



F1 Debrief – He can just write his name in the history book and walk away

Christine: This is F1 Debrief - He can just write his name in the history book and walk away. Coming up on this show, we accept the challenge of a listener, ponder outside bets for Mercedes, and the possibility of a fabulous 2017.

Davin: Hey guys, it's Davin. So, I was told that if I sent in a voicemail, there would be a show. So challenge accepted. Nico Rosberg has retired from Formula One with immediate effect, and I actually think it's pretty fitting. He's been in Formula One for 11 seasons, he's done over 200 races, he's won over 23 times, been on the podium over 50 times, been on pole 30 times, put up 20 fastest laps and now has won the world title. I mean, you can't ask much more from a person. Especially someone who's had to deal with the constant pressure of being the son of a former world champion or just being constantly compared to somebody else, whether it was Mark Webber when he was at Williams, or his teammate Lewis Hamilton. You know, Rosberg has always been that sort of driver where people weren't always fully convinced, even when he was driving fairly convincingly. So now, when you've achieved your childhood dream and you've gotten everything you need to get. You're unbelievably wealthy, you're married to a beautiful wife, you have a daughter, you're a world famous athlete and you're world champion? I think it's pretty fair that he just drop the mic and walk away.

Christine: Thanks Davin. That's how it works now, by the way, we barter our shows. We can only do shows if the listeners give us something in return.

Mr C: You record, then we record.

Christine: Yea.

Mr C: That seems like a fair deal.

Christine: The Rosberg retirement news was incredible, partly because it was a surprise but also because we'd been asking for some drama, some soap opera style stuff and this is exactly what it was.

Mr C: You want to hear the Eastenders drums.

Christine: Yea!

Mr C: That's what it was. I'm leaving. Dum, dum. We've been asking for it, we got it with this vibe, it felt like F1 old school, didn't it? Every day you wake up, there's another headline.

Christine: Yea, I had to get straight on Sidepodcast and write a post about it, straight away, which hasn't happened in a long time.

Mr C: It's good, I love this. I think Davin hit the nail on the head when he said it is a pretty fitting way to go out, and I don't think we've seen it in the time that we've been covering Formula One, a driver goes out at



the top of his game. I know many people talk about wanting to do that. It is nice to see it when it happens, it's nice. We've played witness to Rosberg doing what everybody dreams of doing.

Christine: Yea, to be fair, it's not actually that often that the drivers get to say when they retire anyway. We've had a couple this year, but really, it tends to be they get dropped rather than stepping away gracefully. So then doing that when you've just achieved the most amazing thing, is... it is a surprise.

Mr C: I would love to know what Rosberg's contract looked like, and the way it was written that allowed him just to walk away from Formula One, because Mercedes are losing a lot with Rosberg not being around in 2017. And also so is Formula One, of course. Formula One itself is losing a lot by not having the world champion around in order for anyone else to contest that title. Essentially, he's walking away, all that promotion and all that persona and that gravitas just goes with him.

Christine: But it might just be, I mean it might not be that the contract allows him to walk away but at some point, if you're really determined not to do it, you're not going to do it.

Mr C: I guess there's no point arguing. It's interesting that nobody actually at Mercedes seemed to try to convince him. Rosberg said, well I told Toto, Toto understood and that was it. Now I wonder if someone like Lewis Hamilton had done the same, maybe there might be more of an argument.

Christine: The thing is, he did, I mean the way he was describing it, he sounded exhausted from the whole thing, and actually I thought that was one of the more interesting aspects of it because it shows just how much hard work he's put into it. I guess that all 22 drivers are working really hard, I guess they do, but you never really see it. Like, Hamilton and Alonso, they make it look easy, and Rosberg we've said, doesn't have the natural talent, perhaps, that some of them do, and so it's just interesting to hear someone actually admit how much hard work the tenacity to get to the top is when it doesn't come easily to you.

Mr C: Yes, we don't see that. It's a lot to do with the way Formula One is covered, we just don't see the grind, the daily grind that the drivers have to go through. I think Jenson Button alluded to it when he announced his retirement this year. He just said, I just have to have a break this year.

Christine: And you could see it with Button as well. He was ready to go.

Mr C: He was ready to call it quits. You didn't get that impression with Rosberg, and I guess until he'd achieved his ambition, until he'd achieved all those aims he wasn't ready to quit. But as soon as he had, he realised there was nothing else to fight for.

Christine: Yea, and I think he said, I just can't do it again next year, which is fair enough.

Davin: I mean the only thing that I slightly regret, because I like a little bit of F1 drama, is, I would have loved to see Nico Rosberg run the number one on his car, just to get under Lewis Hamilton's skin a little bit. But Rosberg's shown that he's a classier person than a lot of people would have been in his situation. I've always said that, especially while he's been racing Lewis Hamilton, that if I had been Rosberg, I would have done everything possible to get under Hamilton's skin at like every opportunity. Like whatever Hamilton's least favourite music was, I would have been playing that in the garage all the time. You know, just things like that, to get under Hamilton's skin, to find an edge. And Rosberg didn't really need to do that.



Mr C: There will be textbooks written, I'm sure, many, many textbooks written about how Nico Rosberg made the most of 2016 because he really eked out every single tiny advantage that he could find all the way throughout the season. He never, never gave up, never gave Lewis any quarter. Yes, he had some things in his favour. Lewis Hamilton's early reliability dramas certainly played towards Rosberg. I think Hamilton managed to get some of that back with the double engine penalty he took, was it at Spa, or whenever it was just after the summer break, he took a double hit at the same time, so he recouped a lot of that lost ground with that strategy. But Rosberg, through every race, every single race, throughout the season, he made the most of every situation. And you have to give him credit for that.

Christine: And I think it's been a really interesting season, another chapter in the textbooks about this, could be because Rosberg's been the underdog all year, except that he's an underdog that was leading the championship quite healthily at several points, but still no one really expected him to win. It's not like he was the underdog and then he came back at the last race and nicked it by one point. He was there, he was up there, he had massive healthy gaps and still, we all thought Lewis was gonna come back and do it, maybe you know, because he had the skills to do that.

Mr C: And he has done for the previous two years.

Christine: So I think it's just been a classic season, in a weird way, a way that I wasn't expecting.

Mr C: Yes. I don't think it's going to go down as an all time classic Formula One season.

Christine: No.

Mr C: It has been better than previous years and that's important. Formula One needed that. But it has been, it's been a subtly classic year.

Christine: Yea, it's really got a story to it and that's what we like. So now of course, Mercedes have to decide who is going to replace their outgoing champion, and that is the bit that everyone is speculating on and discussing. Personally, I think it's going to end up being someone less interesting like Wehrlein, or a new name that we don't even know yet, but it is fun to think about the potential fireworks of a bigger name. Everyone's saying Alonso would make an interesting partnership there.

Mr C: It would make the most interesting partnership, wouldn't it? Alonso versus Lewis Hamilton.

Christine: Again.

Mr C: The rematch. In the fastest cars on the grid. I would pay so much money to watch that, I really would. I really want that to happen. I do, but I guess it's just, I mean, that's nothing more than wishful thinking.

Christine: We had another voicemail from Adam, who is the Adam that writes our Class of the Field feature and he's very, very good at it.



Mr C: We must speak to Adam, actually. We must do our one-to-one with him, sometime, maybe early in 2017 to get his vibes on the upcoming season. But what's he got to say about 2016?

Adam: So the question is whether Mercedes will be brave enough to buy out a big name from another team to give Hamilton a big rival and make sure they have two blockbuster names. From the sounds of the news over the weekend, it sounds like Mercedes aren't particularly interested in doing that and risking becoming a super team like Manchester United or the Golden State Warriors have recently. But now you have to wonder what they could do. For me, the obvious choice, not least because it could be a short term option is Valtteri Bottas. Obviously he has Mercedes ties, and clearly ties to Toto Wolff from when Wolff was a shareholder at Williams himself. But whether Mercedes see him as more than a one year option would be interesting. He would certainly bring pace but his stock has fallen over the last year or so compared to when he was the super kid entering F1 in a very slow Williams. The logical choice for me would be Esteban Ocon. It became clear over the second half of the year that he is the preferred son in the Mercedes young driver academy. Wehrlein obviously is a free agent, so Wehrlein would be the easiest one to move into the seat but I think they might be more likely, if they do value Ocon more, to promote Ocon above him and then move Wehrlein into Force India. And Wehrlein could also go to Williams if Bottas is the choice. Bit of a left-field choice, though, I've thought of is Carlos Sainz. He's become a bit of an odd man out in the Red Bull stable, with two young drivers at the Red Bull senior team, does he feel this is his opportunity or would he rather wait with his Ferrari links in order to replace Kimi Räikkönen in a year's time or further down the line? But this could be his opportunity. Ultimately though, I think Ocon will be the choice.

Mr C: So Ocon? A vote for Ocon. See, I think it's probably at this point going to be Bottas, that seems to be the way the winds are blowing, and the thing is, we haven't really seen what Bottas can do in the Williams because the Williams have been underperforming since he sat in it. Now how much of that is down to him?

Christine: Is there a correlation there?

Mr C: That could be an interesting one. It would be very nice to see what the man can do in decent machinery. I do wonder if he's got the psychological strength to outsmart Lewis Hamilton. Even if he has the speed and skill, he doesn't strike me as the kind of guy who is strong mentally.

Christine: Interesting. He is Finnish though, and they've always got a kind of detached way, haven't they?

Mr C: Yes, he could be another Kimi. Okay that might work.

Christine: It's also interesting that Adam mentioned Carlos Sainz because I just never think of the Red Bull/Toro Rosso people going anywhere other than Red Bull or Toro Rosso because there's such a linear path there, you know, you go to Toro Rosso, you do well, then you get promoted up. I never think of them moving outside, that's why it was such a shock when Vettel went all Scuderia on us.

Mr C: Yes but in Sainz's case he got overlooked when Verstappen was picked up by the main team.

Christine: He did.



Mr C: And that must be, even now, still playing on his mind. I mean, not as much perhaps as it is on Kvyat's mind. He didn't get bumped down.

Christine: He also didn't have a good part of that deal.

Mr C: They both lost out there. But I think, perhaps, I mean, I don't know. Again Sainz is obviously backed by Red Bull money. He may be tied into them long term, he may not be able to extricate himself and he's obviously a decent driver? Even though he was overlooked for the main team.

Christine: People do rate him.

Mr C: It may be that Red Bull will not allow Sainz to go to a rival whereas in the case of Williams and Bottas, Williams do need money and Mercedes do have money, and that may play a larger part in the outcome.

Christine: Also with the Esteban Ocon thing, I call him Esteban Ocon, I don't know which way you should say it, Ocon, Ocon?

Mr C: However you want.

Christine: Anyway, it could be that he got promoted and Wehrlein was then drafted into Force India but as we've discussed with Joe, Force India don't like Wehrlein, so that wouldn't seem to be a very good option for them.

Mr C: No, I'll tell you what the other problem with those two drivers are, they're both too young. Now, they may not be too young from Mercedes' perspective, but they definitely are too young to challenge Hamilton, I think, in this first year, or this soon. And as fans, I wouldn't want to see that. I wouldn't want to see a Hamilton/Wehrlein lineup or a Hamilton/Ocon lineup.

Christine: We need someone with a bit of grit.

Mr C: Someone, anyone who can make something of next year is important because Mercedes are almost certainly going to have a car advantage because they will carry their performance, their engine performance advantage into 2017 whatever the regulations are, that's not going to go away. And you don't want Hamilton to have a free pass at 2017. I don't even think Hamilton would want a free pass at 2017.

Christine: Also, I think Mercedes are aware of that. I mean, Christian Horner has only just realised that his Red Bull domination for four years was a bad thing. But I get the feeling that Mercedes are aware already.

Mr C: Okay, yes, we can cling on to that hope that even though business sense says don't pit two really strong drivers against each other, racing sense says please do exactly that. I think the future of the Mercedes team may actually be defined by this decision. Are they a racing team? Or are they a business? Because the business says go with the young, cheap rookie that doesn't cost very much, doesn't cause too much confrontation, fits in nicely. The racing team would pick the fastest possible driver they can find on the grid. And that's gonna be an interesting one to play out.



Christine: We also had a voicemail from Jordan who shared his thoughts on Rosberg's retirement and also on his potential replacement. He put forward a name that we haven't yet mentioned.

Jordan: Oh hey, Sidepodcast. This is Jordan Wilman from Kamloops, BC, Canada. Wow, I wake up this morning, Nico Rosberg retires at 31 and I was like, I need to send a voicemail because I'm probably going to sound like I'm in the minority of people. Yea, with Nico Rosberg leaving, he knows he can't win. I was so looking forward to the start of next year, with him and Lewis. And I get he's 31 and outside all the family stuff, I just think he's not a confident dude, he's a pushover, he's a kiss-ass, people pleaser. Where's the Nico Rosberg from the 2006 Bahrain Grand Prix when he got his first point? God that was one of my favourite years and he was all confident and he was gonna bust his ass and then he's doing his video blogs at the end of his time with Williams, I remember that. And then just Mercedes, the disappointment and the anger and the frustration. Well, everyone thinks Wehrlein is gonna get the seat. Part of me, I would love to get Max Verstappen. I think it would be so awesome to have Verstappen and Hamilton in the same ride. Either way, keep up the great work Mr C and Christine and I'll always be listening. Have a lovely holidays. Cheers.

Mr C: Do we think Christian Horner has Max Verstappen locked up in a basement until March?

Christine: Well I'm sure that he does, but we were saying about, if you wanted as a fan the chaos of a driver partnership, that would Verstappen and Hamilton. I cannot imagine two bigger egos going head to head.

Mr C: That would be spectacular. I'm down with that. Verstappen and Hamilton would be epic. I cannot for one second envisage how that would happen, how could that situation come about? I just don't think it's feasible.

Christine: No, that would be a lot of contract wrangling.

Mr C: I can't see that Red Bull would relinquish their, not only their rising star, but the future of Red Bull. I mean, that's what we're talking about here. He is being set up as the next Vettel and they're expecting him to be a multi-year, multiple time world champion.

Christine: Oh he's gonna do it as well.

Mr C: Oh goodness, several times. He'll be the next Vettel, no question. So yea, I can't see that happening, no matter which way you look at it, I think that's a no. As enticing as the concept might be, I think that's just a little too out there. Maybe one day, though. Maybe in five years time that could happen, just not in 2017.

Christine: The interesting thing about Verstappen is that he is a young driver, very young, but he does have the self-belief and the confidence to go up against. That would be a good partnership, as opposed to the Ocons of this world who we think perhaps haven't developed that yet.

Mr C: I think maybe they will, I mean, the thing is, neither Wehrlein or Ocon, I don't think either would do a bad job, that's the thing. I don't want to sound like I'm knocking them, I don't want to say they're never going to stand up to it. It just feels like you're going to have very limited preparation time. Where are we



now? End of December when we're recording this show. Mercedes have said they're not making a decision until next season so you've got no time to prepare over Christmas and into the New Year. The decision's going to be made at some point in January, whenever... if it goes with Wehrlein or Ocon, it will come after all of the other options have been exhausted by the sound of it. Because Wehrlein's available now, so if they were going to sign him, they would have already signed him. If he was first choice, he'd have the seat.

Christine: Yea, I think he's last choice, isn't he?

Mr C: Yea, okay. For whatever reason, he's not top of the list. So whenever all other options have been exhausted, then he gets the call. So the amount of preparation time is going to be sub-optimal and I think that means going into the first race, he won't be in the right position, he won't know the car well enough, etc, etc. And then into the season, I think Hamilton would already have stretched an advantage before either of those two really find their feet. That would just be disappointing, if you get three or four races into it, and Hamilton's 40 points ahead of the next guy, then you know you're in for a long old season.

Christine: Yea, and again, it's not going to happen, but Verstappen actually probably would be alright at that because he got thrown into a Red Bull and was immediately brilliant. He got Verstappen of the Race every race.

Mr C: He was the best Verstappen in every race this year, no question.

Christine: He was. Even in the last race, when all the focus was on the front, he still managed to be right at the back and then work his way up.

Mr C: Good god, can we just talk about that Abu Dhabi race? I know this show is mostly about Mercedes and Rosberg but my goodness me, I still don't know if I've quite recovered from that Grand Prix.

Christine: Really?

Mr C: It took a lot out of me, I very, very much enjoyed that. That was a good two hours entertainment.

Christine: It's a long time since I've seen you, you just didn't know what you wanted to happen. You were so excited about every single thing.

Mr C: Everything.

Christine: And I'm like, what are we cheering for? I don't know!

Mr C: Verstappen spun his car at the first corner, he was right at the back of the grand prix and you think well that's it. Verstappen's gonna play no major part in this grand prix. There he turns up right in the mix, right in the thick of the action.

Christine: On the last lap, where is he? Chasing for a podium.

Mr C: Goodness me, if I was Daniel Ricciardo at this point, I would be thinking about that Abu Dhabi Grand Prix and I would be seriously questioning what's going to happen next year. Because, just as we just



discussed, Verstappen has all the off-season to prepare. He knows the car, he knows the team. He's got that self-confidence. Ricciardo could be in a lot of trouble next year, and I think the way he ended this season, his last race is gonna open a lot of question marks in his mind. Because he didn't spin at the first corner, he had the ideal strategy, his race played out exactly how he expected it to, and still he got overshadowed by a teammate.

Christine: It's disappointing.

Mr C: If I was him, I would be very concerned, certainly at this point. Even if the Red Bull is fast enough to challenge for races, it's hard to see that Ricciardo would be the first placed Red Bull.

Christine: So actually thinking about it, Ricciardo needs to hot-foot it out of there, go to Mercedes, because then he won't be overshadowed by Verstappen in the same team, he can go and fight with Hamilton instead.

Mr C: But can he fight with Hamilton?

Christine: Well...

Mr C: I don't know.

Christine: Can anyone?

Mr C: Well, Nico Rosberg did, and won, so you know, he was smarter and he came out on top. Can anyone next year? I don't know, I really hope they can. I hope it's going to be a really close fight all the way through. What I would very much like is if every race next year could be like the last race this year, then we're in for a fantastic Formula One season. That's all I ask, that's all I'm asking.

Christine: It's not much, that's all we've been asking for several years though, to be fair. It was a good race, and it was nice that Rosberg went out on the high of winning a championship and the high of a great race, and it all just seemed really nice and well done. And actually, we should wrap it up there, but we'll leave the last word to Davin, seeing as he is the reason this show exists, and we'll just say goodbye.

Davin: Rosberg did what he needed to do, he can walk away on a high, which is a lot more than a lot of other drivers in his position would have done and he doesn't have to deal with the constant comparisons the year after with, you know, oh if he doesn't win the world championship in 2017, how people would have said it might have been a fluke, or he's a one hit wonder or blah blah blah. He can just write his name down in the history book and walk away.