

Gavin: Evening.

Mr C: And Bassano.

Bassano: Heya.



Mr C: Wonderful. That is a full house for fast Formula One discussion.

Christine: So tell me about this show then, what do we do?

Mr C: It's a ten minute show. It's a ten minute chat. We have a stopwatch. Do you have a stopwatch?

Christine: I do.

Mr C: Oh, lucky you remembered it. We have a stopwatch, we set the timer going. We ask the question, and then we discuss Formula One for ten minutes, and then we just go home.

Christine: Okay.

Mr C: Just disappear into the night.

Christine: Who's got the question?

Mr C: I don't have... do you have the question?

Christine: Oh, I might have a question.

Mr C: You've got the stopwatch and the question?

Christine: Yea.

Mr C: I'm sure glad you turned up this evening. Are you ready with the stopwatch Christine?

Christine: Yes I am.

Mr C: Are you ready callers?

[Agreement]

Bassano: Do it, do it!

Mr C: Christine, what is today's question?

Christine: Okay, well it's a bit of a long one. It's a bit Amy-esque, so I'll just go into it. For years, the driver market has been based on Alonso following him to and from Renault, but now he's settled at Ferrari, it's the second Renault driver seat that we're all concentrating on. So, who do you think will join Kubica at Renault in 2011 and what repercussions will it have for the rest of the grid?

Mr C: Start that stopwatch, Christine. First question, Bassano. What do you think?

Bassano: I'm gonna... who I think will join him at Renault... is that right?



Mr C: That's the question.

Bassano: It's Petrov. Petrov's not gonna move. I don't want him to stay, but he's gonna stay. There's too much money, there's too much at stake, it's all political. He's not gonna move, I don't want it to happen. Sutil should be there. Let's move on.

Mr C: Sutil should be there.

Bassano: Yea!

Mr C: Does anybody disagree with that?

Steven: I think the deciding factor is not who the drivers should be but who the owners are going to be because if Dany Bahar buys the team, is he going to sell Lotuses into Russia or is he going to parachute a Malaysian driver in or does he have someone else in sight who is gonna sell Lotuses in this country? So I think the problem is really the ownership will decide the driver.

Mr C: Lukeh, did you have something to say on this?

Lukeh: I don't think Sutil should be there. I don't think Sutil should be at Force India. He's in the gravel trap half the time, anyway. Timo should be there, I reckon.

Bassano: Oh, come on.

Lukeh: No, I'm not doing this just for RG, but Timo is awesome.

Steven: He's just announced today he's staying at Virgin though.

Lukeh: I know, but that's all lies. He told me in a dream.

Bassano: He can't win Christine's Rankings and expect to get a good drive next year, it just doesn't work that way. It's like the World Cup all over.

Lukeh: Oh, that's harsh. I think Kubica and who did I say, Glock, would be a really good team. But it won't happen. But it will. But it won't.

Pat: It won't happen next year.

Mr C: Who do you reckon then, Pat?

Pat: I agree with Lukeh, that's a good line up. But what I think will actually happen is Petrov will come back but it might only be for part of a season, they might get someone else on standby. But I don't know who.

Bassano: Ooh, controversial.



Lukeh: Nelson Piquet!

Pat: I don't know, I've kinda lost track who their back up drivers are.

Christine: Well at the moment, I think, don't they have Jérôme and oh the guy that injured himself.

Pat: He's with Virgin isn't he?

Mr C: D'Ambrosio, has he moved to Virgin?

Christine: He was switching.

Lukeh: He's with everyone.

Pat: He did a test for them, didn't he?

Mr C: And you still have Ho-Pin Tung, assuming he's better.

Pat: He's off to IndyCar.

Gavin: Ho-Pin Tung's gonna, yea, sorry, Pat. Yea, it's announced today he might be second driver over at... or Pat can tell us which team.

Pat: I'm trying to remember it.

Gavin: I think it's Team Fazzt which is the Tagliani.

Christine: So Renault need test drivers as well?

Steven: Yea.

Bassano: Renault need a lot and most of it is money.

Pat: That might be why they're restarting their driver development programme, Éric was saying the other day. They want to restart their driver programme.

Mr C: Because they have no drivers. So at the moment, it is Team Kubica. So okay then, Steven, for the third driver at Renault.

Steven: Third driver at Renault. I think they've got to go find someone young who has got possibilities to take over when Kubica goes to Ferrari, if those rumours ever happen. I'm not really sure who I would have, again, this comes back to owners. If the French are still the owners, are there any really good young French drivers around that they might take? I'm not sure. I mean, Hülkenberg might be an option for them, if they can sell him on the idea of Kubica being there for a season and then him taking over as their, sort of, hot choice. But if they're going to do that then they may as well make him second driver.



Mr C: But presumably they need some money.

Steven: Well, Maldonado's taken all the money to... they need to find some other less than hopeless driver who's got some money.

Mr C: How do we think Petrov did in his first year for a rookie?

Bassano: I think Petrov tried well. He fought hard, he made lots of mistakes, but you want someone to push it out there, do it, don't go safe and... he messed up a lot but...

Mr C: You said at the start of the show Bassano that you didn't want him at Renault for another year. So, how come?

Bassano: Oh. I think he's a good driver, I don't necessarily think that it's going to work at Renault. I think he's gonna get elbowed out unless it becomes a cash call. And unfortunately, it does come down to cash at the moment. I don't think he's... next to Alonso, I wouldn't want to be sitting next to someone like that anyway.

Mr C: Pat, agree or disagree?

Pat: I don't know. Yea, he's had a good year but well it's the same sort of thing. He's driven well but he's also pushed too hard, so... crashed too much, so I don't know. Maybe I'd give him... that's why I said half a year, give him a bit more time to calm down. I mean, as they say, it's better to calm someone who is fast and crashes a bit, calm him down, rather than try and make a slow person fast. So I'd give him a bit of time.

Christine: Is it likely that someone is going to have to give him a drive because there's a Russian race on the cards, maybe Bernie might want that to happen?

Mr C: There is Marussia as well. Gavin, thoughts?

Gavin: Yea, the thing is, I know some Russian people and one of them, actually, is a Formula One fan. He has no idea who Petrov is, so I'm not entirely sure how much he brings in terms of coverage although he's brought a bit of Russian money to the Renault team. I think the grand prix itself will bring more coverage to Russia, so I'm not... I mean, unless Russia have a really big say in Virgin, which I think they're just a title sponsor at the moment, I don't think they'll be elbowing Russian drivers in. But there aren't any other... I mean, how many other Russian drivers are there out there? There's one guy with a funny name that I can't pronounce.

Pat: Aleshin.

Bassano: Aleshin, yea.

Gavin: Aleshin.

Pat: And there's another guy in Formula Two but I can't remember his name.



Gavin: He's got a funny name like abba-jabi-jabba-jabu or something like that.

Pat: Afanasyev.

Gavin: That's it, that's the one. That's the one.

Pat: I don't know where he is, where is he? Indy Lights maybe, or is that someone else?

Gavin: Well his career's over already then.

Pat: At Renault or something anyway.

Mr C: [Laughs]

Gavin: What? I mean, Indy Lights. The grand prix will bring more exposure to the driver so I think that'll be more important.

Bassano: Can I make a...

Lukeh: You sign another driver, could happen, jibber jabber... [fades out]

Mr C: Lukeh, we nearly lost you there. Just a thought, Lukeh. The Renault second drive, a poisoned chalice? Would you wish it on anybody really?

Lukeh: I'd let Petrov keep it. He's better than Grosjean and he's better than Piquet.

Mr C: What were you going to say Bassano?

Bassano: I was going to say that, is it a poisoned chalice? Is Renault about to self-explode? There are so many rumours, there are so many people that may or may not want to invest, or may not. Will it just implode on itself? Will it be a non-team? Could it be the next Toyota, the next Honda? Will it be here next year?

Mr C: Can it get any worse for them than 2009 though, really?

Steven: I think the team will be there, it could be anyone owning it. I think if they go down the Russian route and try and use that then keeping Petrov and maybe making Aleshin the third driver makes sense. Another one that's just occurred to me for a possible third driver on ability rather than on money is Marcus Ericsson, I really rate that guy. I think he could be good. But I think, once they get nearer the Russian Grand Prix, Putin and co will make sure that any Russian drivers there have got all of the backing they need to get into good seats, so if they were able to tie up Petrov and Mikhail Aleshin then by the time the winter olympics happen, and then the grand prix happens, that team could be in a position to take in an awful lot of money from Russia.

Mr C: So who will be then, the Russian a team? Will it be Renault or will it be Marussia?



Bassano: Lada F1. It will! It has to be.

Mr C: You think Lada are gonna take over Renault?

Steven: Why not?

Bassano: They might not take over but they'll be the title sponsor, so ergo they'll be Lada F1.

Gavin: Wow.

Bassano: What's your next biggest Russian oligarch that's willing to make money off Formula One? It's gotta be a car company, isn't it?

Steven: Lada was on the Renault car as a sponsor last year or the year before, wasn't it?

Gavin: This year.

Mr C: It was this year, yea.

Christine: There is one minute left.

Pat: Already?

Bassano: So if you're gonna sell cars and you want sponsorship and you want big money, Lada F1.

Mr C: You heard it hear first people. Anybody disagree with that?

Bassano: It worked quite well for Renault.

Gavin: Well, Virgin are sponsored by a car company that doesn't make a car. They've made a concept car.

Bassano: Yea, but Virgin sponsor brides, so, you know.

Mr C: Tell us, quickly tell us more about the Marussia car because I don't know too much about it.

Gavin: It's a concept car, that's it.

Mr C: It doesn't exist.

Gavin: It's the same as these Dany Bahar Lotus's or Loti, whatever. They are show cars at Geneva, or whatever, and they haven't made a single production car yet. So, I mean, if someone can tell me where that money has come from, I'd love to know.

Steven: I would guess it's your typical Branson deal where there's no money changing hands, but they're actually putting... or Virgin are putting that name on the car and then in return Branson's getting something somewhere else...



[Alarm sounds]

Lukeh: Oh my goodness.

Bassano: Lada F1 2012, I'm telling you.

Pat: No, no it won't.

Mr C: That might be the ten minute warning.

Steven: Yea.

Gavin: They're gonna get more money from Marussia or something.

Bassano: I'm not saying they're champions, I'm just saying they're there.

Lukeh: I don't like the name Lada F1.

Gavin: Well seeing as Skoda have conquered rally in IRC this year, I suppose it's plausible.

Bassano: There we go.

Pat: Lada went into touring cars and gave up after two years.

Steven: Yea. Skoda's been winning rallying, certainly class-wise, for forty years.

Bassano: So I think the answer is Renault, we don't know.

Mr C: And on that note, that is a great way to wrap up this show. Thank you everybody.

Steven: We are unanimous on that.

Bassano: Peace and love.

Steven: Thank you.

Mr C: Thank you for joining us on this call. Thank you Christine for the questions and the timing, thank you Steven.

Steven: Thank you.

Mr C: Thank you Gavin.

Gavin: Thank you.



Mr C: Thank you Pat. Thank you Lukeh.

Lukeh: Thank you.

Mr C: And thank you Bassano.

Bassano: Bye folks.

Mr C: We will hope and aim and desperately try to do this more than twice...

Christine: Yes.

Mr C: In 2011. Maybe one more before the end of this year. Cheers all.