



Episode 41 – Post Season News

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

Chris: Welcome to Sidepodcast, Episode 41 – Post Season News. It's only been a week, can there really be that much news?

Me: There's always something going on in the world of Formula 1. The Renault podcast contained lots of good information this week. Of note, what happened to Heikki in the Brazilian Grand Prix?

Chris: Pat Symonds said that they were the only team to start a driver on the soft tyres and that just happened to be Kovalainen. He had an accident on Turn 1, he came in and changed his tyres, and then 34 laps, he'd burnt out the harder tyres and they punctured.

Me: That isn't good, is it? To have your car destroy the hardest of the two sets of tyres within that short space of time.

Chris: No, not really, I suppose they should have set the car up a bit better.

Me: Well, I guess the heat and the new surface caught them out a bit, but even if he hadn't gone off at that point, it doesn't look like they'd have got to the end of the race. 34 laps on the hardest tyre, and they'd already used the soft, that was gonna be a terrible day for them, whatever happened.

Chris: As if Lewis Hamilton's weekend wasn't bad enough, he also has to put up with Mark Webber having a go at him again.

Me: What's he got to say this time?

Chris: This time he said: "He's had a couple of howlers this year, whenever there are big decisions to be made, he has been very poor."

Me: That's a bit harsh. Do you think he's still smarting after the Fuji incident.

Chris: It makes me think, you know, Webber, take a look at your own race.

Me: Let's see what you got up to in your first year. That's unnecessary, and not particularly fair. I guess Hamilton rose above it, he didn't answer, did he?

Chris: Lewis might be a bit happier next month, though, because they have confirmed the appeal date as the 14th November. Max Mosley said: "For us, the world championship is over, the result is what it is. A team presented an appeal, at the moment this doesn't change anything, it's up to them to prove they're right."

Me: So he's already made his decision, then?

Chris: It doesn't sound good for McLaren.



Me: There was a lot of criticism about the way they announced the appeal date, wasn't there?

Chris: Well, they didn't really announce it.

Me: No, and in fact, I don't even think to this very moment it's been officially announced on the FIA's website, it's still not saying anything of the sort. We first heard the news from Brad Spurgeon's blog on the International Herald Tribune site, and he heard it originally, I believe, from some French journalists, so it's propagating via word of mouth, rather than by any official channels. Which isn't a great way to announce this kind of important information.

Chris: Brad said: "How can an issue of this importance be treated in this way? We all expect the FIA to do what it usually does, which is to issue a press statement about the appeal. That is what any professional organisation would do, and what I believe the FIA usually does. It is indeed very odd that an announcement of this kind has to leak to the international media, be it websites, newspapers or blogs. I was in fact the first of the English language press or sites to hear or publish this news. Autosport had a more complete story but it came out half an hour after mine. Although I was kind of pleased about that at first, I realised afterwards how absurd the situation was."

Me: Absolutely absurd, and I presume that Autosport got the information from the same source that Brad did, as opposed to any official channels, which is just ridiculous. And not the first time that the FIA have messed up this year, so we're coming to expect this kind of slapdash approach to the media.

Chris: The FIA did make some official announcements this week, though.

Me: When it suits them.

Chris: On the 24th October, the World Motorsport Council met in Paris, and made some decisions. There will be a total freeze on engine development for ten years starting from 2008. A change can be made after five years but only with the unanimous agreement of all stakeholders and following a further two-year notice period. Total freeze means there will be no exceptions for development of certain parts of the engine, as is the case under current regulations. Ferrari are again allowed to supply more than two teams with engines for 2008 and 2009. The Force India name has been accepted. They've also managed to calculate the total amount owed to the FIA by McLaren. It will be in excess of \$50 million and its due in December, and finally, the calendar has been confirmed. Canada is no longer provisional, and Singapore will definitely be a night race.

Me: Okay, so let's go through those one at a time. The McLaren fine, not a problem, that makes sense. And Ferrari to supply engines to more than two teams, expected, no surprises there at all. The engine freeze is a little bit unusual, don't you think?

Chris: Ten years is a ridiculous amount of time.

Me: That is an age. If that is a fact and that actually happens, within ten years, the great big heavy NASCAR's will be going faster than the Formula 1 cars. That's not the pinnacle of technology, is it?

Chris: It doesn't count for any advances in technology like fuel economies, or new green technologies.

Me: Which is exactly what the FIA are all about right now. How can they, I can't believe that they can bring this regulation in, they can't mean it. This must be some kind of thinly veiled threat to engine manufacturers or something, because it makes no sense. It was completely unexpected and it's completely absurd.



Chris: Last week, all the engine manufacturers signed a proposal that was submitted to the FIA with what they thought the engine regulations should be. They wanted four race engines, fuel flow restrictors and kinetic energy recovery systems.

Me: All perfectly reasonable requests and suggestions.

Chris: But clearly it was absolutely ignored.

Me: Right, yes, Max took one look and went, yea, not interested. This is what I want. Even though he clearly hasn't put any thought into it whatsoever and has no concept of what it's going to do to the sport. What a stupid man.

Chris: They can't even keep the qualifying format the same from year to year.

Me: No they can't.

Chris: How are they going to manage something for ten years?

Me: It's a bit embarrassing and it's a bit of a balls up all round. Not impressed, not impressed at all. What else were they talking about? The Force India name. That's a bit unexpected too, isn't it?

Chris: A few podcasts ago, we were talking about how we thought all the teams would have to agree to the name, because it looked like the Concorde Agreement would be rolling on into next year, but the FIA appear to think the Concorde Agreement is null and void.

Me: As far as we understand, all the teams agreed that because they couldn't agree, they were just going to roll 2007's agreement on to 2008, which is why the Prodrive customer car issue came to the fore, and suddenly Max is saying the whole thing is null and void and there is no Concorde Agreement. That's really bad for the sport, because suddenly that's going to throw sponsorship agreements into chaos and all sorts of problems. It's not good that he's throwing it out the window, and not getting any kind of validation from other teams. I'd be slightly dubious if the Force India name is actually confirmed yet.

Chris: Well, we should finish bitching about the FIA, and turn to someone else doing a bit of complaining.

Me: Who might that be?

Chris: Bernie Ecclestone.

Me: Him again.

Chris: He's bitching that the British Grand Prix may not make it after 2009, despite the fact that Hamilton has peaked interest in the UK. On the flip side, Brazil has been extended to 2014, despite the fact that it has inferior paddock facilities, which is a pet hate of Mr Ecclestone.

Me: Absolutely. But he has to have some Grand Prix in South America, otherwise you can't call it a World Championship, and there isn't anywhere better than Interlagos. So his hand's are kind of tied, but at the same time, double standards.



Chris: Talking on 5live's Sportsworld program about Silverstone, he said: "They know what they've got to do if they want to retain it, but maybe they don't want to. They need to be paying the rate other European's are paying. They have to get the circuit and track up to a standard."

Me: So it's all about the money then?

Chris: Isn't it always? That reminds me, talking of the future, did you read Autosport magazine this week?

Me: Oh, I did, yes. Which bit are you referring to?

Chris: Ferrari may revert to a shorter wheelbase car.

Me: They might. Tell us why.

Chris: The current car's caused problems in Monaco, Canada, Hungary, Monza, anywhere else you can think of.

Me: Anywhere that doesn't have long sweeping corners, because their long wheelbase car does prefer those sweeping corners and long straights, not so good in the short twisty sections.

Chris: They've managed to get over the shortcomings with sophisticated electronics, but obviously next year McLaren are taking over the ECU and that will prevent such workarounds.

Me: So a shorter car, similar to everybody else.

Chris: Chief designer at Ferrari, Aldo Costa said: "For next year, there will be a complete change in the electronic systems management of the car, so we need to think about how to address handling and dynamics. We may consider different options due to that."

Me: So they need more test time with the ECU first before they make any decisions, I'm guessing?

Chris: And luckily, there are two upcoming winter test sessions. November 13th to 15th in Barcelona, and 4th to 6th December in Jerez.

Me: That's gonna be a busy time for all teams given the new electronics and testing for 2008. No traction control, that's going to be fun, isn't it?

Chris: Also in this week's Autosport magazine there was an entire page of recruitment for Spyker. It said: "As part of a significant expansion of our aerodynamic development program, we are looking to fill a number of positions at our new wind tunnel facility in Brackley."

Me: In Brackley?

Chris: Yea.

Me: Isn't that where Honda's wind tunnel is?

Chris: Yea.



Me: They're not exactly renowned for reliable results, are they? Are they subletting it to Spyker? Just to get rid of it, do you think?

Chris: They could be. That's not a good sign.

Me: Interesting developments, loads and loads and loads of jobs.

Chris: Things like aerodynamicists, model designers, tunnel technicians, someone's obviously putting some money into that team.

[Sweeper]

Chris: This week we had a really nice email from Lea Williams in the US, he said: "Regarding your comments at the end of this week's podcast concerning US F1 fans, the existence thereof, etc. There are a lot of us, witness the ticket sales for the erstwhile US GP. I've been following F1 from the US since the early 60s when we had to wait for magazine coverage to catch up. It's not that motorsports fans in the US don't like F1, we just don't like Bernie."

Me: That's not unique to the US, is it?

Chris: "Certainly US motorsports organisations have their fair share of towering egos but few that can hold a candle to Bernie and Max. Though Tony George certainly springs to mind as a case in point. So keep up the good work, there are a good number of us on this side of the pond who are keenly interested and regular listeners." And he signed his email with a picture of him as the 2007 SCCA Rocky Mountain Division ITA class champion. We have an actual proper motorsport champ listening to the show. How cool is that?

Me: That's very cool, although I don't know what the Rocky Mountain championship is.

Chris: No, it sounds like fun though.

Me: It does. His car looks cool, actually. Shall we put a picture on the enhanced podcast, so you can see what kind of car he drives? It's a great car.

Chris: We also had a nice story from the Blue Orange Lion, who is a frequent commenter on the site. Last weekend, he went to the Renault World Series event in Estoril. Why did they do an event at the same time as the Grand Prix?

Me: They did it at the same time as the Monza Grand Prix when they were in the UK, which is why we couldn't go, so I guess they do it on race weekends regardless of the state of the championship.

Chris: Anyway, he sent us some great pictures and a little story to share with you. So, if you're listening to the enhanced podcast, keep your eyes peeled for the photos. "I have to say this World Series by Renault event is a great idea, lets crazy F1 "junkies" like me get closer to action. If the cost of running an F1 car per lap is 1,000 Euros, that means they spend around 30,000 in two days with this road show on track alone. The funny thing is that they had telemetry running while Cochet was doing his laps with engineers following him on the monitors, was he testing something?"

Me: That's an interesting concept. They wouldn't be allowed according to this year's testing regulations. It must be an old car but I'm sure they could get some useful data as the cars are lapping. Mind you, they never race at Estoril, but something to keep in mind.



Chris: “After the first F1 demo Cochet was hanging around Renault F1 team facilities and some fans just asked him for usual stuff like an autograph and a picture together, and then they started to get all technical and interested in the R26 steering wheel. And then Cochet casually takes the steering wheel out and tells the guy to hold it to get a feeling, of course everybody around goes wild. I think he didn't trust me, but in the end I managed to convince the poor garçon that I'm not going to run away with it. Anyway, he was told by the mechanics to stop doing crazy things and please put the wheel back. But it was nice, he was acting normally, very friendly. I'll be honest, I envy F1 people a little, they complain all the time, but I actually think it's a nice way to make a living.”

Me: That is a great story, and we must try and get to one of these World Series events next year. Who is Cochet, by the way?

Chris: He is a former Formula Renault champion.

Me: That's easy for you to say.

Chris: Yes.

Me: And now some kind of test or demo driver for Renault.

Chris: Yes.

Me: Good stuff. And if anybody else happens to go to an event similar to this, please do let us know, send us pictures, send us your story and we'll cover it when we can.

Chris: So that's it for this week, while we're waiting around for the appeal result, next week we'll be having one of our super duper mini series specials, so make sure you check back in for that.

Me: I like them because I don't have to do very much.

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