



Episode 49 – Everybody Could Share in the Delight of Honda

Coming Up

Chris: This is Sidepodcast, Episode 49 – Everybody Could Share in the Delight of Honda. Coming up on today's show, we talk germs, launches, magazines and Facebook.

Intro

Chris: Before we start this week, I have a question.

Me: A question?

Chris: Yea. If I caught my germs from you, does that mean I've got man-flu now?

Me: Well, last week I had a bit of a cold, I thought I hid it quite well. I also thought I was getting a bit better, but the entire of this week I've been very, very, very unwell. And now you're unwell.

Chris: Yea, thanks for that.

Me: Do you know where I think we got it from?

Chris: Um, I don't know.

Me: I believe it was from Autosport.

Chris: Really?

Me: I think, they've got sick and tired of us stealing all of their audience and then berating them at every single opportunity. They poisoned us while we were in the NEC. Or not.

Chris: It could just have been a room full of very germy people.

Me: It could have been that too, couldn't it? I think that's where I picked it up, because a couple of other people who went, they've also been ill, and I've been not well at all. Last week you had some kind of massive testing related injury, didn't you?

Chris: I hurt my neck.

Me: Whilst sleeping.

Chris: Yes.

Me: Not testing.



Chris: That's fine now, that's no problem. Now I've just got the germs.

Me: Now you just sound very, very unwell.

Chris: Yea.

Me: I think I might genuinely be recovering, but I'm still, you know, not 100%. And you just sound awful.

Chris: Thanks.

Me: It's gonna have to be a short show this week, isn't it?

Chris: Yea, cos it's almost time for me to take yet more over-the-counter drugs, so we'd better get a move on.

Me: They do say "may cause drowsiness", so if we fall asleep mid-podcast, we do apologise.

Good Week/Bad Week

Chris: It's been a good week for Williams, who's new car is showing vast improvements over the old one during testing at Valencia this week. They finished third on the first day, then fifth and fourth over the next two days. Still early for predictions but it's definitely looking brighter for them.

Me: Patrick Head was saying he thinks there's more speed still in it, they think they can go even faster. That's a very good sign, isn't it?

Chris: But it's been a bad week for BMW, as the new F1.08 as competitive as the team would have hoped. These two early testing sessions have shown up a raft of problems, but they have said they've highlighted the problem areas and hope to have made significant improvements by Barcelona. This is not a good start for them.

Me: It means they're gonna spend the next couple of weeks fixing these problems and not improving the car in any way, shape or form, so they will, no doubt solve the problems, by Australia, but they won't be as fast as they thought they might have been. Because they won't have the time to develop the package that they've got.

Chris: It's been a good week for Fernando Alonso as his boss Flavio Briatore has been talking about how much improved the Spaniard is for his time at McLaren. Briatore says he is more motivated and much stronger for his troubled season away from home.

Me: He also said that when Alonso leaves the sport, he's planning to do the same.

Chris: Really?

Me: Yea, quite noble of him, isn't it? If he goes, I'm going.

Chris: Or he's just more interested in the football nowadays.

Me: Ooh.



Chris: However, it's also been a bad week for Fernando Alonso as ex-team mate Lewis Hamilton has been bad mouthing him again. The not-so-subtle swipe went something like: "He showed me just how not to behave as an F1 driver." Ooh, get you.

Me: I think this might be to do with the fact that the recent Formula 1 tests have both been in Spain and every time Hamilton makes a tiny mistake, has a little bit of an off, spins the car, ends up in the gravel, he gets booed and jeered and gets so much grief from the Spanish fans, that I think he just needed to react in some way. I don't think he's helping his situation at all, saying what he's saying but every time he went off and he had to get out of his car and walk to the grandstands, there was jeering and booing and so much criticism coming out at him. Have you seen the flags that some of the people have been hanging around the circuit?

Chris: There are a lot of quite mean signs.

Me: Yes, there's an awful lot of bad vibes coming from that country. It's a shame that he has to test there, obviously he has no choice in the matter. Certainly not going to defend him for the comments he's been saying, but it'll be intriguing to see if McLaren decide to go and test in Bahrain later this year, instead of sticking around Spain, just to give Hamilton a break from all this abuse.

Chris: That's interesting, because I thought Hamilton's comments were a bit uncalled for, but they may be in response to that. However, Fisichella's been talking about Renault in negative terms for no apparent reason.

Me: Yea, what did he say, something like, he didn't think that even though Alonso was coming back to the team that they were going to win this year and he didn't think they were ready and the car was still stuffed.

Chris: Just a bit bitter, I think.

Me: It wasn't like they didn't give him enough chances while he was there.

News and Views

Chris: The news going round at the moment is all about the so-called upgrade to the stewarding process.

Me: Which is actually a downgrade, right?

Chris: Yea, whereby there will now be three neutral stewards making the decisions plus one of Max Mosley's friends. We blogged it but wanted to share some of the comments with you because sometimes you guys say things much better than we could. Steven Roy said: "I cannot understand the logic in this. Everything I have read or heard before or after Tony Scott-Andrews appointment suggested that everyone wanted permanent stewards. The other twist in the tail is that the stewards cannot be of the same nationality as any driver on the grid. This presumably includes the nationalities of nominated and reserve drivers. I haven't compiled a list of acceptable and non-acceptable nationalities but I'm curious where all these suitably qualified people are going to come from, if the majority of the major motorsport nations are ruled out."

Me: That's a good point.

Chris: Doctor Vee also added: "In all seriousness, this is the last thing Formula 1 needs. At a time when so many people see Max Mosley as wielding too much power over F1, to put it very politely indeed, to have a chum of Mosley's become the new permanent steward is a recipe for disaster. Worse still when so many people see the FIA as blatantly favouring Ferrari, is it really so wise to bring in a man who's company very recently listed Ferrari among



it's clients, one position below the FIA and two above FOM. Max Mosley is truly in cloud cuckoo-land. He must realise that this move is highly provocative, it will not be long before people start pointing fingers and suspecting bias."

Me: Hear, hear. It's only gonna take one incident and this whole thing is going to be thrown wide open again. For the last couple of years, the one thing that has been very consistent has been Mr Tony Scott-Andrews and almost everybody had good things to say about him, and I don't know quite what his reasons are for not wanting to continue. No one's really gone into that. That's slightly suspicious after such a short tenure.

Chris: It's been a bad year.

Me: It has been a bad year, maybe he's being leant on by certain factions within the sport and he's not happy with what's going on, but generally everybody liked the idea of having him there, and it was a much improved situation from previous years. This is definitely a backwards step, isn't it?

Chris: I was gonna say, it may be alright if there was an incident that Ferrari aren't involved in but how many of those are there?

Me: Yea, the only thing that really strikes me is the cool fuel saga at the end of last year, with the whole championship positioning debacle, that would certainly get swept under the carpet if Bernie had any say in it, and in the past Bernie didn't have any say in it. It's dubious now whether or not he might do, so you'll presumably incidents like that just wiped under the floor, never to be mentioned again.

Chris: Surely that's a good thing though, because that whole incident was just ridiculous.

Me: Yea, it wasn't good for the sport and in some ways, it obviously dragged on the championship and ruined the end of the championship. But you shouldn't have Bernie in a position being able to overrule decisions just on the grounds of sporting interests. Really, what needs to be done is to look at the consistency of the rule book and how rules are applied, and so questions like this don't get raised in the first place, and then you don't need people like Donnelly to come in and arbitrate in a slightly, potentially biased way.

[Sweeper]

Chris: I don't know if you noticed, because I think we kept it quite quiet but we went to Autosport International...

Me: And got poisoned.

Chris: Yea, and they obviously covered it in their magazine, and we were in it.

Me: Well, sort of, in a very small way.

Chris: Well, they had a picture showing Jenson and the crowd gathered round the stage to watch him. If you look very carefully, you can spot me staring at him dreamily.

Me: And I'm there too.

Chris: If you look even closer, you can see you, but there is a camera over your face, so, your anonymity remains intact.



Me: Yes, there's always a camera over my face. It's the perfect picture though, isn't it? Because there's you looking glazed and dazed and sort of drooling a little bit, and then there's me professional and busy as always.

Chris: I do not drool, how rude. And on the topic of Autosport, this week's has a really funny job advert in it. They're looking for a driver, plus partner to look after a professional racing driver around Europe in 2008. Quote: "Driver's duties will be delivering motor homes around Europe, maintain vehicles to the highest standard. Partner's duties will be cleaning, preparing meals and shopping for the driver. Ideal candidates for the job are ex-F1 transporter drivers who miss their partner and want them to come along to the races." Aww.

Me: Hold on, let's just think about this. They're looking for HGV driver who's willing to drive a transporter around Europe for a race team and they wouldn't mind if that driver happened to have a wife...

Chris: It says partner, could be a man.

Me: Sorry, okay, had a partner, who wouldn't mind cooking and cleaning and shopping for the race driver. Okay, what are the chances of finding that couple?

Chris: Not very high, I can't imagine there are that many drivers out there that miss their partner's so much they'd want them to travel with them 24/7.

Me: Yes, and to have an unemployed partner who's willing to come along with them to do such menial tasks, that seems quite unlikely too. Maybe, I should apply, do you fancy doing any cooking or cleaning?

Chris: The cooking and cleaning I could do, but I take offence at shopping for the driver.

Me: Right, you draw the line at going to get groceries.

Chris: Yea.

Me: Okay. I can't drive an HGV, but I just thought it might be worth applying.

[Sweeper]

Chris: I was just browsing through my Twitter feeds, as you do, and Ollie from Blog F1 pointed out that the official Kimi Raikkonen website has a podcast. He did say, you know, it wasn't great so I was pre-warned, but when I went there, it was awful.

Me: It wasn't actually a podcast, was it? Surely because there was no feed, it was just an mp3 file, which involved a lot of people phoning up a Skype number and saying that they loved Kimi. Is that about the gist of it?

Chris: Pretty much, yea, and you know we've got the little sweepers to break up our sections? Well, they've got that same guy just doing the whole talking. The introducing of the podcast.

Me: Oh, right, the computerised guy who does news and views and that thing. Right, and they've got him talking.

Chris: Introducing the podcast.



Me: Are you sure it's him and not Kimi?

Chris: Oh.

Me: It could be Kimi Raikkonen on his own podcast. Yea, I don't understand it and I don't get it, and I'm not entirely sure what they've achieved by it, but they've got a lot of people Skyping them.

Chris: Yea, people actually ring them.

Me: No one rings us. They've got the same Skype system we've got and they've got people calling in from all over the place.

Chris: No one rings us and says they love us.

Me: Nope, no one rings in and says anything.

Chris: Talking of which, there's a Skype advert coming up, but after that, we'll be talking about Honda and Renault launches.

[Jingle: "If you've got any comments or feedback, why not leave us a voicemail? It's free if you're a Skype user, find us under the username Sidepodcast. Or you can ring us in the UK on 0121 28 TRACK, internationally it's +44 121 28 87225. If you're the more shy and retiring type, you can always email me Christine @ sidepodcast.com.]

Chris: Honda are launching their new car on the 29th January, but the big question is, what will the livery be like?

Me: Well, I have high hopes this year, because last year was a bit of a let down, it didn't look good at the launch, it didn't look particularly good on track or on television, or in the flesh. In fact, it looked worse throughout the year, when they added those names to it. So, this year, I'm hoping they've learnt from their mistakes and it's going to look really, really good. What do you think?

Chris: Well, like the car, I think it can only get better.

Me: They did release their car in anger on the track this week, and it wasn't particularly spectacular, was it?

Chris: No, it's quite disappointing.

Me: Hasn't set the world alight at all, so to speak.

Chris: Bottom of the timesheets, every day.

Me: Yea, a little bit quicker than the last one, but then, so is a tractor.

Chris: We've done a bit of digging, as we are wont to do. RealHondaF1.com have discovered a website called EarthDreams.info which has been registered to the John Brown Group. Last year, they bought a company called Fingal Creative Communications which is the company behind Honda's current website. The assumption is that EarthDreams.info will be a social network for fans to contribute to about green issues.

Me: That's...



Chris: Complicated.

Me: Yea. It all seems a bit proactive, doesn't it? It doesn't solve the livery issue, does it? And it doesn't solve the car speed issue, but I guess it gives the fans something else to do. They had this on the current site, it hasn't set the world alight either, has it? Send you pictures in, send your photos in, send your videos in to the Honda website and we'll put them on our official website. That's not gone down too well, thus far. And that was released back in July?

Chris: Well, I don't remember it being released but if I did know about it then I've clearly forgotten and um, there's very little on there. There's no fan videos, and there's like, seven photos they're getting every month.

Me: I do remember us talking about it, late summer, end of June or July, somewhere around then. They relaunched their website with the Honda Racing TV which is really good and then this little section on the side which was like Fan Zone, where fans could send in their pictures, send in their videos and Honda would manage the process of uploading them and promoting them and everybody could share in the delight of Honda. However, it's not gone down that well, there aren't any videos, the pictures that are up there can't hold a candle to Flickr where there's thousands and thousands of really good Honda pictures on there. It's a much better social website in that respect, so I'm not quite sure what they're going to achieve with this info domain and whether or not they think people are going to take pictures of their wind farms in their garden and discuss that. I have no idea what their plans are. I'm hopeful, I'm forever hopeful with that team but it may just be a massive disappointment on Tuesday.

Chris: I don't know exactly what they're expecting though, because presumably they want you to upload video of Honda and of the team, but when do they expect you to get that? Because you can't shoot video of testing.

Me: No, because Bernie owns all the rights, you can't shoot video of races. You can't film your TV.

Chris: They don't exactly let you wander round the factory every day.

Me: No, so your options are limited to absolutely none at all. Therefore it's not a great idea, but maybe with the green issue you could do a bit more. Go out to your local park and say This is what the world is like before engines destroyed it.

Chris: Here is some grass.

Me: I don't know, we'll just have to wait and see.

Chris: The funny thing is, it looks like Renault are gonna be doing the same thing.

Me: And that launches on the 28th, one day ahead of the Honda website. What are they doing?

Chris: Well, if you go to the site now, it's sort of split into two and one side says the team site and the other side says the fan site. And the fan side of things says you can meet the fans, upload photos, blog about races and much more, which sounds very interesting.

Me: Okay, so they're doing a social network thing too.

Chris: It's unlikely that Renault and Honda are gonna be battling out on track but it does look like they're going head to head on the whole social networking scene.



Me: You have two different company philosophies when it comes to this kind of thing, so it'll be wonderful watching this roll out and expand and grow throughout the year. It's gonna be an exciting year for bloggers and contributors and for user generated content.

Chris: Renault and Honda are light years ahead of all the other teams when it comes to using the internet to their best advantage. This year Renault are promising to use that live data thing again.

Me: Oh, I really enjoyed that last year. Not so much use when it was Kovalainen and Fisichella, I tended to only watch Kovalainen just to see what he was up to. This year, presumably, we're gonna get to see what Alonso's doing, that's gonna be key. It would also help if they were further up the grid, because, you know, watching them in the mid-field wasn't that exciting, you couldn't really so much going on with the whole race strategies. If they become a front running team again, especially with Alonso, it's gonna be unmissable viewing that data. It's certainly worth renewing our subscription this year.

Chris: Renault's team site launches on the 31st January, which is the same day as the new car. We've already seen the new cars though, so the launch is gonna have to be something special.

Me: Yea, the Honda, there's the livery interest, just to see if they've managed to solve the messy looking Earth design. I'm not expecting any changes to the ING Renault, presumably it's just going to be orange, blue, yellow and white again.

Chris: Those colours that you hate so much.

Me: Oh, I like them again. But the launch is gonna have to be pretty spectacular, otherwise it's just, there's that car again, and the usual team mantra's being trotted out. We'll have to wait and see but there's a lot riding on their launches this week.

Housekeeping

Chris: I set up a Facebook Group this week.

Me: I don't know what that means. I'm not a Facebooker. What does that achieve?

Chris: Well, I've had a Facebook account for a while, and I've been using it for important stuff like movie quizzes and...

Me: Playing Scrabble.

Chris: Yea, and then someone sent me an email and suggested I set up a Sidepodcast Facebook Group.

Me: Somebody sent me an email, anybody in particular?

Chris: Yea, that would be Paul Gibson.

Me: Oh right, thank you Paul.



Chris: So, I set up this group and I didn't really know what the point of it was but it's a place you can upload your photos and videos and there's a discussion board and I also threw in a couple of links to interesting news articles I'd read and stuff like that. And then I went to sleep, and when I woke up I had ten people joined.

Me: Oh wow, and where did they come from and how did they find out about your group?

Chris: I don't know, to be honest. But I had a message on there and it said "Woohoo, Sidepodcast on Facebook." Which is weird because Sidepodcast has been on Facebook for a while, but now we have a group.

Me: And people can find us. So how does it relate to the show? Can people discuss what we've talked about on the show on the group?

Chris: When a new show comes out, I'll probably post some stuff about it over on the Facebook Group so people can discuss it there, if that's where they'd rather talk about it. And I will keep my eye out for comments and all kinds of good stuff we can use.

Me: Okay, so we can maybe read some Facebook Wall posts out on the show.

Chris: Exactly.

Me: Good stuff, a job well done Madam.

Chris: Aside from that, there is no other housekeeping news because obviously we're both sick.

Me: Right, lovely.

Chris: So, we'd better go and recuperate, I guess.

Me: Okay, get better for next week. Yay.