

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / How are Mercedes setting themselves up for success next season? | Will Logan Sargeant take Williams' final seat?

Hello, everyone. A very warm welcome to this week's episode of the Sky Sports F1 podcast with me, Matt Baker. Now, on a week where Max Verstappen said he didn't like podcasts, we're going to try our best to keep you entertained with Bernie Collins and Anthony Davidson before we get on to talking a little bit about what happened in Japan. Did you guys see this?

You're aware of the cooldown room, Max Verstappen podcast. You are, you're Bernie. I can see nodding your heads. Yeah, I wasn't aware of it previous to this weekend, but it seemed to be a rolling joke. I think Norris had said something as soon as he got in there. So I wasn't aware of the dislike of podcasts, but I was aware that I had a bit of conversation in the cooldown room. The idea is basically, for those of you who haven't seen this, is that Max is in the cooldown room every single weekend, normally winning. So he's the host of the podcast, and then he's joined by two guests in second and third place. So there we go. Well, Max, if you're listening, we'll try our best to keep you entertained. I'm sure you might be, well, I don't know where you are. Max, you're probably on your jet ski, aren't you? Monaco.

The video podcast, he didn't mention that specifically. Maybe the audio podcast here, and say, ha, here we are.

Is, yeah, a Vodcast fan, let's say that for Max Verstappen. Okay, well, look, guys, you both just got back from Japan. I'm sorry. I know you're both a little bit tired and what not. It's obviously a big, big old time difference, but go and kick us off. How was Japan? Have you had enough sushi? Because I seem to see from Nat's Instagram account, it looked like you entered the same sushi restaurant every single night. I don't know how much she posted, but we went there twice, yeah, out of four nights, five nights. I lose track. All I know is that she had the shortest birthday ever, because it happened in the sky on the way to Tokyo. And obviously, because you're going kind of forwards in time, it means that the day is very short. So Wednesday basically didn't happen. We took off Tuesday, flew through Wednesday, landed Japanese time Wednesday evening. So she celebrated for a short period on the plane, and that was that. So a birthday to forget really. But yeah, then she dragged us to this sushi restaurant and kept, yeah, it was almost like the paparazzi was there, cameras everywhere. She was really enjoying herself. So we went there twice and it was, it's always a spectacle going to Japan. And yeah, they, you know, especially when the sushi master is there, working in you and slicing and dicing the sushi. And it was brilliant. Even Damon had a bit. I thought he was a vegetarian.

Maybe a flexitarian for Damon. But Bernie, how was Japan for you? I haven't been to Suzuka. I haven't even been to Japan. So just fill in myself and also the listeners, because it all looks a bit bonkers, doesn't it, in Japan? Yeah, like I love Japan. And I think the reason is it's so different to most other places you go in the world, like even the language barrier. I tried to get a tree in just a very short distance one of the nights. And you don't know any of the symbols, you don't know what any of it means. Just to try and get your ticket is really complex. You can't ask someone because nobody speaks English where we end up. So it just seems like everyone's trying

to be really helpful. So they keep chatting to you in Japanese, but you just don't, you're non-noiser. So it's really interesting, like you go like the sushi place and they really take it really seriously. But they're just, it's just so different to get anywhere to do anything. The passion is very different. I think they're as interested in us as we are in them. It's just

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like their time's been overrun by all these strange people. It's just, it's really, really interesting. Like I enjoyed the sushi place. But yeah, so it's loads of fun. I think the least fun thing we did was bowling because it was so like Western bowling. I was expecting it to be mental Japanese bowling in some way. And it was actually very close to bowling that we have at home. Everything else, you'd like, if you go to karaoke in Japan, it's a really small room, really intense, really exciting. So it was a bit like expectable from the bowling.

Yeah. So there wasn't any karaoke. Crofty wasn't on the old mic.

There was no karaoke, not this year. No, got from next year. That was next year's challenge.

Next year. Yeah. We do that. Yeah.

A bit of Robbie Williams Angels for Crofty next year. Yeah. Let's look forward to it.

And okay, so I'm conscious that Japan, we're recording this on a Tuesday and especially if you're listening later on the week, Japanese Grand Prix was three days ago at least. So we're not going to dwell too much on what happened directly in Japan just because it was a while ago, but it's thrown up some really interesting discussions and topics off the back of it.

So we'll get into those. But before we do, I just want to give a shout out to obviously Red Bull and Max Verstappen who helped them win their sixth Constructors title, an incredible achievement by the team. It was also Verstappen's 13th race win of the season, which ties him with Michael Schumacher in 2004 and Sebastian Vettel in 2013. So incredible achievements. And I think looking at the Christian Horner's Instagram account, I think they partied till the wee hours in Japan. But I think one of the most interesting things for me from this weekend was one of the interviews right at the very end. And that was with Lewis Hamilton speaking to Rachel.

And Lewis was talking about the development of the car next year. So we haven't done this on the podcast yet. Brand new. We're going to play you a clip of Lewis's interview with Rachel.

Here's what you have to say.

Feeling wise, the car felt just the same as last year. It's bouncing and sliding. So that's tough given how much work we've done to progress. And we're not any closer to the front, at least here. How much input can you have in next year's car? How much are they listening to you? How much are

you saying? How much do you feel that they are taking all that on board and that you will have something next year where you can enjoy what Max is enjoying? There are things that I've asked for that we've gone in part of the direction for next year. I think all the points that George and I give, I think, have been fully listened to. In terms of, I mean, I have no idea where the car is going to be next year. But we're a long, long way away. We've got a hope for the next six months has to be the greatest six months of development that we've ever, ever had to close that gap. To be really banging on the door. But the evidence is there, Adam McClaren's, and we can't turn a blind eye to that. We've got to look at what they've done and go in that direction. That is the direction. But I truly believe my team can do it. So when you listen to Lewis speak there, we know obviously they're going to be at the team till George and Lewis are going to be there until 2025. They're a part of this team going forward. So there's no question that they're going to be going elsewhere. So they are part of that team. But when you listen to Lewis there, what's your reaction? And how do you think Mercedes are setting themselves up for more success in 2024? Well, I think you hear a level of frustration. I've just seen Max Verstappen and Red Bull just romp away with it and destroy the competition. So you know,

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straight after the race, you're a bit devastated by that. But in a pragmatic way, looking to improve the car in every way possible. And I think he's aware, the team are aware, and everybody else that Red Bull have the advantage at the moment in a similar way to Mercedes have an advantage

before this current set of regulations. And when you've got that advantage and you're winning championship after championship, whether or not you've got penalties after cost caps or whatever, it's given you such such a backlog of time to carry on developing next year's car, you just constantly sit ahead of the competition. They're scrambling to try to make headway to catch that gap. And you've got that buffer, that margin to work on your next year's car. So that's why Lewis is alluding to the fact that we need to work harder than ever right now to catch that gap, because they're going to make massive gains next year as well. And we need to catch them, not only catch what we're behind now, but potentially where they're going to be next year in the future as well. So you've got to almost do double the work that they can, helped a little bit, of course, by the fact that the way these new regulations work in that you get less wind tunnel time when you keep winning championships. And that's why we've seen the likes of Aston Martin and McLaren make a lot of gains this year, because of where they finished in last year's championship and where they currently sit in the championship now. So yes, it will help a little bit for Mercedes in that respect. But there are things that they need to sort out with a car.

It's not, let's not forget, the car was never designed to look like this this year. It was never designed in the first place to have side pods. They switched that coming into Monaco. And it's a bit of a, with all respect in the world, it's a bit of a cut and shut job. I think the team would admit that themselves. It wasn't designed from the ground up to look like this, to behave like this. So you're fighting fires in many ways. And I think next year, starting from a clean sheet with what they've learned from this year's car and this year's add-ons, if you like, I think it must be. And I think all the hope is there. It must be a better car going into next season. Bernie, I mean, Lewis said there, you know, the next six months of development have to be the greatest six months of development we've ever had. Take us inside the Formula One team right now, obviously from your experience with Aston, with Force India, with McLaren. What is happening right now? You know, we've got six races left of 2023. How are teams getting ready

for 2024? Yeah, I think there's a few things to say. Like, if we think of the McLaren example, if we take a step back a bit, McLaren have made a fantastic gain through this year. Nobody's going to take that away, but they came from a much lower starting position. And those first few seconds of lap time are going to be easier to find than the last second of lap time gap to Red Bull that we currently have. And like Ant says, the goalpost changes all the time. The goalpost is always running away. I think actually Mercedes, out of the teams that we discuss are maybe one of the strongest positions of them. So Mercedes have a very strong team. Like Ant says, they know that they will know the weaknesses of the car now. They know it's not a full philosophy car if we want to think of it like that. So they'll be starting from a ground up design for next year, compared to Aston and McLaren. They're not bringing online a new wind tunnel. They're not bringing online a new factory like Aston have done. So they are in a set up position that I think should be smoother transition to just say, right, we're going to take this new concept. That'll be going through variations in CFD. Even within a new concept, there'll be certain routes.

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There'll be different ideas. There'll be different ideas of flow over the front, different idea for side pods. And teams tend to split it into like a front, middle and rear group, or different groups, maybe working on different concepts. And they'll be trying to see one, what the most laptop time is in that first idea, the first fundamental idea. And second, what they think the reach is going forward. So how much more development they can get out of it. And from my understanding, I'm not an error analysis, but it's how much more you can develop that concept. That's actually the difficult bit. You can have three ideas and you can benchmark them now and say, you know, is A, B or C quicker, but which one's going to allow you to continue to develop and develop. And that's maybe one or two days of going wrong at this stage where they had a design that was probably stronger initially, but actually they met the end of that development cycle. And that's the point that from an error analysis is actually difficult to do. And I actually spoke to one of the leaders one of the teams this week that said, people don't realize that actually our analysis is probably one of the most difficult jobs in the pit, William, because it affects everything else that that team does. And that, you know, it's so it's easy to be a strategist in a strong team. It's easiest, easier to be a race engineer in a strong team. It's all about the car you've got underneath you. So there'll be a frantic work going on the split between CFD and the wind tunnels could be very important in those teams. And I think Mercedes will be in a strong position because they're going back to grind zero and start with a full car fundamental swing. Hopefully. I don't know if we've got that confirm. Hopefully that's what they're doing. Yeah. And I'm intrigued to know just just obviously for us who haven't been a part of Formula One teams logistically, how does this work? Is there is there like a 2023 team that sort of seeing the car through to through to the end of and end of the races this year? And who is involved in the 2024 team? Because is it a case that I don't know what you were like as a driver? Would you be sort of knocking on the door of the design team for 2024 and going, what have you got planned? What's next? I really want to know. Or how much interest do people take? Or is it kind of all locked away secretly in one part and everyone works quite separately? Well, I do get a bit of a flavour of it in the simulator, of course, in watching the potential updates or concepts come through. And it's different departments within the team. And this is what's fascinating about Formula One teams today. All these different departments that there's not one person in a Formula One team that knows and understands every single piece and component on a Formula One car and what it does and its influence on performance. So for that, all to come together, you know, with a thousand people, let's take Mercedes, an example, around a thousand people, all coming together with all their ideas and groups and concepts and parts they're working on, all coming together to make this incredible machine is really something to behold. And to be, as I'm just a tiny cog in all of that process, it really makes you fully appreciate the work that goes into it. And also, how a leader or multiple leaders within these teams, it's a bit like making music, because you've got individual musicians and they can all play very well, their own pieces of equipment, their own instruments, but you need people to bring it all together to make excellent music. Otherwise, it's just a horrible cacophony of different instruments making all kinds of weird sounds, you know, and all like a football team, so you need someone to make it work. And that's the magic, I think, that's the real magic is someone knowing when to say yes or no to different angles of development. And, you know, we talk about

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the wind tunnel, it is just a simulation, it's a simulation tool, just like CFD, just like the actual simulator itself, just like anything that pulls off from the car, all of the data you're gathering from the car is all just put into this world of simulation. And the wind tunnel is like a very secretive, and rightly so, a very secretive world that not many people within an F1 team or anybody within the F1 team even has access to within the premises. They can't even, it's an untouchable Willy Wonka's factory of magic. And you rely on that on that department to come up with

the magic every year. And like Bernie touched on, it's so influential to the car's performance today, everything else hangs off of it. The suspension design, the weight distribution, anything, the dominance is the aero. And you'll come up with strange things, the pull rod suspension, the post rod, whatever it is. That's all because of the drive of the aerodynamics. You wouldn't normally come up with these kind of wacky ideas of suspension. Any mechanical engineer that's never worked in aerodynamics before would look at a suspension concept of Formula 1 car and go, what on earth are they doing? That makes no sense at all. It's because the aero dominates the mechanical

influence of the car. So yeah, I hope that gives you an idea as to how it works and how it all comes together. And yeah, I'm there every once in a while in the Sim as well, going thumbs up, thumbs down. I like this concept. They're not really not sure about that concept or it's just neutral. And a lot of the time that's all they're looking for. Because as the car moves on, if they've got just, if they're happy with that element of the car, and they don't want to change it, and you say, yeah, that's that feel was pretty transparent to me. That's actually a good thing. So yeah, it's a very, very interesting world and a world of stimulation.

Bernie, were you how interested were you in next year's car as a strategist?

As a strategist, you tended you, they would give the entire factory sort of update meetings on how they thought the development of the car was progressing, if they were hitting their targets, you know, any sort of big stumbling blocks that always be sort of update meetings through the year, maybe in a month or two's time. So for the final few races of the year, you get sort of the final one of how sort of when you're starting to lock down the aero surface design, because mechanical design needs to take over at some stage and they need to start to make physical bits. So yeah, there's continuous updates about what's going on. And you're you are always interested in because you have to remember there's lots of people in teams moving around or thinking where they might go or what job offer they might take or whatever. So it's fun, the teams are fundamentally trying to keep everyone interested, everyone bought into next year's design. And it might mean that things are harder at the end of this year, because you've stopped developing this year's design. So it's all about keeping everyone sort of in the loop of what progressing is. And what I'm deluded to when I was doing mechanical design at McLaren, you were making huge mechanical design compromises just because the aero wanted something different. Or when you were doing gearbox design, the aero surface might move a little bit and then suddenly there's not room for all the stuff that you're trying to fit in and around the gearbox. But you sort of accepted that aero was king. And the mechanical design still needed to be there, still needed to work, but just needed to fit with whatever surfaces the aero gave you to a large degree. So, you know, that surface, you get this overall surface of the car. And that will be beginning to be finished almost now, such that from this point onwards, mechanical design can start to pick up. And

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that doesn't mean aero design stops. It just means that some of the best surfaces that we get for the first car will be tied down, the chassis will be tied down, the gearbox will be tied, certain things will be tied down now. And then things like wishbones, front wings, rear wings, they can all change around that going forward as well. And if you had someone like Lewis Hamilton watching or standing over your shoulder in that position, Bernie, how would that make you feel? Would you welcome him being a part of that process? Or would you actually go, oh, this is best that we develop this ourselves and then you give us feedback after?

I think it depends. If he's sort of interesting in what you're doing, trying to understand the fundamentals of what you're trying to change, how the development's going, then that's good. It's good that you've got driver buy-in. It's good that you're trying to solve the problems that he has. If he's at your computer going, oh, no, I wouldn't do it like that. I'd do it like this, then that's not what you want, because he doesn't understand aero. Like everyone's got their niche market. So it is just about you do need buy-in from the drivers because you are going to make such a big change and you need to get them on board. They need to be working with you. They need to be like on spending time in the simulator, giving good feedback, really involved in what you're trying to do. It does sound like Lewis and George both are. They're both on board that they are going to turn this around and progress and bring it forward.

The good thing is that, going back to that interview with Lewis, the good thing is that both drivers have quite similar, and he touched on that, they have quite similar demand from the way the car feels. We're hearing that the Ferrari drivers, for example, Sainte and Leclerc, their styles are quite different, apparently, and that makes it very difficult for the team to know which direction really to go in in terms of aero shaping, as they call it, or mechanical design from the car. It really does compromise things. So I think part of the luxury Mercedes have is that both drivers are singing the same song here in terms of where to take the car. Fascinating. I want to talk a little bit about the last couple of races for Mercedes, and I think, I don't know if you both agree, it's probably the raciest we've seen both Lewis and George together. Certainly in terms of Singapore, where Lewis was behind George, said he was faster. Obviously, George then had the accident into the barrier, but Lewis was really pushing George there, and then we saw them pretty close on track over the weekend in Suzuka, which led to George's radio message of saying, who do we want to fight, each other, or the others, which I thought was a bit heath of the moment. After the race, to be fair, they were very cordial, saying they've got bigger fish to fry than battling each other. They're obviously going for second in the championship. Anne, how do you see this playing out for the two drivers? I guess it's probably worth pointing out now, isn't it, that this is all well and good, because they're ultimately fighting for second in the championship, as I said, or they're not in the driver's championship individually. That could all change. If they do manage to develop this car, that could change, couldn't it, but having these discussions when they're right at the front? I think it clearly would, yes. It becomes much more personal and much more competitive when you're fighting for a championship rather than fighting for the positions they were. Say, Japanese Grand Prix, for example, and yes, you always want to try and beat your teammate, but it definitely becomes more, you've got more of a valid reason to fight team orders when you're going for a championship. And then, we've seen it with the Makaran drivers as well, and the Ferrari drivers this season, where things get a bit too close for comfort and the team have

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to step in and say, think about who you're driving for here and what the ultimate goal is. Well, when you're fighting for a world championship yourself, well, I'm sorry, that's my goal. And yeah, I don't want to crash into my teammate and ruin things for the team itself, but I'm in this for myself as well. So it's a really, it's like a catch-running too, isn't it? Are you doing it for yourself or the team? And when you're not fighting for a world championship yourself, then you just kind of slip back into more, yeah, let's do this together, work together for the greater good, and until it comes to those moments where it is more about you, you kind of go from being more kind of employee to self, a limited company doing it for your own benefit. So, you know, is the driver an employee or not? It's a really gray area and one that I'd love to talk about, because I've been on both sides. I really have as a driver and as a teammate. It's not an easy question to answer, but for now, they are behaving themselves, but there's definitely a hierarchy in that team. And rightly so. Lyritus, he's earned that status in that team as a seven-time world champion, and George can't argue against that. And George is still the understudy, and he's doing a very good job on those occasions where he's got the speed over Lewis to really take the fight to him, but he's doing it in such a George Russell polite way, which is quite humorous to watch, because I know inside the car, he'll be fuming and esteeming when he's very fast at any moment, and that's why we see the near misses. The driver's coming almost to blows, almost to contact, but then he's a good boy on the radio, but he takes it. You can tell he's very British about it, and there are layers to the annoyance, I think. It always comes over as, I'm okay with this, but if you could please, very thankfully, let him through. It's going to be much appreciated. Yeah, maybe a bit more vocal if things are different, but I think for now, I think he knows where he is in the team. He knows he's got the speed. We all see it as well from the outside, and Lewis is getting his elbows out when he needs to, and I'm really intrigued by this battle, and watching George develop as a driver, and watching Lewis in his later years in his career, let's truthfully speak about that. Watching this young, hard-charging driver in George really threatening him for speed and consistency, and yeah, and it's great to watch Lewis getting stuck in as well.

Bernie, how would you manage those two drivers if you were at Mercedes as an engineer or strategist?

I think there's a few interesting battles, so the Mercedes we're speaking about obviously, but there's a few. The Ferrari boys, the McLaren boys, it's all the same. They're very, very close. It's interesting. Fred Fusser actually said something very interesting in the grid. He said, one of them's happy. I mean, they're never both happy. Whichever one's ahead is happiest, which is very, very true. I find that interesting with Lewis's comment, particularly after qualifying. I don't think he actually qualified too differently to the position he qualified in Singapore, but in Japan, he was ahead of George, and in Singapore, he was like five positions behind George, but I think actually his qualifying position was pretty close, and he was much, much happier with qualifying in Japan. So it's very interesting that, and you have to be very careful, because it's one of the only sports, water sport is one of the only sports where you've got an individual sports person that's competing for their own interest, but not necessarily always aligned with the team address. That goes for their crew as well. They're engineers in the pit. Well, you've got this dynamic of where you've got a central person, but then you've got someone to your left with one agenda and someone to your right

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with another, and you need to be very careful with all the information that comes through. You particularly don't believe that I'm faster than him information, and even when you ask the how much, you always get a number that's incorrect. So you just need to be very careful, and you have to sometimes come up with a lot of rules, internal rules of how they're going to manage that stravity situation where two drivers are competing. Is it that the lead one always gets preference in pit stops? Is it that if they undercut accidentally, they'll switch the cars later on? There's lots of different things. You need to be really careful. You know, we as a midfield team or lower down team at that time, you need to be very careful about starting the two cars on different strategies. If the person who was faster because they were in a soft retire ended up behind, you don't want to just be switching the car and fighting each other the old race. You want to do a plan that works well for both and works well together. So does that mean putting one on a one-stop and one on a two-stop just so you avoid more interaction? That's the way it's going. There's lots of things that teams can try and employ, but you really want your two guys to be working together as much as you can. But you have to remember in the back of the mind, they're a vested interest. The first person they want to beat on track is their teammate, and that's not necessarily the first person the team wants to beat. That's very different across, you know, everyone in the team's bonus championship point, garage slot next year is based on team finish and position, but the driver doesn't care so much about that. He just wants to beat the guy because he knows that way is, you know, people watching the sport, the first thing we judge them on is how they perform against their teammate. So it's very interesting dynamic in the team and there are things you can do to try and help, like I say, put them in different parts of the track, put them in different run plans and qualifying, put them in different things in the race, but ultimately, you know, we don't want to overall hurt your race in that situation either. You said there that sometimes drivers would be told incorrect information by the other side of the garage. Oh, no, what I meant was sorry, I've decided like that. What I said is, at times, a driver will say, like Lewis will say in Singapore, that he's faster about the faster than George, he'll say that on the radio. And then sometimes you'll ask, well, how much faster do you think you can go when he'll say some ridiculous number? Oh, I see. One second, a lot faster. Then on the pit wall, you have to go, let's take a bit of caution on that. Because it's probably not true, you know, the guy behind always feels like he's quicker. And often that is true. But often you have to say, well, is it because he's got DRS? Is it because he's got, you know, the loads of different reasons why that could seem thekius? The fighting turbulence as well, when you're stuck behind another car, don't forget. So as a driver, it's very hard to anticipate how the car will feel when you're in free air. And sometimes you're actually, you're being a little bit over optimistic in how the car will feel when you get into free air. Finally, you go, oh, it's not actually, yeah, giving me the grip. I thought, I'm not worried about that guy. So interesting. I was going to say, if they were telling each other different things across the garage that was incorrect, that would obviously be, well, be very, I'm sure that has happened in the past in Formula One, but probably not, not sort of normal, normal procedure. I think in general drivers from what I've seen, and what I've heard historically have got a lot better at working together. We share a lot of data across the garage where, you know, they work together and qualify and to try and get the best

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lap time. I think in the past, it was, you know, more secret score in terms of what setup changes you were doing or whatever. So I think in general, the teams have got a lot better at that. And the drivers, it's, you just, in the heat of the moment, recent situation, you just need to be trying to remove any, you know, feelings one way or the other towards the driver and try and get it dead in the middle, which is very difficult for the person in the central seat.

My brother-in-law died suddenly. And now my sister and her kids have to sell their home.

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An agent offered us a 10-year \$500,000 policy for nearly \$50 a month.

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For your free quote, go to SelectQuote.com. SelectQuote.com. That's SelectQuote.com.

SelectQuote, we shop, you save. Full details on example policies at SelectQuote.com slash commercials.

Let's move on then to talk about one of the other stories that I think is brewing and might kind of come to a conclusion over the next few weeks is the final seat at Williams because we have a full grid for next year apart from one seat at Williams. Obviously it's, we know from what James Vows has said in the past, it's Logan Sargeant's to lose. Bernie, what do you think are the chances of Williams keeping Logan Sargeant as things stand?

I think it's so hard to predict what's going on in the background of a team, mainly because although we see incidents on track, we see the pace on track, we see

we can hear his driver comes on track. We are not seeing how he's performing in the debriefs, what he's bringing to the team in terms of development, how he's interacting with everyone.

So maybe the team is really working together as a fit. But I think a few things we're telling this weekend in terms of a chem delight, because there's been so many accidents that that car isn't at the full spec. And then there was straight away another accident after that. So I think there's only so much time that a team can sustain that. And I think James is very vocal when we spoke to him on the pit wall and saying, oh well, we told him to build up, we want him to get into the weekend, we don't want him to have an accident early on, all these sorts of things. And then you still have a big accident. It's that will eventually grind a team, grind the management, if you can imagine. And it's very, it's very difficult in one of the lower teams of the grid. Now, Williams obviously can't consider 10th anymore, they're running much higher

than that in the championship. But the mechanics work so hard. And it's hard to keep motivation up if every weekend you're fixing a car, putting it back together, running it with bits. So

I think those are the things that are probably going to stand against him more than the, I don't know, PS performances, because that could be tempered by something that we're missing in the engineering meetings. But the inability to run a car at your preferred spec is very detrimental. Because you're doing half the learning, you're doing half the learning on your upgrades, you're doing half the learning on any development item that you do. And you need ideally what you want is you want two drivers that are very equal, that in FP2 you can run one in the medium on one in the hard and you can take the learning from both. So that's your ultimate aim is to have two really well matched drivers. And then beyond that, you need a driver that's fit to

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keep it on the tarmac. Sort of a vicious cycle, it sounds from what you're saying there, Bernie. And that final Williams seat then, if it's not Logan Sargeant, and obviously we don't know that yet, that I'm sure will be decided over the next month or so, who do you think would be a good option for that final Williams seat? I think it's not just me setting this, but everybody in the paddock that I've spoken to about it, I mean, Liam Lawson, what a cracking job he's done, and continue to do that in Suzuka as well. I think he might just have one final run out in Qatar next race coming up if Ricardo's hand hasn't recovered in time. So we'll wait and see if that's or when that's confirmed. But if that is the end of the road for Lawson for now, then I think he would be an amazing option for Williams. And one where both teams can benefit from, you know, in the short term, Williams can benefit from having clearly a known quantity that will jump in and do a good job. He's done enough races now in enough conditions to give people confidence. And that's what a lot of the time it's down to in a team. It's not just one person making that decision who to put in a car. It's lots of people have to be brave enough in many ways to not be proved wrong if it does go wrong. And it's like a board decision who they're going to go for. So the better your results have been like Lawson in lots of different scenarios. And you can see yes, the guy keeps his nose clean. It doesn't he's not a crasher. He's fast when he needs to be. He's a methodical worker. He's a good overtaker. Yeah, you know, he's he's a he's a team

player and he ticks a lot of boxes and he's young and he's got time to continue to learn out of the spotlight. So, you know, learning continuing to learn in the teams like team like Williams, alongside a great driver like Alex Albon, could be a fantastic relationship and one that works well for Red Bull as well going forwards because they have the luxury of too many drivers around for the amount of seats that they have available with Ricardo being signed for next year, of course. So, for me, that makes sense. He's the most logical one that I would want to put in my second seat if I was running a team. And you put a nice deal together with Red Bull.

The only negative for Williams is that you would lose that commodity. You're training somebody up to then lose them later on down the line. But in the short term, you could get a good healthy amount of points on the table and and walk away from a season with somebody that's not damaging the car all the time. So then if it's not him, you have to look elsewhere. Felipe Dragofitch has been there with Aston Martin this year as a reserve driver, almost got his chance in Bahrain from another hand or wrist injury from Stroll who just about made it back in time. But he was prepared and ready to jump in. He did a pretty decent job from what I could see at the test in Bahrain. But again, limited information. I would be less confident in putting him in the car than Lawson because I haven't seen enough of his performances in different scenarios.

You know, I haven't seen him in qualifying in Formula 1. I haven't seen him start at race. It's all I've seen is some lap time comparisons to Alonzo at different parts of the day because they weren't out there together because it's the one car. So it really starts to limit your data points on that driver. And then you've got Theo Porsche, who's leading currently the F2 championship. He'll be looking for a seat next year as well. And you go, well, I know that the thing with Logan Sargeant proves is that he was comparable to Liam Lawson in F2. He had the speed and he had consistency there and he had good race results to almost match those guys or did match those guys. But yet for whatever reason in Formula 1,

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it's not working out. And it can be such a pressure cooker environment in Formula 1 for some drivers that they struggle to drive freely enough. You drive too tense because you're not confident enough because such a scary environment is such that. You call it the Piranha Club, don't they? Because you form, you're going to get gobbled up by everyone and that can intimidate you. And I feel like Logan isn't driving the way I've seen him drive before in other categories. He's not driving the way that he knows he can drive. And these mistakes keep coming about because maybe he's trying to do things without driving in a free way. You need to be relaxed when you drive these cars. You need to let it flow. And if you're too tense and digital in your movements because you're inherently nervous all the time and with driving with a feeling like, do I really belong here? It's never going to work out for you. And some other drivers just have naturally more confidence. It's like any athlete. You can perform on a world stage, the same level that you can in a test day or in a training day. And it's the same for drivers. So it's not working out for Logan at the moment. He's going to have to ask himself questions. The team are clearly going to be asking questions. And what do you do? It's not an easy decision. Bernie, just finally, what were the attributes you looked for? What would impress you when you've got a driver coming to you? What are the key statistics? And why is there sometimes not that transfer from F2, say, to Formula One? I think you need to look. A lot of it is we do exactly what we said, although the drivers are concerned about it. We do the comparison of their team yet. Have they just been pure final points position because of unreliability? Is that a team issue or a driver issue? You try and see where the pace is in qualifying, where the consistency is. So sometimes you can have very strong results or very poor results with the championship ends up not that far apart, but it's just consistency through the whole year. In F1 now, if you go to look internally in F1, as a team, you're given all the driver radios and another driver talks to their engineers through the race. So that's the first place I go and look. What's the feedback? How is the conversation going? Is there always this heated debate? There's a lot going on. And the other thing to add to Ann's point for, particularly trying to take someone like Liam Lawson, he now has very valuable experience from a competitor team that is doing better in the championship. So that is insider knowledge that you don't get every day to a team like Williams, how they set their car up, how they do their meeting, just really simple things you can take ideas from. And that's why engineers move around. That's why everyone on teams moves around. And you end up with this sort of debrief at the start of, oh, how do they do this or whatever? And stuff like that could be very valuable development addition for Williams. Now, obviously, Albin's come from the Red Bull family as well, you could argue. And James, there's a lot of experience from Mercedes. So there's a lot going into the pot there and there's a lot to be improved on, but to have someone with some knowledge of another team, another engine, whatever it might be, is very, very valuable. So yeah, it just does seem like they have to decide between someone who's fast and extra and someone that they can develop going forward. And I agree with Ann's point that maybe someone like Lawson, if he was to stay in the Red Bull family, is detrimental in two years time, if a gap becomes available in Red Bull summer. It's going to be an interesting problem for James. He's holding all the cards. And it's that final place on the grid. So by this point in the year, I think there's

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normally a few more places still up for grabs. So yeah, it's very interesting. We will see what happens. But Ann, Bernie, thank you so much for your time. Really, really appreciate it. Go get some sleep. I'm sure it's going to be the order of the day. Sorry about the bags.

Oh, that's fine. We'll edit those out, you see. You can edit it. Yeah, it's all good.

No problem at all. Thank you both. We're going to be back next Tuesday where I'm joined by Jessica Hawkins, who drove a Formula One car for the first time. It's a fascinating interview about her.

We literally get her just as she's out the car. So it's really, really interesting

and fresh insight on what it's like to drive a Formula One car. So hope you can join us then.

Have a nice week. Bye for now.

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