



Episode 43 – Moving Forward, Looking Back

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

Chris: Welcome to Sidepodcast, Episode 43 – Moving Forward, Looking Back. Guess who's been shooting his mouth off again?

Me: Oh, that could be Max, Bernie, Flavio?

Chris: That would be right, Flavio.

Me: Oh right, what's he got to say today?

Chris: He's been saying that Renault will have an all new driver line-up for next year and that he's 60% confident Alonso will be a part of it.

Me: Right. And do we think that's true?

Chris: Alonso has made no comment on the subject. Apparently he's on holiday so he doesn't want to talk about his future, while Fisichella says he has many other options if Renault decide they don't want him.

Me: Does he?

Chris: Apparently.

Me: And what might they be?

Chris: I don't know, I can only think of Force India, so...

Me: Well, the McLaren seat's free, maybe he thinks he's in with a shot there.

Chris: I highly doubt that.

Me: Otherwise maybe he's just tapping up Mallya, give us a seat, go on.

Chris: Whoever Flavio's got lined up for Renault, does he even know they're gonna be in it next year?

Me: Well that is a good point. We're still waiting to hear, obviously, from the hearing on December 6th and some bits and pieces have been taking place this week, that might indicate Renault are planning for a future outside of the sport.

Chris: Renault Sport has awarded the contract for making their F1 engines to Mecachrome this week.

Me: That's not unusual, because Mecachrome have been involved in Formula 1 for a long time, although the timing is uncanny. Renault may be pre-empting that they may be thrown out of the world championship next year and are



therefore putting in processes that will allow them to continue in the sport under another name. So Renault would go, but the engineering talent would continue under another name.

Chris: So you could end up with a Red Bull Mecachrome instead of a Red Bull Renault.

Me: Yes, oh yes. It's unlikely, but it's a possibility, and like I said, the timing is a little bit uncanny. That they decide to renew that relationship right now.

Chris: So Renault are worrying about next year, but Prodrive have said they're definitely not going to be in it.

Me: Oh no, they're gone.

Chris: A statement from the team on Friday said: "Prodrive has always been committed to competing in Formula 1 with what has become known as a customer car. It has been well known that our entry was made on this basis and that our entire business model was built upon this premise. It is therefore particularly disappointing to face a last minute legal challenge to our entry when our plans have been public knowledge for over a year."

Me: It shouldn't have come as a surprise to them though, that legal challenge happened. It has been in the pipeline for most of the year.

Chris: Yea, Frank Williams has been complaining about it like, forever. Prodrive also said: "It is, however, still our ambition to compete in Formula 1 and we are hopeful that a new Concorde Agreement between the FIA, FOA and the teams will provide clarity as to the terms in which this might be possible." I think they finally had to admit it's not going to happen because the customer car row isn't going to be resolved in time and may go against them when it is resolved.

Me: Yes, rumours are circulating that from 2009 all constructors must build their own chassis. Williams and Force India maintain that in a constructors championship, you must be a constructor to be eligible, and because the constructors championship is the way the money gets assigned, it's quite a contentious issue.

Chris: At the moment, there's no Concorde Agreement for next year, and any other regulation agreements that come into force will need all the teams signatures on, so it may be that Toro Rosso and Super Aguri are sidelined in the future.

Me: Yea, and Super Aguri, didn't they get rid of 30 staff members this week?

Chris: They did, it's not a good sign.

Me: So you would have liked to see Prodrive in Formula 1 next year?

Chris: Well, yes. I kind of think the constructors championship thing is a good point, where you should make your car if you're gonna get the points and stuff, but I would have liked to see Prodrive bring in some new people. You know, another team on the grid, that's always good.

Me: Yea, and the irony isn't lost on Frank, I'm sure, the fact that he started with a customer car.

Chris: It's a little bit hypocritical.



Me: Yea, I like the idea they had where they could build up. You know, they had two years as a customer car and then build up to be their own constructor. That seemed to work well, but I'm not sure if that idea's been dropped now, which is a bit of a shame.

Chris: Does anyone else get to fill their 12th place spot?

Me: I think they could sell it, but I'm not sure anyone could just come in and take their place. However, it is really late now, there's no chance of anyone coming in to next year's championship.

Chris: If I was one of the other people that competed for that twelfth space, I'd be a bit annoyed that Prodrive stole it from me and didn't use it.

Me: Yes, no question about it, although, I'm not entirely sure that there were that many realistic competitors for that seat.

Chris: Probably everybody else was a customer car as well, anyway.

Me: Highly likely.

Chris: We've got some news about the upcoming test in Jerez, but we'll talk about that after this break.

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Chris: At the test in Jerez, in a couple of weeks, Bridgestone are set to reintroduce slick tyres. I've only ever seen slick tyres at historical events like GPlive. What's the difference?

Me: Well, obviously, there's no grooves on them. So they're usually flat, and wider and faster. And they look much better.

Chris: Why were they banned?

Me: Because the cars were going too quickly, because cornering speeds were increasing too much and it was a simple way to try and control that additional speed.

Chris: It seems a bit odd because Formula 1 is the only major motorsport series that uses grooved tyres.

Me: Yes, they are, certainly the only single seater series to use groove tyres these days. Now we have a single control tyre, instead of a tyre war, it's hoped they could be reintroduced for the 2009 season.

Chris: During the test, each team will get three sets of tyres and any testing completed on them is deemed outside the 2007 testing agreement.

Me: So we can expect a lot of running on them, and hopefully not very many mechanical breakdowns.

Chris: Do you think that's why they're bringing Michael Schumacher back again?



Me: Oh, yes, highly likely. They brought him back last time for the traction control testing and he does have experience on slicks before they were banned back in 1997. Both him and David Coulthard are the only two drivers still racing that would have had experience on those kind of tyres, so he would be a definite advantage to Ferrari.

Chris: Presumably Wurz would have had experience on the tyres as well.

Me: Yea, he picked a fine time to leave, didn't he? He would have had experience of running with no traction control and of running on slicks. Damn shame.

Chris: I'm not sure, but I think Lewis Hamilton might have had experience of slick tyres as well.

Me: Eh? When?

Chris: You know, he tested them at the Chinese Grand Prix.

Me: Do you think that's what they're doing? They were pre-empting 2008 and thought we're so far ahead in the World Championship battle, we'll be fine, we'll just try out the slicks for a couple of laps. No problem.

Chris: Honda have been criticised for how they approached the previous test in Barcelona.

Me: What's wrong with what they did there?

Chris: They gave Super Aguri one of their 2007 racing cars, lucky Super Aguri.

Me: They must have been well pleased to receive that.

Chris: And they sent three young drivers over as well, so that meant any miles done by the three would be accrued to Super Aguri instead of Honda's testing mileage total.

Me: I didn't actually spot this although we did notice they were running Honda's car, I didn't realise it was to avoid any testing limits.

Chris: It's a little bit naughty because Honda have currently covered the most distance this year with 25,500 kilometres and the limit is 30,000 for this year.

Me: So they're very, very close then. And yes, probably trying to find a way round it.

Chris: And looking forward again, there are rumours abound that tyre warmers could be banned from next year.

Me: Yea, significant problem with this though, is that you have to be extra careful when leaving the pits, especially after stopping for fuel because you'll be heading back onto the racetrack with freezing cold tyres and no chance to warm them up.

Chris: Ex-Formula 1 driver Antonio Pizzonia made the move from Formula 1 to Champ Car last year where they don't use tyre warmers and at the time he said: "Every time you leave the pits you're on cold tyres and it's very easy to make a mistake."

Me: Yea, so much for improving safety then.



Chris: One of the safety improvements for next year will be the higher cockpit sides and Jenson Button has an opinion on them saying: “It’s definitely a step forward because it’s going to be safer. The new protection comes along the side of the helmet which is great for the taller drivers like me, but it’s going to be quite hard for the smaller guys because they’ll find it quite difficult to see around.”

Me: Aw, yea, but who turns their head in a Formula 1 car that much anyway? I guess they might have an issue looking at their wing mirrors, but I don’t think too many people look to one side when they’re driving.

Chris: Super Aguri drivers might struggle. They’re only little.

Me: That’s true, although you’re assuming that Anthony Davidson has a drive there next year, which may not be the case, it might be somebody taller. It might have to be somebody taller.

Chris: Our last piece of news is very annoying because it doesn’t have any fancy link to anything that we’ve already talked about.

Me: Right, brilliant.

Chris: Max Mosley has been to Serbia.

Me: I can see why you’d struggle to link that to anything useful. That doesn’t happen every day.

Chris: Allegedly he went to discuss the construction of a racing circuit, although in reality he’s most probably there to make the FIA the default motorsport body in that country.

Me: Yes, always thinking ahead that man.

Chris: Bernie has previously been to Serbia to investigate business opportunities that might be over there.

Me: Well, Hungary is currently the only Eastern European race on the calendar and there has been talk for a long time that F1 needs to spread farther East. It’s just a shame that guy from Midland left Formula 1 so soon.

Chris: Wasn’t he Russian?

Me: Well, he had business interests in Serbia, I think, and there was talk that Bernie wanted to expand in that direction. That’s what brought him into the sport, but it didn’t exactly work out the way he hoped. But Bernie and Max haven’t given up on the idea completely.

[Sweeper]

Chris: In F1 Racing this month, the head to head quiz is quite interesting because they pitch ITV’s James Allen against BBC 5live’s David Croft. I won’t give the game away completely but let’s just say the questions are all about commentating and it’s not really a very close run battle.

Me: Is that right? Well, James Allen is quite well read in the sport of Formula 1 and you’d expect him to know all sorts of interesting stats and useless bits of information that might help him in such a quiz. However, the thing I’m most interested to learn is has F1 Racing improved since Matt Bishop has left?



Chris: I think it's early days yet, because it takes a couple of issues for an editor to really stamp his mark on the magazine. There was a lot of Lewis Hamilton in there, so I wasn't that impressed, but you know, we'll see. Talking of Lewis Hamilton, I went to the bookshop this week and I saw a book made by one of those historical newspaper companies. It basically chronicled Hamilton's year by putting all the back pages of the newspapers that had his face on them. Let's face it, there were quite a few of those this year. And it put them all into one book. I don't know how they managed to get copyright on things that like that, but I liked it. It made an interesting difference to the usual season review books. Talking of which, next week, we'll finally be doing our 2007 Season Review.

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

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