



Episode 47 – If You Don't Know the Difference, You Shouldn't be Wearing the Overalls

Coming Up

Chris: This is Sidepodcast, Episode 47 – If You Don't Know the Difference, You Really Shouldn't be Wearing the Overalls. Coming up, we've got first impressions of the McLaren and Toyota launch, Alex Wurz at Honda, and all the fun of Autosport International.

Intro

Chris: Hello everyone, we're at Autosport International 2008. It's our second day here and we're very tired, so we've retired to the restaurant for a nice cup of tea.

Me: A nice cup of tea? How English. Actually, we're having pain au chocolat and you're on Diet Coke as per usual. How come we're so exhausted?

Chris: Um, cos all we do is walk round and round and round, and get lost, cos it's so enormous.

Me: It is enormous and we're slightly confused today, because we thought we had it sussed on the Saturday, we knew where the stands were, we knew where all the sponsors and companies were. Then we arrive on Sunday, and it's all changed.

Chris: There was an enormous monster truck and we basically planned everything around this truck. We were like, we know where this truck is so therefore we know where the other stands are. And it was gone.

Me: For absolutely no reason whatsoever, as far as we can tell, they've just decided to jiggle the whole thing around a bit.

Chris: It was on top of a car, crushing it, and the car's disappeared and the monster truck's just on the floor now.

Me: It must have crushed it.

Chris: It must have crushed it completely, flat as a pancake, so you can't even see it anymore.

Me: I like the idea of it, because it does keep things fresh for people like us who decide to arrive for both days, but slightly confusing, nonetheless.

Chris: We'll talk more about our experience at the show later, but first we're gonna do good week/bad week.

Good Week/Bad Week

Chris: It's been a good week for Fisichella, he was announced as the lead driver for Force India. Also good for Liuzzi, who was announced as test driver. I was surprised that Fisichella was announced as the first driver, because I thought Sutil was the top driver in that team, but apparently not. If I was Sutil, I'd be a bit annoyed.



Me: Well, he has been there for a year. The thing I'm most pleased about is that it means there's no more Ralf Schumacher in Formula 1. I don't really want to see Fisichella do another year at the back of the grid, but it's better than Ralf.

Chris: Talking of Ralf, it's been a bad week for Toyota because even though they're saying that winning doesn't matter, we all know that it's not true at all and the pressure is seriously on them.

Me: Yea, there have been moves to downplay accusations such as that in the last couple of days, but it does seem that the time is nigh for Toyota. They're not getting as much out of Formula 1 as they are out of something like NASCAR, where they're doing particularly well. They entered NASCAR last year, they've got a lot of good promotion and sponsorship out of that sport, and it's not going so well for the Formula 1 team who aren't getting the results, so they need to do something about it and they need to do something about it this year.

Chris: It's definitely true because we were talking about the next time I buy a new car and I was like, yea, I don't want a Toyota. Just because they haven't performed well in Formula 1.

Me: By that standard though, it means you're coming home with a Ferrari.

Chris: I could live with that. It's been a good week for Ferrari, specifically Michael Schumacher who know has a job title and a job description, although it doesn't sound all that interesting. He's basically in charge of developing cars for the motorsport department.

Me: That is pretty much exactly what he said he wanted to be doing earlier this year, so at least everybody's now in the clear. Does that mean he's going to turn up to races this year? Or won't we be seeing much of him now?

Chris: He did say he's going to do a bit of testing, although he doesn't have any specific dates. So presumably, he'll still be poking his nose in at races.

Me: I'd miss him if he wasn't around.

Chris: It's been a bad week for Christian Klien and basically anyone else who was interested in a Formula 1 drive because all the seats are filled now.

Me: That doesn't necessarily mean that all the named drivers will see the season through.

Chris: Spyker had four drivers last year, so I think that tells you everything you need to know.

News and Views

Chris: I was very surprised this week when I read that Alex Wurz has joined Honda as a test driver. I can't imagine why, except that he must have been charmed by Ross Brawn. I thought he was giving up Formula 1 forever but presumably it's just that he wasn't so much a fan of the racing and he prefers his little test driver role instead.

Me: It's amusing that he worked so hard and so long to get a race drive, and he finally got the drive he wanted, only to find out he didn't really like it. He quite liked doing what he was doing the whole time, so now he's gone back to another team. I did hear a rumour he wanted to become a commentator. I guess he's scrapped that for the moment and will be at Honda for 2008.



Chris: I think he would be good as a commentator cos he likes to tell it how it is, but he is quite difficult to understand.

Me: It may not have been English, it may have been in his native language. I think he could have been an Austrian commentator, so possibly that wouldn't be such an issue. Although he does talk fast, so he could be a little bit hard to understand in English.

Chris: So this seems like this is a good thing for the team, what do you think?

Me: Yea, I think it will be very, very good for Honda. If anyone needs a very consistent and strong test guy, it's that team, and he is the man for the job. He did really, really, really well at Williams and the reason that they've made such an improvement this year was due a lot to the work that he did.

Chris: I suppose it will take a while until we start to see the effects.

Me: It also depends on how much testing is limited this year as to how much an input he can make. It probably won't be an instant improvement, although given how far down the grid they are and how woefully they performed last year, it probably will be quite a big jump at first and then a steady climb to the top.

Chris: They can't really do much worse.

[Sweeper]

Chris: We've had two car launches, McLaren and Toyota. Like the Ferrari launch we're gonna wait till we have more cars, more data to examine them closely but there were some things we picked up on that we'd like to share with you.

Me: Well, first of all, McLaren have done an awful lot of aerodynamic work, there's some wonderful sculpting around the sidepods, really, really impressive the amount of detail they've managed to push in to that area. They've completely revised it and it looks really, really nice. Of note, given the controversies of last year, it does look like McLaren have gone for a longer wheelbase car, just like the Ferrari, but it's likely that all the other teams will do something similar, so you can't particularly pick that out as something they might have copied off them.

Chris: My notes about the launch say non-Newey nose. Would you like to expand on that?

Me: Um, well, obviously Newey's gone to Red Bull now, and when he went, he took his nose with him, so to speak. And Red Bull ended up with a very McLaren-looking nose. Last year's car also retained that low sculpted nose that Newey created but now that Newey's been gone for a while, they've managed to come up with something of their own.

Chris: During the launch, although Ron appeared to be keeping a low profile, he did say something a bit odd. He said the day was special because it was Lewis' 23rd birthday, they were launching the MP4-23 and Lewis would be running the number 23 on his car. But, the rest of the world knows he's going to be running the number 22 on his car. So what was that about?

Me: The Official FIA Entry List had Lewis in the 22, and when they debuted the car during testing, Lewis was in the 22 and Heikki was in the 23. Funnily enough on F1 Fanatic, we had a bit of a discussion between a number of commentators on there, and Keith agreed with Ron, and Ollie agreed with me. Now, we'll have to see what happens



come Melbourne, but if Lewis takes to the track in the number 22 car, can we call Ron Dennis honest Ron Dennis, can we call him a big, fat liar?

Chris: I think that's a bit harsh, he was probably just a bit confused, you know, it's a very stressful time for the poor lad. I think it's funny that this kind of thing has split the blogging world completely down the middle.

Me: Well, it is important because it's honest Ron and all of last year, during the spying controversy, he was going on about how important it was that people should believe him and how he's never told a lie and how he's to be trusted and he didn't know any of this was going on. Suddenly, he doesn't know which car his driver's are driving.

Chris: I bet what happened, someone just said it to him, and he was like "Wow, that's so good, we're gonna say that at the launch," and then they were too scared to tell him actually, they'd got it wrong.

Me: Sounds like senility to me.

[Sweeper]

Chris: The Toyota launch was nowhere near as exciting, I mean, Toyota are boring.

Me: It should have been a really, really exciting launch, because Toyota were the first team this year to launch their car online. I think Jaguar did a couple of years ago, so it's not completely original, but it meant we could sit at our desk and follow a Formula 1 launch as if we were there. As if we were part of the invited media and part of the invited press.

Chris: You couldn't.

Me: Well, I say we, but I have a Mac, and it was Windows only, using Windows Media Player, on a Microsoft platform, so I was completely excluded from all the fun.

Chris: You didn't miss much, let's be honest.

Me: From what I did see, afterwards, it was probably the dullest launch of all time. Some guy stood at a podium talking about something in a very slow monotonous voice, and I was bored, and it wasn't very interesting at all. And then some people ripped the covers off the car to some music, and they all stood round and had some photographs taken.

Chris: Like the McLaren they've got a longer wheelbase, but we did say that's probably gonna be most of the cars on the grid. It also looks like they've borrowed an idea from Renault with the wing mirrors being sculpted onto the sidepods. The last thing of note and probably the thing that makes the whole launch worthwhile is that Toyota were the first team to show pictures of the rear of their car.

Me: Ferrari were particularly keen to hide the rear of their car, not letting journalists anywhere near it, McLaren were less so, although I've yet to see a specific picture of the diffuser, whereas Toyota, they just spun the car round and round on a podium and let everyone have a look all the way round it, which was quite nice.

Chris: It's a refreshing change to see a team so open about things.



Me: Absolutely, but that was probably the only refreshing thing about the team. The paintjob is exactly the same as it was when they debuted in 2001.

Chris: But you never like it when a team changes their paintjob. You always go, oh, I hate that, I hate that, I hate the Renault, even if you end up liking it, so that's probably, actually, a good thing.

[Sweeper]

Chris: We want to do a quick follow up from last week where we were talking about the proposed FIA regulations, and there was one there we didn't really have a clue what it meant. The regulation read: "Test fluid to be air at atmospheric pressure." And I didn't even think that was a sentence but apparently it does have a meaning.

Me: We had two great comments from Stephen Roy and Ian Growler who both explained that basically some teams are trying to substitute air for a fluid, for example, water. Fluid will give them much better feedback over air, so the FIA are trying to regulate it and specify that only air may be used in a wind tunnel.

Chris: One of the many benefits of doing a podcast is we can say "We don't understand this" and then people will just tell us what we need to know.

Me: Beats doing research. By the way, this is a lovely pain au chocolat, we should come here again.

Chris: Yea, I'm sure it's really good for the listeners to be hearing you munching away.

Me: [mouth full] Mm, hmm, mhmh, mmm.

Chris: Okay, that's enough.

Autosport International

Chris: As we said earlier, this weekend is Autosport International 2008 at the NEC in Birmingham and we are here. We've been here for two days, and I think I'm a good position to sum it up right now. Less girls than last year, but more Formula 1 stuff.

Me: That's a pretty good summary, there are more Formula 1 stars this year, for example, you've seen Jenson Button.

Chris: Aw, yea, he was on stage yesterday, and I can't pretend that I was actually listening but I'm assuming he had some useful things to say. He was followed up by Mark Webber, who, to be honest, was a little bit boring.

Me: That's a bit harsh, the interviewer didn't ask very many probing questions, which I thought was the problem. I thought he was a bit sick of being asked the same question over and over again – have you been busy this winter? Are you looking forward to next year? What is it like driving with David? Those kind of things. So, it wasn't the best interview in the world, therefore he didn't give the best answers.

Chris: Yea, it's probably not fair, because they're on stage probably three times in a day and I'm assuming they're getting the same questions over and over again, so that's not fair at all. It was good that they did a Q&A at the end of each interview, with people from the audience asking some questions, so they must have got some variety there.



Me: Possibly, although for some reason, the microphones in the audience weren't working properly, and therefore the guys on stage were answering the wrong questions at the wrong time. For example, somebody asked Jenson Button whether he liked the Honda Open Day last year, and he said "Yea, I really liked driving those cars." Now, we went to the Honda Open Day and we didn't see him driving any cars, so therefore he must have been talking about a different Honda Open Day that the person in front of us was discussing. So a little bit of a problem with the audience participation, possibly, at Autosport.

Chris: It's good that they were doing it, though, and then they went round and signed lots of autographs so it's definitely worth it.

Me: One thing that Jenson Button did say that I found slightly confusing. Do you remember when we went to Silverstone with Honda, and I had a go in that Honda simulator? Remember that? I was utterly rubbish and everybody beat me and at the bottom of the day I was at the lower end of the timesheets, possibly last. Well, while I was there, the guy who introduced the simulator to me said this was the very simulator the guys used to practice the tracks and that Rubens had been on it recently. Yet, yesterday Jenson Button told us that his team didn't have a simulator. Now that's slightly weird, because even Williams who are one of the financially poorest teams on the grid, they have their own simulator. We know that, we've seen drivers in it, Mark Blundell was in it not so long ago. I'm not quite sure what's going on there, but he definitely claimed there was no simulator at Honda. He cannot practice on any of the tracks and he wasn't really interested anyway. Oh, and by the way, Playstation games are rubbish. Well, that's what he said.

Chris: I also just want to say, you know back when they announced Ross Brawn was joining the team and it was only a couple of days earlier that Jenson had been saying how annoyed he was and rubbish, how he was going to leave. Well, we all thought at the time did he know, did he not know, it was a bit odd. We thought maybe they were just doing it for publicity. Well, yesterday, Jenson said that he'd known about it for a little while, then it was confirmed to him and he was chuffed to bits. So...

Me: Sounds like a massive amount of media manipulation going on there.

[Sweeper]

Chris: Also on stage today, we saw Mark Blundell and we were expecting the same usual ITV rubbish: Lewis Hamilton is great. But we stopped to listen for a bit and one of the first questions he was asked was, who's fault was it that McLaren lost the championship? And he said Lewis Hamilton.

Me: And in no unequivocal terms, too. There was none of this ITV nonsense that he has to keep spouting out, week in, week out. Suddenly, the real Mark Blundell came out and said his real feelings.

Chris: He was talking a lot of sense, actually, he said a large percentage of the blame lay on Hamilton shoulders, obviously some of it was with the team. I'm starting to think ITV are a lot more controlling than we think, especially because he said Kubica, then he said "Oh, he might be called Kubica, but we've been told to call him Kubica, so I'm trying to stick by that."

Me: Yea, everytime he mentioned ITV, he didn't speak about them in particularly friendly terms. Suddenly, it was almost as if he was off the record and his true feelings came out. It is odd that they request all crew members to call one driver in a particular way, I wonder what else they specify they have to do.



Chris: I can see why they would do it, because you want consistency, but the way he said it, was like, if I don't call him Kubica, I'm gonna be sacked. Which just seemed quite harsh.

[Sweeper]

Chris: The F1 display this year is a series of pit garages painted on the back wall with the F1 cars out in front, and they're in championship winning order, so it's very funny to see poor little McLaren stuck next to the Super Aguri and the Spyker car.

Me: What isn't quite realistic at Autosport is the garages don't get smaller as they go down. Really, the Ferrari garage at number 1 should be massive, and the McLaren garage should be really, really tiny. Just so they get a true feeling of what this year's going to be like.

Chris: The Spyker car in the F1 display is in its Spyker livery, but they do have the new Force India car with its paint job and its higher cockpit sides and everything at a different section of the show and it was actually really amazing to look at it.

Me: It's almost the same paint job they were running the test not so long ago, so it wasn't a huge surprise. But it was really nice to see this year's cars. Also, wasn't the Williams in the main F1 display, isn't that this year's car?

Chris: Well, what happened was, at another area of the show, there was a BMW car which was trying to advertise the Malaysian Grand Prix, I think, and I thought that that had the higher cockpit sides, so that was a new car. But when we went to the F1 display, we looked at the BMW car next to the Williams car and the Williams cockpit sides were even higher, so we're assuming that BMW were just a little bit ahead of the game and had slightly higher cockpit sides, but the Williams car in that display was the new one.

Me: It is quite confusing, but I think Williams, because they're not having a launch this year, they've just rolled out the new car at Autosport. So, we've had a bit of an exclusive look, which is quite fantastic.

Chris: But we're not quite sure if it was exclusive or not, because we don't know.

Me: You'd think they'd have made a bigger deal of it and someone might have mentioned it but it's just lined up with all the other cars. It's definitely this year's car so it must be next years.

[Sweeper]

Chris: There was an enormous stand for that Motor City development in Dubai and it had very posh brochures and everything, but it looks brilliant. They've got a little model that shows basically the layout of the whole city and I find it amazing that they've basically built a whole infrastructure around just this one idea of a track. They've got the theme park, and the schools and the housing estates, and the business centre, all around the idea that we might want a Grand Prix in the future.

Me: It is a massive development and they've gone all out on this stand to give us a feeling of what it's gonna be like. The whole stand is built in 3D, it's like a 3D model village, it all lights up, it shows you where the cars are going, it's a really wonderful stand.

Chris: And they gave us a free t-shirt.



Me: They weren't the only ones to give us a free t-shirt though, you seem to have picked up an awful lot of stuff this weekend.

Chris: I think they were the only ones to give us a free t-shirt, but yea, you might be right. My backpack is bursting at the seams full of bags and books and brochures. It's gonna take me a while to go through them.

[Sweeper]

Chris: That's pretty much it for Formula 1 stuff here, but there were some other things that we wanted to talk about. I like the A1GP stand, they're trying to promote the British race at Brands Hatch, and they have the video screens showing some of the racing. It looks really good, it looks like there's lots of incidents with tyres blowing up and long pit stops and things like that. It looks a lot more like British Touring Cars than Formula 1, so I'm definitely thinking about checking out Brands Hatch.

Me: There's not a race on that weekend, so we might be able to squeeze that one in.

Chris: There was no one else around the stand, so I stood there and watched the screens for a bit, watching this race. And when I turned round there were thousands of people there. It was like, me watching it had brought all these people together to join in the fun.

Me: Ah, so where you lead, others will follow.

Chris: And just as we turned to go, there was this little McLaren boy. Now what I mean by that, is there was this little 4 or 5 year old kid in the McLaren overalls being dragged around by his mum and dad, and he said: "Oh, is that what Lewis Hamilton drives in?" and I'm thinking: "No, it's A1GP, and if you don't know the difference, you really shouldn't be wearing the overalls."

Me: He's 5 years old.

Chris: And I resent the fact that his parents are dressing him up to look like Lewis Hamilton for no apparent reason.

[Sweeper]

Chris: I'm not sure what this has to do with motorsport at all, but there are dodgems here. I've never seen dodgems in a building before.

Me: It's normally an outside sport, isn't it? Normally with the fair. It works quite well though, sounds quite good. The music's a bit loud and it's quite expensive but a lot of fun.

Chris: I refuse to have a go on the dodgems though, you're quite disappointed in me, I think.

Me: I think it would make a great video, you driving badly on the dodgems. I think people would appreciate that. Go on. I'll pay.

Chris: It's never gonna happen.

Housekeeping



Chris: There isn't too much to talk about in terms of housekeeping this week, because obviously we've been preparing for this event, but we did want to point out that we came third in the Performing Blog Awards in our category. We want to thank everyone because that was amazing.

Me: It is a huge achievement and we are absolutely chuffed to beats, we beat three really, really tough competitors who are all backed by commercial businesses and all of which have, I believe, more listeners than us, so that's a really, really impressive for everybody and anybody who voted for us. Thank you very, very much. How happy are we?

[Sweeper]

Chris: The only other thing we have to talk about is that we promised last week that you could learn and grow with us as we improved the theme tune. But, you may have noticed that it hasn't changed at all. We have had no time to do that, but next week, there should be a slight improvement, even if it's only one note changed, you will notice a difference. That's all from us at Autosport this year, I hope you enjoyed the show and the sound of munching wasn't too distracting.

Me: It's a bit of a noisy restaurant and I could have been slightly more polite, so I do apologise. I'm off to strap you into a dodgem.

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