



## Episode 4 – New Car Launches

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

**Chris:** Welcome to Sidepodcast, Episode 4. Today we're talking about the new car launches that have taken place over the last couple of weeks. Designers can alter their cars pretty much however they want, but they have to stick within some technical rules. The rules this year are much the same as last year but there have been some slight changes.

**Me:** There have. There is a new crash structure required for the front, the rear and also for the sides of each car. The FIA have mandated certain G force requirements that the car must be able to meet. And there's a fixed volume across the rear section of the car. And finally, the engine has 9,000 RPM revving limit.

**Chris:** Are these changes for safety?

**Me:** Certainly the crash structures and the G forces are, it makes for much safer Formula 1 cars, especially if cars are spinning. If a car was to spin, and hit another car side on, it now should be much safer this year.

**Chris:** Or drive over each other, as they quite often do.

**Me:** You know when Raikkonen, it wasn't last year, was it, it was the year before, when Raikkonen's tyre blew up and he almost spun into Button, if they'd have hit, there could have been an almighty problem. This year the changes should address that. It's a long time coming, considering that's almost 18 months ago, that nearly happened. But I believe they're in response to that.

**Chris:** They're changing for an accident that nearly happened?

**Me:** It could have been quite bad. I believe, I don't know if that's the only reason, but that's one very graphic incident. The engine change isn't really for safety, except possibly to limit speed. It's for a cost-cutting exercise.

**Chris:** The first car to be launched was Toyota. Imagine that, Toyota coming first in something.

**Me:** Yay, they won something. They weren't first to hit the track though, were they? Bless them. First to launch though.

**Chris:** Any major changes?

**Me:** The car, yea, this car has some pretty major changes from previous years.

**Chris:** It looks the same.

**Me:** It's still red and white. Toyota were honest with themselves, they were suffering last year.

**Chris:** Not good.

**Me:** They didn't keep up with the changes last year, and their car had a lot to make up.



**Chris:** That's because that guy left.

**Me:** Yea, they got rid of Mr Gascoyne mid season, handed over to Pascal Vasselon.

**Chris:** That's easy for you to say.

**Me:** He's now in charge of the main chassis, he did quite a bit of catching up at the end of last year, and I think they were quite quick. The last two races of last season, they were quite quick, weren't they? They kept breaking down, but they were within the top five each time. So, what they've done, they've basically kept the same overall length of the car, but they've lengthened the gearbox, which in turn has moved the cockpit forward, left them lots of room at the back. But the front is very, very squashed up, so the front bulkheads...

**Chris:** Is the driver squashed?

**Me:** He certainly has less legroom than he did previously. And the bulkheads are squashed up over him, and he's perched up in the air a bit more than he used to be.

**Chris:** Knees round his ears, that kind of thing.

**Me:** It seems very fragile what they've done. They've compressed the whole thing together, to give them loads of room at the back.

**Chris:** Why do they need room at the back?

**Me:** I think that's down to the new Bridgestone tyres, the rears seem to be burning up quite quickly in testing. So they're trying to move as much weight forward. They're trying to bring the engine forward to give them better weight distribution. It looks, to be honest with you, completely fragile, it looks like it's gonna break. It's an interesting thing at Toyota because obviously, Pascal came from Michelin, he was competition director for Michelin tyres, so he knows tyres almost better than anybody else in the pitlane.

**Chris:** But not Bridgestone tyres.

**Me:** No, but he did have Bridgestone tyres last year. With any luck, the direction that Toyota are going should be something to look out for. Hopefully they've caught up a lot for last year, and should be making steps forward. You know, they're now selling engines to Williams. In return, I believe Williams are getting the seamless shift gearbox they developed last year.

**Chris:** Which is what?

**Me:** Even though Formula 1 cars have paddle shift gears, you've still got the whole depress the clutch, pull the gear in, release the clutch again, and seamless shift should reduce that to almost a nano-seconds. It disengages the engine, changes the gear, re-engages the gear very quickly. And all teams, a couple of teams did it last year, I think McLaren and Honda were running seamless shift last year, and Williams obviously.

**Chris:** It's spreading.

**Me:** I think you'll find pretty much every team has it this year. Toyota appear to be quite far behind on their development, they appear to be licensing something from Williams.



**Chris:** It seems like a fair swap, an engine for a gearbox.

**Me:** It does, it makes Williams more of a second Toyota team though, rather than an independent team.

**Chris:** That's true.

**Me:** Which is interesting. That's Toyota. Basically, in short, it's squashed and fragile.

**Chris:** Delicate.

**Me:** Delicate. That's a good word.

**Chris:** So who was next?

**Me:** Ferrari were next out of the gate with their new car. And what a car. If you look at the photographs they released.

**Chris:** They were very set up kind of pictures, weren't they?

**Me:** They almost looked like some kind of graphic drawing rather than an actual photograph. It's a longer car, they've extended it by 85mm in total length. So it's a longer car, it's actually the longest car in the pitlane now. None of the other teams are going that way, in terms of extending the wheelbase, and no one's really sure why Ferrari have done that. Supposedly it gives them more flexibility in the aerodynamics at the back of the car to cope with the new FIA rear crash structure requirements that we mentioned earlier. So it should give them more flexibility. What's confusing about it is whilst everyone else is trying to get weight away from the rear tyres to the front of the car in order to better use the Bridgestones which are burning up at the back, Ferrari's car doesn't do that. It puts more weight at the back of the car because it's a longer car.

**Chris:** So do they know something that we don't?

**Me:** It's a conspiracy theory, obviously Ferrari have intimate knowledge of Bridgestone's operations and they're very close companies, and it's possible that maybe Ferrari know something that nobody else knows. The tyre structure or construction hasn't been finalised completely by Bridgestone. It's still in testing, they're still looking into it.

**Chris:** Ferrari could have forward information.

**Me:** Let's say they released a much harder tyre than they have done previously in testing, bearing in mind every team has based their new car around the testing they've done over winter. If they were suddenly to come out with a stronger rear tyre, Ferrari would be in the box seats with their new car that nobody else could hope to compete with. Anyway, they've got a longer car which is bizarre, but they've got a seamless shift gearbox. The car that debuted, it didn't have the final spec 2007 front and rear wings, it was still running 2006.

**Chris:** So they're keeping secrets or they haven't finished?

**Me:** Who knows? 50/50 on that one. I can't imagine they've got too much to hide on a rear wing, but possibly. So next up McLaren.

**Chris:** Ooh, ooh, I know lots about McLaren.



**Me:** Okay.

**Chris:** They've got their new sponsor so they've changed their overalls, it's Vodafone. And Alonso cut his hair.

**Me:** And?

**Chris:** That's the changes. I noticed. When I was looking at the pictures for the launch, that's what struck out for me.

**Me:** Okay. You didn't notice the tightly packaged bodywork?

**Chris:** No.

**Me:** The fact that things are poking out of it all over the place because the thing's so tightly packed around the engine covers?

**Chris:** No.

**Me:** You didn't notice that. You didn't think when you saw it, that's gonna melt when it gets hot?

**Chris:** No.

**Me:** Did you notice the new front wing they're running that has the little vein to hold the front section together? Did you notice the rear wing is the same as Renault's last year?

**Chris:** Are you trying to make me look stupid?

**Me:** I'll stop now. I'm sorry. You know it's gonna catch fire, right? You know it's gonna happen the same as last year.

**Chris:** It's still silver.

**Me:** And they had a massive crash in testing this week. No one's said exactly what happened there but it's not looking so good on their reliability front.

**Chris:** I'll tell you why I didn't notice anything about the car though, that would be because the launch was more about the team as a whole and the youth that they're trying to aim at, and the flashing of the lights and the driving up and down in the streets and everything. You know, it wasn't about the car.

**Me:** It was a good launch, as launches went. Certainly better than Ferrari's which was dull.

**Chris:** Boring.

**Me:** Dull.....

**Chris:** Actually, our good friend Ollie from BlogF1.co.uk, he's been on the forum.

**Me:** Ah, the forum.



**Chris:** Yes, it's the best forum I've ever been on. Make sure you go there, Sidepodcast.com/forum [retired link]. He's been talking about the Ferrari and McLaren launch. He says: "In my opinion Ferrari kept it all very controlled. They banned photographers and issued their own photos. They allowed very minimal press interaction with the team and drivers. In fact, it was all very sanitised and came across quite poorly in my eyes. But I think they've built an incredibly sexy motor. McLaren on the other hand were very in your face, they had the audacity to close off part of Valencia, so Alonso could charge down the streets in the Macca-Merca. Car-wise, I think it looks okay, although visually it isn't too different from the 2006, apart from the poorly placed Vodafone logos. Normally the Italians are very "How you doing?" and McLaren are: "Get off me land before I shoot you." Funny how things change. Anyway, just wondering what others thought of the two big launches and how the cars look in other people's eyes?"

**Me:** How do they look? How do you think they look?

**Chris:** Well, I think it's an interesting point because I was quite put off by the McLaren launch, actually, the way it was all about, you know, how young and youthful the team is, and actually not much about Formula 1 at all. But in the same light, it's probably good for the sport in Spain because you know, they've got Alonso and they want to promote it.

**Me:** Ron can definitely be accused of being dull.

**Chris:** He's not the most exciting man to listen to. Or to look at.

**Me:** He's not the easiest man to understand either. He certainly has a unique style of interview technique. So possibly they're a little bit inaccessible, and they're trying to do something about that. I think possibly they're trying to do too much too soon. They've reinvented the company in one day which...

**Chris:** It was like, suddenly overnight: "Woohoo, we're so great."

**Me:** It was a bit of a shock.

**Chris:** Fireworks and everything. What happened there?

**Me:** As long as he keeps it up, as long as that's the start of something.

**Chris:** Not just a one day event.

**Me:** Not like I've had an idea, let's do this, and that's it for the whole year. I think that's a very good thing.

**Chris:** If you've got something to add to the conversation, make sure you go and check out the forum: Sidepodcast.com/forum [retired link]

**Me:** I'm sorry I didn't get that URL, can you say that one more time?

**Chris:** I'm not going to say it again. How many times can I get away with saying it?

**Me:** Just one more time, go on.

**Chris:** Sidepodcast.com/forum [retired link]

**Me:** I'm there. Anyhow, back to the launches, who's next? BMW.



**Chris:** Right, BMW, okay, don't tell me. Seamless shift gearbox, a new front wing, a rear wing, which will fit in with the FIA regulations, and suspension changes to accommodate the Bridgestone tyres. Am I right?

**Me:** Am I boring you?

**Chris:** No, it just seems that they're all the same.

**Me:** That's pretty much BMW. It looks the same. You've pretty much covered it, I've got nothing else on my notes.

**Chris:** So after BMW, is your favourite, that would be Renault.

**Me:** I don't know if they're my favourite anymore.

**Chris:** What?

**Me:** I don't know if I like the colours.

**Chris:** Yea, the colours are a bit gross. Who puts orange and blue together?

**Me:** Orange, blue and yellow and white. That's a great combination. I don't recall any company logo or any kind of brand ever having that many colours in it.

**Chris:** I think the blue is a bit unnecessary, they just need more of the orange. One of the colours needs to be more dominant, I think.

**Me:** Renault is obviously yellow, and ING is orange.

**Chris:** Yellow and orange would be alright.

**Me:** It would be great. Where's the blue then? Don't get me wrong, it's a lovely blue, it's a really nice shade of blue.

**Chris:** It's better than last year.

**Me:** It's lovely, dark, almost Williams shade of blue. But not with the orange and the yellow, I don't know.

**Chris:** It's unnecessary.

**Me:** I'm not going to switch allegiance just because of the colour of the car, but, it's an odd one.

**Chris:** You're tempted.

**Me:** Anyway, the new car. They've got a new front wing.

**Chris:** New back wing, new gearbox.

**Me:** No, they have a really, quite an innovative front wing. It's really cool. It's got full length cascades, so basically, you know the little things that used to come off the sides over the top. I don't know if you remember from last year, they were short two years ago, and they got a bit longer last year. It's hard to explain.



**Chris:** And now they're even longer.

**Me:** They go all the way across now, and they look really nice on the front wing.

**Chris:** Don't they have wobbly mirrors?

**Me:** Yea, they've done some really innovative work on the wing mirrors. They've now integrated them into the sidepods, I guess. When the driver looks to his left and right, instead of coming out of the main...

**Chris:** They curve in.

**Me:** They come in from the sides, yea.

**Chris:** It is cool, but I think it will be too wobbly when they get going.

**Me:** It should have an advantage though in that they're so wide of the car, that all the little aero flipups that usually get in the way of the drivers vision, it should be clear of those. So it might bounce around a bit but what they should be able to see will be clean.

**Chris:** Should be able to see more.

**Me:** Possibly, it might be a more direct view. I did notice during testing they were running the dustbin lids on the back wheels. You know like Ferrari had last year?

**Chris:** Dustbin lids.

**Me:** Yea, you know, it was a bit controversial, something to do with moveable aerodynamic devices. Last year, Ferrari blanked in the back wheels almost entirely, and I think Toyota had smaller rims for aerodynamic effect.

**Chris:** Like racing bicycles.

**Me:** Exactly that, on the rear wheels, and Renault were running them. I think they couldn't get it to work last year with the Michelin, whatever it was, the casing or whatever, they didn't quite fit.

**Chris:** But now they have Bridgestones.

**Me:** With Bridgestone, suddenly these things fit, or I guess they're testing them to see if it works.

**Chris:** Are they still controversial or are they a given now?

**Me:** It kinda depends who's in the lead and how far in the lead they are easily, I think.

**Chris:** Whether Ferrari are winning or not?

**Me:** I think if someone's running away with it, anybody, if it looks like a bit of a whitewash championship, Bernie's going to step in and change something. That's the given rule, to make it more exciting. So if they're not controversial, something else will be. So on the Renault front, seamless shift, as everyone's got. They're supplying Red Bull Racing as well, as an engine supplier.



**Chris:** Is that going to affect them as a team or not really?

**Me:** Well, they should get more miles in terms of reliability testing on their engine.

**Chris:** Like they need it.

**Me:** They've kicked Ferrari out of the Red Bull team and pushed Ferrari back to Toro Rosso, so that's a bit of a PR win. So that's good. And they're going to get more mileage on the engine, so that's pretty useful. They brought in Zonta as a test driver. He's got Bridgestone experience from Toyota, that might help them a little bit.

**Chris:** That might help them as well.

**Me:** Not sure though, really, I think the colour schemes still got me vexed.

**Chris:** It clashes, really, it just clashes.

**Me:** It upsets me, it really does.

**Chris:** And it doesn't seem to fit the team either. Whereas Spyker changed to orange and you were like, yea, okay, that fits. But this with Renault, it's like, who are you?

**Me:** And they've got new drivers, and quite a lot of personnel changes.

**Chris:** After Alonso.

**Me:** I guess it's post-Alonso Renault, isn't it? Who's next on the list? It was Honda this week, wasn't it?

**Chris:** My favourite.

**Me:** Ah Honda.

**Chris:** Yay. But we didn't see any colours from them though.

**Me:** They're running their test car, aren't they? It's kind of a bizarre car to launch, really. We've got a new car, it's not the car you're going to see race.

**Chris:** Fantastic.

**Me:** It's a test car.

**Chris:** But I think it was more important that Jenson was up and about to show that he's better, rather than showing off the car, really.

**Me:** How many laps did Jenson do?

**Chris:** Well, you know, there was, like, three. But it wasn't his fault, it was the car. Which doesn't really bode well for the future.



**Me:** It's very difficult to ascertain from the pictures I've seen, exactly what Honda have changed. Because the car's black, and all the parts are black, and you can't get a very good view.

**Chris:** I bet it's got one of those gearboxes.

**Me:** I think it looks very boxy, it doesn't seem as smooth and rounded as the other cars, not even the BMW. It's not at that level, it still seems a bit like a cardboard box coming towards you. I saw an interesting picture, did you see the interesting picture of Jenson's steering wheel? He's got a full headup display on the steering wheel now, it basically looks like a Nintendo. There's like a full 32-bit colour screen.

**Chris:** Do you think he'll be driving round and playing Super Mario Bros?

**Me:** He might well do. It's okay, you know, most teams have some kind of LCD display, you know, timing information and stuff as they go round, but he has a gigantic wide screen television.

**Chris:** Just in case he gets bored.

**Me:** Nothing more to add to Honda really, it's too black.

**Chris:** I'm sure we'll find out more in the future but at the moment, there wasn't much revealed. The last one on our list is Red Bull, which was launched a few days ago.

**Me:** You say launched.

**Chris:** It wasn't launched?

**Me:** They pushed the car out of the garage, took a photograph, pushed it back in again. Drove round the track. It's not in McLaren's league, let's be honest.

**Chris:** It looks like a McLaren.

**Me:** Yes, Mr Adrian Newey. He stole his own design.

**Chris:** Can you do that?

**Me:** Can you be sued for stealing your own design?

**Chris:** I'm not sure.

**Me:** I don't know. The front nose of the Red Bull, it is a McLaren, there's no question about it.

**Chris:** Well, I guess if you've got a good idea, why change it? You know, if it isn't broke, don't fix it.

**Me:** It did break a lot though, the McLaren. Don't think it was his fault, though.

**Chris:** The question is, is Webber going to be able to drive it without breaking down?

**Me:** If Webber doesn't have a better season this year, it must be Webber, it's got to be his fault. Whereas in the past you could have blamed it on the wrong team at the wrong time.



**Chris:** Last year, it looked like he was in the wrong team, and although we took the mick out of him quite a lot, it looked like it was just a bad season. Bad luck, bad timing.

**Me:** It should be, in theory, a fast car. It's got a reliable Renault engine in it.

**Chris:** And it's good for him to be paired with David, bit more support.

**Me:** It's gonna be a good team. Maybe it's make or break year for Webber in his new RBR3, I think they're calling it.

**Chris:** Brilliant. I love car names. They're just fantastic. Numbers.

**Me:** The RA107.

**Chris:** My favourite is Super Aguri.

**Me:** What's that called?

**Chris:** SA07.

**Me:** Is it? Okay. Then you've got the RA107 from Honda.

**Chris:** And the Renault is something funny as well.

**Me:** That's the R27.

**Chris:** I complain that the names/numbers are ridiculous and boring and obvious, but actually it would be more helpful if they were all the same. Like Super Aguri is actually quite good. SA, so you know the team, and 07, so you know the year. It would be easier to compare them if they did that.

**Me:** I take your point. There is a reason I think why you like the Super Aguri, because they don't have any racing history to speak of. I'm sure if you look back through the annals of time, that the RA107 comes from some kind of Honda Racing fifty years of history.

**Chris:** But it doesn't mean anything.

**Me:** It doesn't.

**Chris:** Why is it RA? Cos you'd think that was Renault.

**Me:** Yea, I think, possibly for racing purists, it's a tip of the hat to say, you know, remember back then, back in the 40s when we won that race.

**Chris:** Even Ferrari is the F2007, you can't get more obvious than that.

**Me:** That's its public name, isn't it called the F249 or something? Last year's was the F248, wasn't it? As a young fan, you know...

**Chris:** Don't patronise me.



**Me:** Maybe we should do a show on the history of racing numbers.

**Chris:** Okay, maybe we should move on. Do we have anyone left to talk about?

**Me:** Yea, Williams haven't launched yet, they're next week. Spyker haven't launched yet, they're gonna be next week too.

**Chris:** Ooh, I'm looking forward to that.

**Me:** You're not looking forward to Spyker at all, are you? Quite frankly, you're not bothered.

**Chris:** I'm not bothered either way, to be honest.

**Me:** So we're probably not gonna mention those, but probably new front wing, new rear wing, seamless shift gearbox. And also Toro Rosso and Super Aguri.

**Chris:** Yes, well they're not going to launch, are they?

**Me:** I think they're going to deliberately try not to.

**Chris:** We were saying how far back can we push this podcast about launches, and really, if we wait for them, it would have been like...

**Me:** Second race. Don't hold your breath for those two. Super Aguri is going to look like last year's Honda. Toro Rosso is going to look like last year's Red Bull and that's all you need to know.

**Chris:** Well that wraps up what we've got to say about the car launches, if you've got something to add to the conversation like, Renault's colour scheme, or Ferrari's controversial ideas, then make sure you head onto the forum at [Sidepodcast.com/forum](http://Sidepodcast.com/forum) [*retired link*]. There you go, I got it in. Next week, we'll be talking about testing.

**Me:** Will we?

**Chris:** Pre-season testing so far.

**Me:** What have we got to say about that?

**Chris:** Well I'm not going to tell you now, am I? That would spoil it.

**Me:** Okay, fair enough. I'm looking forward to it already.

**Chris:** Good.

**Me:** I'll be there.

**Chris:** And I'll be there too.

**Me:** Okay.

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