



Episode 36 – And Then There Were Three

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

Chris: Welcome to Sidepodcast, Episode 36 – And Then There Were Three. Coming up in a bit we've got the first ever Sidepodcast interview. But first up, we've got a quick roundup of the news stories that have happened this week. McLaren have decided to drop both their appeals.

Me: That is a shame. No retribution for the stewards in Hungary, and that means Ferrari are absolutely, 100% 2007 constructors champions.

Chris: You can see why, though, they probably just fed up with this year, want to put this year behind them.

Me: Get on with it, get on with 2008.

Chris: The FIA transcripts were released and they had lots of juicy information in them, perhaps a little bit too much.

Me: You reckon?

Chris: Because they gave the documents to the teams first so they could blank out any information they didn't want the general public to see, but then when they released the information to everybody, you could still find out the secret stuff.

Me: You could copy and paste, and then just see everything within it.

Chris: Not the smartest thing the FIA have ever done.

Me: They moved very quickly to retract the information and put up the correct documents.

Chris: Not quickly enough, though, we still found out how much Mike Coughlan earns.

Me: Oh yea. We did do a thorough analysis of each document. Even you read it, didn't you?

Chris: I read both of them, all the way through, I'm so impressed with myself.

Me: And if you look on the blog, we've done a really thorough analysis of all the interesting juicy bits within there. Probably not worth repeating them, though, because we'd just be reading our own blog out loud.

Chris: The 2008 calendar has changed slightly, Italy and Belgium have swapped places and Japan and China have swapped places. No one's really saying why but presumably it's just a date issue.

Me: Yea, or it could be transportation. It might be easier to get from one to the other that way. No big deal, no big change.

Chris: This week was an exciting week of testing, and I say exciting, I mean dull.



Me: No, it was an important week of testing, because it was the last testing of the 2007 season.

Chris: But nothing happened, it was pretty dull.

Me: No. Lots of teams tried out 2008 parts and consequently went very slow.

Chris: The only interesting bit was Honda turning up with a McLaren style nose.

Me: They're all at it now, aren't they?

Chris: Mm-hmm. All the teams were there, except Spyker and Super Aguri. On the first day, Timo Glock in the BMW, Liuzzi was second fastest, and Buemi in the Red Bull was third. The top teams were running 2008 things. On Day 2, de la Rosa was fastest, with Webber and Badoer in the Ferrari behind him. Interestingly, Liuzzi was driving for Toro Rosso for most of the day, Vettel turned up, did one lap... went home.

Me: Just getting his eye in for the next day.

Chris: Just one lap. And on the third day, de la Rosa again fastest, with Badoer and Webber behind him.

Me: And nothing else happened on that day of any interest whatsoever.

Chris: Nope.

Me: So you're right, it wasn't a very interesting race, was it?

Chris: Nope.

[Sweeper]

Chris: That's enough news. As promised, here comes our first ever Sidepodcast interview. Because it's our first, we're playing around with all the bits and pieces, trying to make it work. So, hope it sounds okay, and let us know what you think, and if you'd like to hear more. Today we're joined by a very special guest, he runs the always up-to-the-minute website F1 Fanatic, which is packed with plenty of news and views, Keith Collantine. Hi Keith.

Keith: Hi there, thanks for having me on the show.

Me: Keith, give us a bit of a background about yourself. How long have you been into F1?

Keith: Oh wow. I started watching Formula 1 when I was in shorts, I was about 8 years old, and watched Nigel Mansell in the Ferrari, back in those days, and I've never really stopped watching it. So since 1989/1990 really, and started F1 Fanatic two years ago, it became a blog at the start of last year and it's grown from there.

Me: What was it before it was a blog?

Keith: It was just an ordinary website, really, that just had Formula 1 pictures, some bits of news, wasn't really very up to date. Even I would say, I only updated it once a week, and then I had the idea of turning it into a blog, and it's grown from there.

Me: And apart from that, you also are involved in Autotrader.



Keith: Yea, well, I work for Autotrader, that's my day job. I write a weekly column on that called 'Trackside' which is about all kinds of motor racing, not just Formula 1, and I write for a magazine there as well.

Me: So we can consider you our official expert.

Chris: This might be a tough question, but why are you an F1 fan, what do you like about it?

Keith: When I first started watching the sport, obviously, what got me going was patriotism, as much as anything else. Because you watch Nigel Mansell and he was doing all these astonishing things, particularly in the Ferrari years. I got into it then, plus you had, back then, the Senna / Prost fight, which was an amazing thing – a rivalry not like you've seen in many other sports. And you know, great racing and all the rest of it. What keeps me watching now is pretty much the same. Anyone who's read the website will know I gripe about the quality of the racing in F1 quite a lot, but it still can be great on its day. We've seen, even races recently that have been spellbinding – the Japanese Grand Prix back in 2005 is a great example. And everything else about it is the icing on the cake. It's been hard to be an F1 fan over the past week or so, because the sports been beating itself up quite thoroughly, but you've still got 22 phenomenal drivers in the most incredible cars in the world that go at incredible speeds. And if you go and stand somewhere like Becketts at Silverstone, or Blanchemont at Spa, it's impossible not to be a Formula 1 fan. I've just come back from my first ever visit to the Italian Grand Prix at Monza, and people say it's an almost spiritual experience, and it's an incredible place to watch F1 racing. I felt like much more of an F1 fan after coming back from that.

Me: That's good to hear. Going back to what you were just saying about experiencing Senna vs. Prost. How does that compare, because that was almost before my time, so I don't have a huge amount of experience of what was going on then. How does that compare to Alonso vs Hamilton?

Keith: Well, first of all, you have to understand that when Senna and Prost were racing each other, I was 8 years old. So, really, I only followed what was going on on the circuit. But when you see one driver ramming into the other at 160 miles per hour and taking him off the track, you don't need to pick up the subtleties so much that things aren't going too well, there. And really, what I've learnt of it since then, I've learnt from the magazines, and Joe Ramirez's book which is very enlightening about the Prost thing. It's a bit hard for me to say how it compares to Alonso/Hamilton, but in many ways, you can see the similarities. There's Alonso in the Prost role, already a two times champion, not underestimating what his new young team mate was capable of but being taken aback when Hamilton gave him the hard time that he has. What's been interesting is Alonso's reaction, perhaps like Prost's, has been to take the political route. In Alonso's case, trying to force Ron Dennis, apparently, into giving him number one status at McLaren, which is perhaps a rather naive thing for Alonso to try and do. Whereas the Prost and Senna battle ended up with a confrontation on the track and the two hitting each other on several occasions, you have to wonder if that's going to be the next thing to happen in the Alonso battle. And if that does happen, here's the interesting extra dimension, if that does happen, it will probably let one of the Ferrari drivers through to be World Champion.

Me: If that does happen, do you see the FIA stepping in?

Keith: You know, ordinarily I would say no, but I think in the height of the past few weeks, you wouldn't rule out the FIA stepping in on anything, you know, someone sneezes out of place and the FIA are gonna step in. Having said that, if I could just actually qualify that remark, and add something else to it. One thing that I had on F1 Fanatic recently, was some interesting remarks that Max Mosley made in James Allen's new book, where he was saying that under modern rules, if Michael Schumacher or someone were to have done something similar to what Schumacher did to Hill in 1994, the FIA might step in and strip them of the championship. So perhaps they would step in, and if, in some



hypothetical scenario, one of the drivers took off the other and won the championship, perhaps the FIA would get their hands dirty and take the drivers championship off them and hand it to someone else. One might argue that they've done something very similar with the constructors championship this year.

Me: That's true, they do have more evidence. The FIA has more to draw upon these days with the electronics in cars, so they would have an easier job of proving it than maybe they did with Michael.

Keith: Absolutely.

Chris: So, apart from the espionage thing, how do you think these season compares with previous ones?

Keith: Let's look at the good things first of all, we have had a stunning battle for the drivers championship. There have not been many seasons where this late in the day, four drivers mathematically able and capable of winning the championship. Realistically now we're down to three. Felipe Massa is gonna need a fair slice of luck to win the drivers title, but still, we've got three excellent drivers in very, very good cars, still fighting for the drivers championship. That's the good thing. Obviously on the negative side of it, we've already discussed the espionage scandal at length, and I'm sure we've got more stuff to say on that later. Aside from that, you have to say the quality of racing this year has been generally dismal. We had lots of fun at the Nurburgring when it rained, F1 races are always good when it rains on them, and apart from that, the Canadian Grand Prix was fairly exciting, but marred by all the fear over what happened to Kubica. And apart from that, you have to look and say, F1 really needed a great race at Belgium, after last year, at a fantastic venue, and it didn't get it. It was really quite turgid.

Me: You've heard of the Overtaking Working Group. Do you think it's gonna solve any of these problems, or do you think it's just another distraction?

Keith: Well, I'm hopeful. Certainly reading what's been reported in the press about it, particularly in Autosport. What they're saying has been received fairly well, people like Pat Symonds, for example, spoke very highly of what they'd come out with. Exactly what they're going to suggest, they seem to have suggested various things including limiting or perhaps creating a spec underbody for the cars, in order to generate a certain amount of ground effects downforce, and then limiting what the teams can put on the surfaces of the cars to create further downforce, and you'll get less of the buffeting in the corners. That sounds promising. They've also spoken about taking off the little winglets, all these little appendages that have been growing on the cars, mainly over the past five years, on the bargeboard areas and rear wings. They're talking about banning those completely. That would, I suspect, although I'm not an expert, would reduce the aerodynamic sensitivity of the cars. What we have heard of, and I'm not sure, forgive me if I'm misleading you here, this has come out of the Overtaking Working Group or not. But the FIA have talked about things like having wings that extend under certain circumstances, particularly gives one driver more grip. I have to be sceptical about that sort of thing because it sounds very difficult to create in the first place, and secondly and more importantly, it sounds completely unnecessary. What always gets me with the overtaking argument is the FIA have the perfect case study in how to make single-seater cars race each other properly, and it races at pretty much every Grand Prix weekend – it's called GP2. And they have big slick tyres, which in the longer length race they have to change once and invariably there are drivers trying to nurse a badly damaged set of tyres at the end of the race. They have very, very small and tightly controlled wings that they can't add much downforce to at all, and it is always a recipe for great racing. Trying to mimic that in Formula 1, bring in slick tyres, which surely they can do now that we're down to a spec tyre, and reducing the wing size, seems to me the really obvious way to go. That, rather than these slightly pie-in-the-sky solutions, of wings that magically change shape at certain speeds, would surely be the better way to go.

Me: The issue they have with bringing in those wings is monitoring how and when they're used. As I understand the proposal, I think you're right in that it has come from the Overtaking Working Group, there's gonna be an FIA spec



Pitot tube on the front of the car that will monitor when it's behind a car, and then adjust the wings. Now, you know the problem they have in validating and keeping up with things like traction control, is it not just adding another thing that they're not going to be able to monitor correctly and prove?

Keith: It certainly seems that way. I can't imagine how they're going to do that. If they don't know when teams are using flexible floors that move in ways the FIA aren't aware about, which is something else that's come out of the espionage thing, I can't for one second imagine how they're going to manage that. I think they're biting off more than they can chew with it. They're just creating more difficult regulations to enforce, that are gonna have a questionable impact on the quality of the racing, and yea, could just lead to more sticky situations like we've been mired in for the past month.

Me: One thing that's apparent in GP2 is the single spec chassis, so if you're saying that GP2 offers better racing, are you therefore implying that Formula 1 should adopt a single chassis?

Keith: That's a very good question. You're quite right, very often the argument about how do you improve racing in Formula 1 ends up being an argument that Formula 1 wouldn't be Formula 1 if it were a spec series, and there's always a balance to be struck. I think perhaps what the Overtaking Working Group have suggested in terms of making the underbodies of the cars all the same, ie. the bit you can't see unless something's gone terribly wrong. Making that bit the same to improve the racing, and yet let the teams have more degree of control over the upper surfaces is perhaps a good compromise.

Me: How do you think the four race gearbox rule is gonna affect things next year?

Keith: I think Red Bull are screwed.

Chris: Definitely.

Keith: Actually, that's pretty much the sum total of my thoughts on it. All the other teams, perhaps Honda excepted as well, all seem to have had no problems with their gearboxes these days, and I would expect that they're able to make them last four races. Others, principally Red Bull have had big problems and I'd be very concerned. The big thing they've got to address next year is reliability and this is yet one more challenge for them. And then again, on top of that, I have to add, it's always disappointing to see situations where drivers are being disadvantaged on grid positions, and their car lets them down. And if we're gonna have a case where a driver turns up at the Australian Grand Prix and his gearbox fails and he's then dropping a certain number of grid places for the next three races, that's pretty poor.

Me: Bringing us back to this season, earlier this week the FIA's transcripts were released. What's your feelings about the newfound transparency from the FIA?

Keith: Oh, well, you have to welcome the FIA releasing it's documents and even if, as some people have said, it doesn't show them in the best light, it did appear to be a very hurried hearing, but I think it's great. Sunlight is the best disinfectant and I think F1 could use a dose more of it. We were talking earlier on about things like the Prost/Senna years and one thing you certainly didn't have in those days was this kind of transparency from the FIA. So I think it's definitely a good thing and it's a step forward for the sport, and yea, it's great to see everyone particularly on the blogs, getting in there and scrutinizing the documents very deeply. One thing I will say is that, talking at this time, and obviously this is Saturday, when we're doing this interview now, and I think the podcast goes up a little bit later, but at this stage, there hasn't been an enormous amount of analysis of the hearing transcripts within the wider media. Certainly the story about the FIA accidentally releasing an improperly censored copy of the



documents that had a lot of the secret information in it, doesn't appear to have been picked up by any of the major news sites at all, which really surprises me.

Me: That is an interesting point. I did see it on one non-Formula 1 site, and that source linked to your site.

Keith: Right. Which site was that?

Me: A site called The Register. It's an IT website and they were talking about the leaking of documents on the internet, as an IT angle, information security and that kind of thing, and they didn't link to any official news source at all because there isn't one. Your site was the only site running it.

Keith: Yea. I'm still waiting for the FIA goons to beat me up.

Me: But you're not doing anything wrong.

Keith: As far as I'm aware.

Chris: The FIA have made a good start with the transcripts, but they sort of lose context. Sometimes they refer to something that's going on in the room. Do you think they should do more, like video the hearing and then release that to the public as well?

Keith: I think there is scope for expanding what they've done with the hearing documents and as you say, giving more detail about what's going on in the room would be a step forward. Perhaps they could do something in terms of letting people see some of the documents that were circulated. Lots of references are made to particular pieces of evidence, which obviously those of us who've obtained the hearing documents can't see. So at least giving an index of what they were, or giving some indication of what they are would be helpful. In terms of videoing it, they could do, but really, realistically, I don't think there's going to be an enormous amount of demand to watch a 9 hour hearing of the FIA. I really don't want to stare at Max Mosley and Ron Dennis' faces for that long. What I would say, all the scripts are out there now, surely it's only a matter of time before someone acts it out and puts it on YouTube.

Chris: Is there anything else you noticed from the transcripts?

Keith: Like you've said, and like you've made a point about on the blog, one thing that strikes you is that there's a constant need to hurry things along, they were constantly saying we need to get ready because people have got to get flights and things like that. That was surprising, given the severity of what was going on, and the enormity of the punishment that was later handed out. I've sat in plenty of meetings wishing to hurry people along, but I've never sat in a meeting quite as important as that one, and I was surprised to see that. I don't think that necessarily shows the sport's governing processes in the best possible light. Perhaps they should have taken more time.

Chris: Was it a wise decision to hold the hearing the day before a race weekend?

Keith: On the surface of it, you'd say not, but you have to take into account there were a lot of people who have very, very major demands on their time. Taking Max Mosley as an example, managing Formula 1 is just one of the many, many jobs he has to do. So getting the people together for any length of time is difficult. But perhaps there's lessons here for the FIA to learn in terms of how they execute these things, and whether they needed so many people in the room, and whether there's more efficient ways of handling this kind of hearing.

Me: There seemed to be a rumour that Hamilton's performance on Friday, and further on Saturday and Sunday was affected by the fact that he had to fly from Paris to Belgium.



Keith: Yea, well, of course that was his choice. Fernando Alonso didn't do that.

Me: Yes, true.

Chris: He only said five words.

Me: He did only say five words. Do you think it was necessary for him to be there? Did he add anything to the hearing?

Keith: Lewis Hamilton? I don't think, from the point of view of McLaren's case, I don't think it was necessary at all, but from the point of view of Lewis Hamilton's career, I think it's a very astute move.

Me: The next question should be whether or not F1 has been hindered by this. I heard it's gone down quite well in America, and it's raised the profile and awareness of F1 over there as a result of this.

Keith: It's a very tricky thing to judge so soon after it's happened. I'm very interested in your remarks that it's apparently gone down well or has created publicity in America. In America, I think they love their sporting scandals. You look at NASCAR and they seem to forever banning pit crews for this and that, little transgressions, stuff that you may or may not call cheating going on. And then you look at other sports, say baseball for example, you had the Barry Bonds drugs controversy and so on, so perhaps it does take a little bit of controversy to build a sport up in America. Of course, F1's dropped it's American Grand Prix and it's American driver, so it's a limited amount of usefulness to it now, until it gets it's American Grand Prix back.

Chris: But they have got more coverage in the media, the BBC news are always talking about Formula 1 now, where they didn't before, which is a good thing. But then I think a lot of fans are turned off by it, so it's like 50/50 really.

Keith: Absolutely. I mean, everyone always makes the quote, there's no such thing as bad publicity, or all publicity is good publicity. The thing they seem to forget is it was Adolf Hitler that coined that phrase.

Chris: Yes.

Me: Okay, moving on from that question then, do you see Fernando Alonso moving on from McLaren, and if so, which team do you think that might be?

Keith: On the face of it, you'd have to say Fernando's position at McLaren must be untenable. I mean, the enormously difficult thing that Ron Dennis and McLaren have to deal with over the final three races along with everything else, is making sure that no one thinks that Fernando Alonso has been disadvantaged in any way. A lot of people expect that's going to happen, given Alonso's rows that are now public, to be made number one which weren't met. The fact that he threatened to go to the FIA with the emails that ultimately landed McLaren in trouble. On the surface of that, you'd have to say, Alonso has surely lost some popularity within McLaren. Dennis would surely want to rid himself of the headache and get rid of Alonso in whichever direction possible. So where could Alonso go? Plenty of people have suggested that he would end up at Renault, that would certainly be logical, but they've not had a very competitive car this year and it remains to be seen what Flavio Briatore could do to persuade Alonso that he could win the championship in a 2008 Renault. There's obviously teams like Toyota and so on but I don't think he'd give them a second look, or even a first look, because they're nowhere. A lot of people have said that Luza Montezemolo's dream line-up is Raikkonen and Alonso. That's certainly possibly but given Alonso's apparent new-found appetite for being the number one in a team, he might not want to go to Ferrari and deal with Raikkonen. So I think perhaps, the other alternative is that he would take a sabbatical or quit the sport. He did say



last year at one point that he wasn't interested in winning more than about three world championship's. If he was world champion this year, maybe he'd quit.

Me: That's an interesting idea, and I have heard a number of people say that. The only question I would raise to that statement is Bernie has planned two Spanish Grand Prix next year. Can you see Bernie letting Alonso leave? Will he be allowed to take a sabbatical?

Keith: What could Ecclestone threaten him with? I guess is the response to that question. If Alonso's gonna take his ball away and not play anymore, you can't stick him in a car and make him. I daresay it's not the sort of thing where money's going to be a motivating factor, he's already earned plenty of it and it's not been an issue in the past. If he's genuinely not interested in doing this long term, I don't see what Ecclestone could do about it in these circumstances. In all honesty, what do I expect him to do? It's a really difficult question. I would expect him, if an opportunity came up to have a championship winning car that's not a McLaren, I would expect Fernando Alonso to take it. But if there's no entry into Ferrari and the Renault for next year doesn't look good, then you never know, we may end up seeing him stay at McLaren. After all, Prost did stay at McLaren in 1989, and many people expected him to leave.

Me: That's an interesting insight, that's a very good point. Also, McLaren have the single ECU, they are the ECU supplier for 2008, so they should have a pretty big advantage over the opposition.

Keith: Yea, that's a whole other kettle of fish, that, isn't it? Last year, when that decision was made, it seemed a little bit odd that it was a McLaren-related company, but they are a company that have an enormous amount of experience when it comes to engine control units and other things in motorsports, and I don't think people thought much of it. But now this year, with the espionage stuff coming out, people are looking at the decision in a very different light and less favourably.

Me: So we don't take up anymore of Keith's time then, let's just throw one more question at him.

Chris: Who do you think's gonna win, Alonso or Hamilton?

Me: Or Raikkonen!

Chris: No, he's not gonna win.

Keith: Looking at the last three races, obviously we've got Fuji next, and that's a bit of an unknown quantity, but I expect McLaren to go fairly well there because it's got a great big long straight and a lot of slow corners. I think that will suit McLaren's short wheelbase chassis rather than Ferrari's longer wheelbase chassis, based on what we've seen so far this year, that seems to be the way it's gone. One of the McLaren drivers will win that race, and even if Ferrari are gonna win the last two races on circuits that suit them better, that's gonna carry one of the McLaren drivers across the line and make him champion. Which one's it gonna be? I think it's gonna be Fernando Alonso, because he's been here before. He's won two championships under phenomenal high pressure circumstances, particularly last year's with Michael Schumacher. He's got the experience of doing it, he's only two points behind Hamilton. I think if Hamilton beats Alonso to it, then we're gonna find ourselves talking about Hamilton in terms of him being one of the sports greats far sooner than we expected to. Where would I put my money, right now? Fernando Alonso. Incidentally, I hate it when people get asked questions like that, and don't give an answer. Who do you two think is gonna win?

Chris: I think Alonso, because the pressure's been getting more and more, and Alonso's been getting better and better whilst Hamilton's been dropping off a bit.



Keith: Absolutely.

Me: I think I'm gonna say the same thing unless, if something does happen to Alonso's car, there's gonna be pressure from the FIA, and presumably from Ron, to make sure that a similar accident would probably have to happen to Hamilton's in order to make it fair, and that might just let Raikkonen in.

Chris: It's not gonna happen.

Me: It's not gonna happen, but I can't see... if by some fluke Alonso's engine blew up at the next race...

Keith: You have to say neither of the McLaren's have failed all year, and that either leads you to believe that they're not going to fail for the rest of the year, or the law of averages states that just like Michael Schumacher last year, one of their engines is gonna go pop at an inconvenient moment, or something like that. And sods law says that's gonna be Alonso's engines.

Chris: Hamilton is as lucky as Schumacher.

Keith: He does have the champions luck, hasn't he? Yea, he finds his way out of gravel traps.

Me: If that does happen to Alonso, then what do McLaren do? If it genuinely is an accident but it doesn't look like an accident, especially to the Spanish fans, what's their move?

Keith: It's down to preparation. They've got to make sure that a) the engine doesn't blow in the first place and b) that if it does, they've got stacks and stacks of proof that proves it wasn't someone pressing the engine destruct button.

Me: That sounds like a good place to leave it. Thank you Keith.

Keith: Thanks very much. It's been a pleasure being on here and I'll hope you'll have me back again soon.

Me: Absolutely.

[Sweeper]

[Jingle: Ted News]

Chris: Not more Ted News, this isn't going to become a regular feature, is it?

Me: Oh, I do hope it does.

Chris: After the Belgian Grand Prix, Ted wrote in his notebook on ITV-F1's website: "You may have heard the Super Aguri / Honda rumour that was going round at Spa. It was to the effect that Honda Racing were so scared that Super Aguri would beat them, that they prevented their sister team from bringing to the race aerodynamic parts that had been tested successfully at Spa two months ago. A quick conversation I had with Aguri team boss Daniele Audetto keeps coming back to me. Significantly Daniele ended our chat with the admission that his team are not in control of all the parts they run on their car."



Me: Ooh, now earlier in the year, I think we talked about the fact that Honda may require Super Aguri to turn their engine down, in order to be less competitive, or at least not get the latest updates. Presumably, you could prove that, with some of the audio sampling tools the teams have. And I guess they decided not to go down that route, and they thought they'd restrict them some other way.

Chris: That leads me to talk about a column I was reading in F1 Racing this week.

Me: You've done a lot of reading this week.

Chris: I know. It only landed on the doormat this morning, and I've read it all the way through already, how cool is that? Anyway, Peter Windsor's column, it starts like this: "The 'T' word was used for the first time in the F1 Team Principals meeting in Turkey. T as in team, as in F1 team championship, not F1 constructors championship, team championship. Can you believe that?" He goes on to say that whilst Super Aguri and Toro Rosso are purchasing their cars, at least they do have people working on them, whilst next year Prodrive are really not. I thought it was an interesting point that Prodrive are purely planning to buy the car and run it and not bother with the building of it at all.

Me: They're going to leave it to the parent team to keep it up to date, are they?

Chris: Yea. The column ends with: "If that is good for F1, then I'm a rabid soccer fan. Better by far for Richards to use his excellent facilities, huge resources, and talented personnel to do what people should *want* to do in the first place and that is build it's own cars."

Me: Yes, except it's prohibitively expensive to do that, and possibly he doesn't have the budget with would allow him to follow that route.

Chris: It says he has huge resources.

Me: He has a great team, and a very large factory. I guess it depends on what sponsors he's lined up and how much budget he's been allocated to run with this year.

Chris: That is our Talking Point for this week. What do you think about customer cars? Should they be allowed constructors points, or should it be called a team championship?

Me: It's an interesting idea, that, but where's the incentive for anyone to build their cars in the future?

Chris: Last week's talking point, we asked about the Alonso / Hamilton incident at the first corner of Spa, and we had some interesting responses on the blog. Don Speekingleesh said: "While Alonso was a bit robust, it's a bit bloody cheeky of Hamilton to be complaining about it as it's the sort of behaviour he's been at most of the season." Which is a fair point. FT said: "I don't agree. While I reckon Lewis has been having Schumi-esque attack angles at his starts, he really hasn't pushed any other driver aggressively into the grass, and when another driver has answered he hasn't complained about it."

Me: That can't be all FT said. It normally goes on for pages.

Chris: Yes. It was quite a short response this time. And Rich said: "Both Alonso and Hamilton are drivers not adverse to pushing and shoving. For some people these manoeuvres are either brilliant driving or blatant intimidation depending which driver you support. Both drivers are fighting for the championship and while Alonso's move looked



rather more blatant, if the roles were reserved would Hamilton have done the same - I am afraid the answer would be YES.”

Me: That is a very, very fair point. It may just be the camera angles have caught it, but thus far, I think Lewis has been slightly more subtle about how he goes about pushing people off the track, whereas Alonso wasn't subtle at all. And clearly the viewers at home picked up on that. It's sure gonna be an interesting last few races.

Chris: Leave a comment on the blog at Sidepodcast.com, join the discussion at Forumula1.net, or phone us on 0121 28 TRACK.

[Sweeper]

Chris: Next week is the Japanese Grand Prix, 30th September, at Fuji. The track is 2.85 miles long which will be 67 laps, and the previous three winners, oh... hang on a minute. There were only two previous winners, in 1977 it was James Hunt and in 1976 it was Mario Andretti.

Me: Well, I know nothing about this track, as it was way before my time. Although I can say when I first started playing arcade games, there used to be a sit-in simulator, and that track was Fuji. That was a lot of fun.

Chris: The pictures look pretty, that's all I can tell you.

Me: There's a mountain in the background. Mount Fuji.

Chris: Very picturesque.

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