



Episode 34 – The Espionage Show

[Intro: Rich Reich, Keeping Up With the Race]

Chris: Welcome to Sidepodcast. This is Episode 34 – The Espionage Show. It's Friday. What are we doing?

Me: We did say we might do an extra show this week if one was warranted, and I think it probably is.

Chris: Yea, and we are.

Me: There's a bit of news to get through, isn't there?

Chris: There's lots, to do with all McLaren and Ferrari and the FIA and everything, and we really didn't want to clutter up the Belgian Grand Prix show. So we're doing an extra special show just for you.

[Sweeper]

[Suspense Music]

Chris: Previously on The Espionage Show. Ron and his team appeared before the FIA. They were found guilty of having Ferrari information but there was not enough evidence to prove they had done anything with it, and Ferrari appealed the decision, but before the appeal was heard, it was thrown out because new evidence was discovered.

Me: That takes us up to yesterday.

[End Suspense Music]

Chris: Yes, Thursday's hearing was all about the new evidence. Lots of people there in Paris, not us.

Me: No.

Chris: Lewis turned up to support his boss, bless him. And there was also a surprise guest.

Me: Ross Brawn. Unexpected.

Chris: It went on much longer than anticipated. They thought it would be over in the morning, but by lunchtime, they were all starving so they had to go out and get some food. Then come back. Alonso wasn't there, but de la Rosa was. You know I've been complaining about Autosport recently?

Me: What, the magazine being irrelevant before it's printed?

Chris: Yes, well, their website was down on Thursday as well.

Me: Bit popular.

[Sound FX: Phone error beeps, followed by "We're sorry, the number you have dialled is not in service at this time."]



Chris: Presumably it was because of the traffic and it was down for, like, half the day.

Me: They're obviously not used to handling this kind of event.

Chris: And then when it came back up, they announced the wrong verdict.

Me: They really did.

Chris: They said that McLaren had been banned for 2007 and 2008.

Me: Didn't they have to announce a public apology to the FIA?

Chris: Well, it caused all sorts of problems because McLaren's lawyers read it and assumed that the FIA hadn't told them or spent enough time thinking about it. I mean, it was a nightmare.

Me: Yes, they've not been having the best of weeks.

Chris: Well done Autosport. The BBC however, spot on at 6:15pm with the announcement from the FIA.

Me: What did it say?

Chris: It went something like this: "The World Motorsport Council has stripped Vodafone McLaren Mercedes of all constructor points in the 2007 FIA Formula One World Championship and the team can score no points for the remainder of the season. Furthermore, the team will pay a fine equal to \$100 million, less the FOM income lost as a result of the points deduction. However, due to the exceptional circumstances in which the FIA gave the team's drivers an immunity in return for providing evidence, there is no penalty in regard to drivers' points. (No McLaren representative will be allowed on the podium should a McLaren driver win in any of the remaining races of the 2007 season.) The WMSC will receive a full technical report on the 2008 McLaren car and will take a decision at its December 2007 meeting as to what sanction, if any, will be imposed on the team for the 2008 season."

Me: Good grief. You okay?

Chris: Yes, so, question. Are they excluded from the Championship or have they just been put to the bottom?

Me: They've just been put to the bottom.

Chris: Just had their points taken away.

Me: Absolutely. They are now joint 9th with...

Chris: A lot of other people.

Me: ... Toro Rosso and Spyker.

Chris: So does that mean next year, their garage is going to be all the way back with Team India?

Me: Team India, yes. And they're going to struggle to fit that three storey motor home next to the Red Bull Racing.



Chris: Oh my god, how embarrassing.

Me: Monstrosity. That's two very large motorhomes in a very small space.

Chris: So the number one car, presumably, if one of their drivers wins the championship, is going to be at the back of the paddock.

Me: Yes, well that one is going to be very important, I think, come the end of this year and going into next year, to keep sponsors happy.

Chris: The only thing that's going to keep them happy.

Me: Assuming of course that whoever wins it, stays with the team until next year.

Chris: This is probably the best quote of the day, that sums up the persons feelings exactly. When he left the hearing, Max Mosley was asked if justice was done, and he said "Yes." That's it, just yes.

Me: You can't fault him for answering the question.

Chris: No, exactly. Ferrari issued a statement saying "Ferrari are satisfied that the truth has now emerged." Which they would be.

Me: Yes, that makes a change, is my initial reaction to that statement.

Chris: Ferrari, happy? What's going on? Ron Dennis' reaction was this: "The most important thing is that we go motor racing this weekend, the rest of the season and next season. Having been at the hearing I do not accept that we deserve to be penalised or our reputation damaged in this way." So, that was it, all done and dusted, on Thursday night. Why didn't we do a podcast yesterday?

Me: We could have done a podcast last night, but it would have been a very short one. Because that's pretty much the amount of information we had.

Chris: We were waiting to find out the official FIA information which was due to be released today.

[Sweeper]

Me: I was listening to Radio 5 Live this afternoon, Friday Free Practice. And they had Mark Hughes from Autosport, them again, in the studio.

Chris: My favourite.

Me: Unfortunately, he's got a bit of a boring voice. He's not a natural speaker, and I was finding the show a little bit dull. I was contemplating turning it off, actually.

Chris: Weren't they talking about hair? People's haircuts.

Me: Well, David Croft was his usual enthusiastic self, and was asking questions like, "Have you seen Vettel's new hairdo?" and Mark would answer with, "Not really interested in hairdo's."



Chris: “Don’t wanna talk about hair.”

Me: Then all of a sudden the air went dead. You could hear the cars in the background, so you know there wasn’t a problem, but it was silent in the studio. I was worried for a second that Mark might have bored them to death.

Chris: Oh, he wasn’t that bad.

Me: No, it turns out they’d just been handed the abridged notes from the FIA verdict.

Chris: They were kind of like the minutes of a meeting.

Me: It’s not the full transcript, we’re expecting those on Monday or Tuesday, including the notes from the previous hearing. But it is enough juicy information to be getting on with.

Chris: Didn’t David Croft, just read it all out? Like a script.

Me: And the show improved no end. It was really enjoyable. I was listening to it and my jaw dropped to the floor as I heard them read it out.

Chris: I tell you what, if it’s good enough for Croftie, it’s good enough for me.

Me: Oh go on then.

Chris: Obviously it goes on for pages, so I’m just going to pick out the important bits. Point 3.5 says: “On 21 March 2007 Mr. de la Rosa wrote to Coughlan in the following terms: *Hi Mike, do you know the Red Car’s Weight Distribution? It would be important for us to know so that we could try it in the simulator. Thanks in advance, Pedro. p.s. I will be in the simulator tomorrow.*”

Me: That’s a very jolly Pedro.

Chris: Point 3.6: “In his evidence given to the World Motorsport Council, Mr. de la Rosa confirmed that Coughlan replied by text message with precise details of Ferrari’s weight distribution.” Point 3.7: “On 25 March 2007 Mr. de la Rosa sent an e-mail to Fernando Alonso which sets out Ferrari’s weight distribution to two decimal places on each of Ferrari’s two cars as set up for the Australian Grand Prix.”

Me: To two decimal places?

Chris: That’s some serious information they’ve got. Point 3.8: Mr. Alonso

Me: Senor Alonso.

Chris: Yea, it should be. I like Mr Alonso though, that’s Mr Alonso to you. He replied to this e-mail on 25 March 2007. His e-mail includes a section headed *Ferrari* in which he says: *its weight distribution surprises me; I don’t know either if it’s 100% reliable, but at least it draws attention.*” And lastly, Point 3.9: “Mr. de la Rosa replied on 25 March 2007 stating the following: *All the information from Ferrari is very reliable. It comes from Nigel Stepney, their former chief mechanic – I don’t know what post he holds now. He’s the same person who told us in Australia that Kimi was stopping in lap 18. He’s very friendly with Mike Coughlan, our Chief Designer, and he told him that.*”

Me: Blimey, O’Reilly.



Chris: Yes, it is quite damning evidence.

Me: Information was flowing consistently, then, between the two individuals Mike and Nigel, Prior to and during a race weekend.

Chris: According to Italian police investigating, on Ferrari's behalf, there were 288 text messages...

Me: 288 text messages?

Chris: And 35 telephone calls in a five month period.

Me: That's more text messages than I've sent in my life. What on earth could they possibly have to talk about?

Chris: In five months, that must have covered all kinds of tests and Grand Prix, and...

Me: Sore thumbs.

Chris: Yes, it would have involved sore thumbs. It kind of looks like they're pinning everything on de la Rosa. It's like, de la Rosa said this, he said that, he sent this, he talked about Ferrari there, so how long is it until he gets fired?

Me: Although the emails are specifically de la Rosa, Mike and Fernando, they can't do the things that they're discussing there by themselves. Things like the simulator would have involved lots and lots and lots of people, so you'd expect that more than just the three individuals were in on this.

Chris: But Ron Dennis is still claiming that no one knew anything. He said: "The entire engineering team in excess of 140 people provided statements to the FIA affirming they had never received or used the Ferrari information." I thought he was telling the truth, but he's been busted and he's still saying the same thing. I don't understand why he would continue to lie about it. Maybe I'm being naïve but once you're found out, stop lying.

Me: Oh, I can see his point that none of the information has been used on the car. No one has proved that fact.

Chris: But I think it's safe to say they had it. They received it.

Me: Didn't, later on in the document, the FIA went on to say that de la Rosa had a discussion about the gas. A special kind of gas that Ferrari use in their tyres. So is Ron suggesting that when Pedro found out about this gas, he popped off to the local Calor shop, picked up a canister, came back, filled his tyres, put his tyres on his car, drove around the track and tested it by himself.

Chris: I don't know about test drivers but I don't even know if there is such a thing as a Calor shop.

Me: Okay. The guy can't work on these things alone and he clearly had big plans.

Chris: Now that we know that the drivers were implicated in the whole thing, I mean, specifically Fernando Alonso and de la Rosa, it seems odd that they still get the immunity. I know they were promised it, but they were right in the midst of the trouble.

Me: The FIA were pretty shrewd actually, ahead of this hearing. I think they figured this out, and they figured that if they take the two leading drivers out of the championship, it's going to make a mockery out of this year and the



whole sport in general. And so they offered them immunity, and probably they didn't actually need to do that, and they just did it so they could protect and give themselves an argument for keeping the two guys in the race.

Chris: That's true because no one would watch just two Ferrari drivers. Boring.

Me: No absolutely not, it would be silly. And also, you've got to keep Hamilton in it, because he's the new media darling.

Chris: Oh god, imagine all those poor desolate fans.

Me: And there's a chance that he might win the championship on his rookie year, which is obviously of interest to a lot of people. And also you've got Alonso who is big in Spain, and you've got two Spanish Grand Prix coming up, pretty soon. So you don't want to go upsetting the Spanish fans either. You have to say, a bit ahead of the game, the FIA, and they covered themselves nicely on that one.

Chris: Alonso's not that special though, I am really liking him less and less.

Me: And why's that?

Chris: According to GrandPrix.com, who let's face it, they've been 100% correct so far.

Me: They have, on this whole case, I don't think they've put a foot wrong.

Chris: Unlike Autosport.

Me: Let it go.

Chris: They're suggesting that Alonso used his knowledge as a bargaining tool with Ron to extract himself from his contract, and Ron, obviously, he didn't want to be a pawn in Alonso's games, so he decided to shop himself to the FIA. Of course, Ron is actually saying it's all about being honest and open during the investigation. He said: "Once I became aware that new evidence might exist, which I did on the morning of the Hungarian Grand Prix, I immediately phoned the FIA to keep them informed." So he was the one that came up with the new evidence.

Me: Well, he was, but that date is interesting, the morning of the Hungarian Grand Prix.

Chris: 5th August.

Me: That's the day that follows the qualifying debacle between Alonso and Hamilton, so presumably Alonso was quite angry with Hamilton, decided he wanted out of the team, and came up to Ron and said "I've got this information the FIA might be interested in, and I want out of your team."

Chris: And Ron said: "Forget it, I'm gonna go and tell them myself."

[Sweeper]

Chris: Apparently, McLaren should be grateful for the penalties they got, because Bernie Ecclestone says they could have been kicked out. He said: "It came very close to McLaren being thrown out, it really was a genuine possibility. A few of us sort of battled on and campaigned for the fine instead. Formula One is now more open than it has ever been because the threat is definitely there now if any team is helping anyone else. Even if it is a smaller team than



McLaren, they're gone, without any hesitation. The alternative to the fine was worse, being excluded from the championship for two years. It was much closer than everybody says it was. It really would have been bad news."

Me: Two things. Firstly, when he says other teams, I'm presuming he's excluding both Toyota and Spyker from that, as both have been implicated in data sharing scandals of late. And secondly, he's right about the transparency, because the FIA do appear to be trying to be more open to the media with things that go on behind closed doors.

Chris: But we said before that it was really actually quite tiresome. You know when they were sending all those letters backwards and forwards and we were like: "When are they gonna stop?" and really, kind of thought maybe the matter would have been settled much more quickly and painlessly if they'd have just done it in private.

Me: I think maybe the FIA are getting the hint that most people don't trust what goes on behind these closed doors, and by being more open about it, there should be no argument.

Chris: Prior to the last hearing, Mike Coughlan put his side of the story across in an affidavit. We don't know what was in but this time round, they mention that there's a lot of stuff we've found out now that wasn't in that previous affidavit. So he might be in some trouble.

Me: Some trouble?

Chris: Quite a lot of trouble.

Me: I should think he's gonna be in massive amounts of trouble if that turns out to be true. They based the last hearing on the contents of that affidavit. If they've got a load more information of things he's been up to, as alleged by the Italian police, he's essentially lied.

Chris: So he probably didn't say: "By the way, Pedro was emailing me a bit. You might want to use that as evidence."

Me: And he might not have mentioned those 288 text messages. Might have slipped his mind.

[Sweeper]

Chris: Ron is being sort of optimistic about the fine, because he gets to offset revenue from the points earned to date, and that will basically halve the amount. I don't really understand that. How can they have the money if they don't have the points? You know, either be horrible to them, take their points and the championship away, or be nice to them, you know, don't bother. You can't have it both ways.

Me: That is unusual. I get the impression that what the FIA really, really wanted was a massive headline grabbing figure to appear on all the newspapers the next day.

Chris: Biggest fine ever, isn't it?

Me: \$100 million dollars, kind of like Dr Evil. I get that kind of vibe going.

[Audio Clip: Dr Evil: "\$100 billion"]

Me: I can visualise Max in his chair, a bit like Dr Evil, with Jean Todt as Minime.

Chris: Minime.



Me: Trying to threaten the world with impossible amounts of money that doesn't exist.

Chris: Ludicrous amounts of money.

Me: Do you get that kind of vibe?

Chris: Yea, and it's money he's never gonna get really.

Me: Exactly.

Chris: But I mean, apart from the money, is the constructors championship really that important? I've never known anyone go "Yea, yea, we're constructors championship winners." It's really all about the drivers.

Me: Sometimes it helps sell cars, and team members like it because their bonus schemes are usually based around the points you get in the constructors championship.

Chris: No Christmas bonus for them then.

Me: I don't think they can afford to pay any this year. Apart from that, to the general everyday fan, I would say no, it doesn't mean an awful lot. Drivers, constructors, it's all about drivers, personalities and who's going to win out of Alonso vs Hamilton vs Kimi, and that's the important bit.

Chris: So what about the Hungary appeal, have they given that up now? Presumably they have because they don't need the points.

Me: I hope they haven't, though, because the stewards need to be accountable for the decision they made. I don't believe they should have got involved and that should be appealed.

Chris: Just on principal, basically.

Me: Yea, it's gonna sound really silly though, if Ron goes up there. If he doesn't appeal this case, and he does appeal that case, it's gonna seem rather ridiculous and he may just decide in the end it's not worth it, which would be a massive shame because it does deserve to be heard.

Chris: Give me my points back that I can't have really. Oh dear. Never mind.

Me: It's the principal of the thing.

Chris: Of course he can appeal this verdict as well, but Ron wanted the actual FIA transcripts to review before making his decision. The FIA statement says: "McLaren is reminded of its right of appeal. In the event that an appeal is lodged with the FIA International Court of Appeal, the effect of this Decision will not be suspended pending the outcome of that appeal."

Me: So basically, you're not getting your points back, unless of course you win the appeal, but you're not getting your points back in the meantime, so don't even think about it.

Chris: I feel really, really sorry for Ron Dennis. I don't particularly like him, although I don't really dislike him either, but you know, his whole life is that team, and you can just tell that it means so much to him, and it just must be an awful time.



Me: Well, every day is a challenge.

Chris: He must be going through hell.

Me: He probably is, but in some ways he is slightly responsible because he put the management structure in place that has caused all these problems. It's not a traditional management structure at McLaren and possibly he's paying the price for all those books he's been reading about people management.

Chris: And I really hope that Ferrari will just shut the hell up now.

Me: Oh, it's far from over. This isn't the end at all yet. There's lots left to be cleaned up. You've got the civil cases going on, against Coughlan, you've got to hear from Stepney yet, it's not even the beginning of the end.

Chris: But they've got what they wanted. You know, they didn't want McLaren to win the championship because they didn't want an all McLaren car.

Me: Potentially now we're going to have a homologated Ferrari floor in the 2009 or 2010 championship. We haven't got that confirmed yet, it's still speculation, but as they now should be the 2007 constructor champions, they should have that right.

[Sweeper]

Chris: I've had enough of this legal mumbo jumbo now.

Me: I like it.

Chris: Yea, it's okay, but I like talking about the racing, and overtaking and all that kind of stuff.

Me: Oh, well that's good too, I suppose. And we've got Belgium coming up on Sunday?

Chris: Yep.

Me: Before we go, can I lighten the mood a bit?

Chris: Yes, please do. It's been quite a heavy show, let's have something upbeat.

Me: Okay, well, it's just I was listening to the Renault podcast, at the beginning of this week. And this week there was an interview Nelson Piquet Jr, and the show's anchored by the lovely Ms Holly Samos. She asked him an interesting question that I'd just pass on to all the listeners, because it's such a good question. And this isn't a criticism of Holly, just want to say that, because Brendan will come round and kneecap us, if we say anything bad about her. We love her to pieces, she's wonderful, but the question she put to Nelson, and I put this to everybody listening, is: Are you a happy person, or are you one of those that thinks a lot?

Chris: Right, because you can't be both?

Me: They are mutually exclusive. Happy people, those that think a lot.

Chris: Which are you?



Me: Well, I know that Holly is clearly one of the former, because she's not one of those.

Chris: One of those people that thinks a lot.

Me: So, I'm going to put myself in the think a lot group, on the right side of the bus, yourself?

Chris: Happy, obviously.

Me: I'd love to know anyone's opinions or responses on whether they are happy people or those that think a lot. Answers on a postcard please.

Chris: Or in the comments.

Me: Or in the comments, or even Skype us. Just tell us, happy? Think a lot?

[Out: *Rich Reich, Keeping Up With The Race*]

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