

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Is Max Verstappen's success underestimated? | 'He has something special'

Hello, everyone. Welcome to the Sky Sports F1 podcast with me, Matt Baker. I hope you're well. Joining me to discuss all things Max Verstappen. I'm joined by former F1 driver, Dutch broadcaster now, Guido van der Garda, as well as Formula One content creator and Max Verstappen fan, Tom Bellingham. Hello to you both. Tom, I'm going to start with you because you are joining us still in Amsterdam. You weren't supposed to be in Amsterdam today, we were not. No, we were. We've been stranded by the UK situation, but there's worse places to be. So yeah, it's been all right. It certainly is. There certainly is. Guido, how was your weekend? You were obviously working for VeerPlay. I'm still knackered to sit. It was flat out. We had like, you know, from Wednesday onwards, we were really, really flat out from nine o'clock in the morning, actually to 10 o'clock and sometimes even 11 o'clock in the evening. You know, at the moment, we are working for VeerPlay. It's something really cool to do in Holland. The Formula One is huge at the moment, especially with Max Verstappen. So yeah, we went with the broadcaster flat out every day, many, many, many hours, but we got a very good feedback from the last weekend. So everybody was happy with what we made. Yeah. And you also, I mean, you delivered, I think, you know, one of my favorite bits of telly for the whole weekend when you were doing the interviews after the race and you said to Alonso, you know, were you going to go after Max in those last few laps? And he said, no, I want to leave the track. I mean, it was, I thought it was like a, just overall, a really good race, Guido. And I think it kind of was reflected, wasn't it, after the race? All the drivers, I said, I'm guessing really enjoyed that. It was a really challenging but good race to be a part of. No, I think, I think we were very, very lucky. First of all, with the weather. I think, you know, before the race, it was sunshine, the grid walk was easy. Everybody was relaxed. All the people could come on. And then suddenly in lap one, it started to rain. Actually, what we hoped for, because it makes the race much more entertaining than instead of Max starting first goes away. And that's it. And now with the first star guys who did the early pit stops, Czechos was leading by 11 seconds. Then Max had to do the catch up. And what you said, you know, everybody loved it. Everybody was so happy with the entertainment. Everybody was happy with the race outcome. As you said, Alonso, I think the interviews we had with him after the race, he was smiling. Pierre was smiling. He was so happy. Yeah. So I was lucky in that way that I could do the interviews and that they opened up and that they also were telling that about that he was not thinking about passing Max, because he could not exit the track. It's cool to hear that. And yeah, there's a lot of respect for the guys because it was not an easy race. Tom, what did you make of the race? I mean, I was just chatting to you before about maybe F1, the last few races, we needed that, right? After the summer breaks, come back with a race that exciting, that eventful. It was brilliant, wasn't it? Yeah, it was really good. Like Iday said, the rain fell at the perfect time, really, because when you felt the rain in the air, I was worried which can happen with Formula 1 now, where it might rain at the start and then we get a delayed start and then, you know, they wait for it to dry out a bit. But it was very cool to have the race start and then the rain came down and it was that challenging moment where you have to choose, do you stay out and brave it? Do you go for the inters? And yeah, like we said, we were due a very good race, even though we got the same outcome and Max, obviously, equaling that record. And it's amazing that the race was just so entertaining and F1 fans, we needed that very much. Yeah, definitely. So what I want to do over the

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course of this podcast, really, is use both of your experience. Obviously, Tom, you've been a fan of Max and Iday, you've known Max for a long time and just try to understand what exactly what he's doing at the moment. You know, he got his ninth win in a row this weekend, which is an extraordinary achievement that equates to Sebastian Vettel's record. He's going for 10 this weekend in Monza, which will be the all-time record. So I want to understand how he's got to this point. But before I do, I do want to continue just talking a bit about the race. And I guess, Iday, it was a really good race in the sense of it just proves how good Max is, because he could deal with the safety cars, the two massive deluges of rain, the red flag, and all of this was happening. And if we're honest about it, it probably was never in doubt, was it, that he would end up finishing first from that race? Well, after a second lap, I didn't know, because the gap between Perez and Max was quite big, but you could see straight away the head goes down, you see him getting angry and putting lap times that nobody could, making the gap from I think 11-12 seconds suddenly was like four or three seconds. The pace he had was just amazing. I think, as you said before, the driver Max at the moment has so much confidence. He feels so one with the car, one with the team, his engineer, the way they talk, the way they do things, the way they set up the car, the way they handle the radio during the race, the feedback they get, they give each other. It's just amazing. It looks like they are a married couple, and that they are performing on their best at the moment. And I think it was nice to see that Max was even though with a lot of pressure from the fans, 100,000 people a day is coming, they want to see him win, raining, a lot of music, the pressure, the king was there, everybody wants to have a quote, everybody wants to have autograph, a picture with him, that he stays so cool. And I think that's his strength at the moment, that he has overcapacity than more than any other driver to think about different things in the race, to think about strategy, to think about the setup, to think about what the best lines are, what's happening on the weather. It just amazed me how good he is at the moment.

Do you agree, Tom, that he's just performing at a level that is just superior to anyone else on the grid, basically?

Yeah, definitely. I mean, the confidence that he has in not just himself, but the team as well, obviously, yes, he's got a very good car underneath him, but he's matched a record that I personally thought might never be back, like match never be broken, you wouldn't put it past him breaking it, because we've seen dominant cars in the past, but he's only the second driver that's ever got nine wins in a row, and it just shows that he is just driving so well, and like you said, no matter what a race throws at him now, we've seen in these races, it's not just him starting on pole and winning every race. Sometimes he's had a penalty and he's started further back and he still wins, or something, the change in the weather, I mean, like Guido said, that he just stayed so calm and cool in such a chaotic race, and I also thought when Checo was about 12 seconds up the road after making the call earlier, I was kind of like, well, surely this is Checo's race win, it's going to be a big ask, and then you remember that actually in these wet to dry conditions, Max almost is actually even more superior, because that's the conditions that he likes, and he's shown that time and time again, and did again in the race. I thought that first lap was really interesting in terms of the, because obviously it's a short lap at Zandvoort, the decision to go on to a different set of tyres to either the intermediates or the wets,

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that decision had to be made really quickly, so whose responsibility is it ultimately to make that decision, you know, you sat on the grid as a driver, you know the rain's coming, after that first lap, there's obviously got to be a cutoff point, hasn't there, between where you go, no, we have to make a decision now, otherwise it's too late. Well, I think it's a decision of both, mostly when it goes from slicks to wets, it's the decision from the engineer and the team, because they see the radar coming, they see how much rain is coming, how long the rain will stay on track, and the other way around, I think when you go from rain until to slicks is more called the driver, because they see the dry line, they feel what's happening on track, but in this decision, it was really really hard, because the first part of the lap on a lap one, it was dry, until they came chicane, and in turn 13, where it started to rain really really hard, and actually I think Perez just guessed it right, and Cho guessed it right, and I think Leclerc also guessed it right, because they had like a very very poor first lap, so they had nothing to lose, they said okay, the rain is coming, boom, let's go in, and then we see what happened, and I think Perez did a very very good call, Cho did a very good call, because they were one and two after a couple of laps, but it's a very tough decision, I mean if you're leading and you're a second, third or fourth, and the rain is coming only in the last quarter, what do you do? You stay out, because the rest of the track is dry, but then it started to be a lot of rain, then you have to come in, because you are a passenger. Yeah, it was very interesting, there's been some fascinating team radio that's emerged, definitely from that opening lap, it's pretty hairy. Okay, I just word on the event as well, because I've got a few questions from people at home, one of them, Tom, is actually for you from Kakatoko on Twitter, said how was the VIP experience at the Dutch Grand Prix, because obviously you were there in 2021 as well, I don't know if you were also VIP in 2021, but how was the experience of doing that? Yeah, so I've been very fortunate that I've done two Dutch Grand Prix, and the first year we got to experience being in the grandstand opposite the main straight, obviously Max winning that as well, a lot more flares that year, and a lot of techno and stuff like that, it was a very cool experience, I've never been to a Formula 1 race where it felt like you were a football game, or even a music festival or something, it was constant cheering and chanting and stuff, which was a really cool experience, and then this year we were very

lucky that we actually, on the Sunday, we had a guest pass from Daniel Riccardo, which was a bit unusual, because he wasn't there, so thankfully we were going to get the passes before his injury, but we still obviously were able to get into the paddock, even though his team had gone home, which is obviously a very sad and unfortunate for Sodam, but yeah, we had an amazing experience, and it's the first time ever that I've been under the podium, Red Bullets go under the podium at the end, never experienced that before, and me and Matt, my colleague at P1, yeah, we were

you know, as fans living the dream where we were like under the podium just trying to soak it all in, literally soak it all in, because Fernando was right in the champagne over us and stuff, it was amazing, it was so good, it felt very surreal to be on the other side where you're watching the drivers come in to park Verme and stuff, it was so cool. Incredible experience, and actually, it was my first time in Zambor, and I just thought what an amazing event it was, so well organized, and the viewing spots around the track, you know, I had my dad with me this weekend, you met Tom, and he was just saying there are just so many places around the track that

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you can you can see, and it's you know, it was it was it's pretty reasonable value as well, like it was just a great a great race, and also Guido, I was going to say what an amazing stat that I think is between 97 and 98% of people arrived at the track by sustainable transport, whether that's on bike, on a train, or by walking, I mean you guys know how to put on a good event, don't you, that's incredible. Well yeah, I think yeah we can be proud on that that we have such an event in Holland, you can see that the Dutch people, they like to party, like to have a good time, I'd say it's like one of a family festival, what's going on in Zandvoort, because every year every year they like people want to come, want to see the race, of course, want to see Max winning, but the entertainment around the track, with the music, with the DJs, with the singers, with André Vieux, and who is doing the national anthem, it just amazed me every year, it's like getting goosebumps when you're standing there, it's like, you know, I have to say I'm a very proud Dutchman at the moment, because we can put something in Zandvoort, I think five, six years ago we never thought it would be able, so I think the team, and I think special Bernath van Oranje, who's the owner of the track, they did an amazing job with their team to put an event like this, and every year to amaze people that it is just a big event, I even ask Fernando Alonso, because you know, you have the red flag, you're standing there with your car in the pit lane, and suddenly all the people around you, you hear big music, they start to scream, dance, go crazy, and suddenly like 15 minutes later you have to put the helmet back on, and you're like, okay, am I in a discotheque,

or I have to go racing, you know, it's just crazy, and ask him this, he said, yeah, well, you know, once you put the helmet on, you're back in the game again.

You just have to basically keep in the zone, ignore everything that's going on around you, and it was, I mean, it was loud on the grid, just before the, you know, they ramped up the music, just, I mean, you couldn't hear anyone think, I don't think Nat could hear, she didn't interview Steve Carell on the front of the grid, I don't think they could hear each other, it was ridiculously loud, and okay, that's sort of, I mean, it brings us on nicely to talk about Max Verstappen, because obviously one of the main reasons that we've got the Dutch Grand Prix

while we've gone back to Zandvoort is because of Max, and obviously his success, and yeah, as I said in the intro, I just want to get into and understand how he's got to this point, and Guido, I thought you'd be a brilliant person to ask about this, you've known him for a long time. Take me back to the first time you came across the name Max Verstappen, how did that all come about?

When he was born, yeah, well, I mean, I knew Joss from a very young age, I used to race actually in his go-kart team when I was 15, 16 years old, I was young when he was 13, so I met him, I was racing for Joss Verstappen racing, then I went to move on, he went to do Formula 1, and actually in 2002 he got paid off his contract in Formula 1, I had him in the phone in December in January, he said, well, can I help you out regarding coaching, regarding engine tuning for the last year you do a go-kart? So we started the way, he starts to do two of my go-kart engines, I think it was a very, very successful year. I lived more or less half at his place in Belgium, and Max at that time was three, four years old. I was sleeping in Max's bed, Max was sleeping with Joss, in the evening we were playing PlayStation together with Max because he was still young, but when he was losing he was even trying to throw the controller away, he was angry,

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he was already very passionate about racing, he saw his dad and me going to the go-kart, he even went to some races. And a funny thing, on the end of the year I won the World Championship

with Joss, which was a very wonderful year, the engines were flying, and on that time it was, I think, October, November, Max jumped in for the first time in a go-kart in Gang, and I was part of that. So yeah, then what is it, 20, 22 years later, 23 years later, we have a three times, nearly three times world champion, and yeah, from the beginning of on, the Max has something special in his eyes, the way he does things, the confidence, the way he plays with the car, the way he races, I always say it's a bit of dancing, you know, I mean, when I see him dance, it looks a bit strange, but when I see him racing, it just, it just so much control, just unbelievable. Tom, I was, I was going to ask what your first memory of Max is, but you're probably not going to match Guido's. It's going to be whatever it is, it's probably not going to be quite as impressive as knowing the moment he was born, but can you pinpoint a moment as a fan when you first came across him, and you first started to become aware of what he was doing in the junior categories? Yeah, absolutely. So I actually, as a kid, had a weird fascination with the Dutch national team, like football, and I don't know why, it was maybe just the bright orange, and I was like, oh, that's really cool, and then when, I think when Joss was driving, he was driving for arrows, and it was, you know, like an orange car, and being like, however old I was, like seven or eight, I was just like, oh, that's cool, I like that. So then when I heard that, you know, Verstappen, the son of him was driving and going to be in Formula Three, you know, had heard amazing things that, you know, was going to be an exciting driver, and I think I watched some of the races he was doing in Formula Three, and he was very much the kind of driver that I like. I've grown up liking the drivers that are, you know, like Montoya's and people like that, that aren't afraid to make a bold overtake and are exciting on the track, and I remember actually thinking, so it would have been, I think, 2014, he was in F3, and I was like, right, I'm going to support Max, I'm going to follow his career up until Formula One, and then I'll be this, like, hipster fan that's known him for ages, and then the reality was he was so good at F3 that he was in F1 the very next year and get to watch that journey going up in the junior categories, but it was a big surprise because I actually used to freelance work for Red Bull, so I actually knew that he was going to get that Torosso C in the big announcement for us, so that was also really exciting, and yeah, it was a crazy thing to happen at the time, you know, 17-year-old kids coming to F1, and I think there was quite a lot of, maybe, backlash that he was going to come in, and, you know, he's far too young, it's ridiculous that he's coming into Formula One, and actually, you know, he's here doing incredible things in F1 now.

Certainly is, yeah, Guido, what do you remember of that period when he first arrived in Formula One?

Obviously, the youngest driver to start a Formula One race, then the youngest driver to win a Formula

One race, he certainly was noticed, wasn't he, very early on in his career?

Oh, I think already in Go-Kart, you saw that he was spectacular, you know, he was doing things on a very young age, winning championship, European, world championship, and of course, from that time

to go from Go-Kart to a race car, it's a bit different, you know, it takes a little bit of

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time, but he was doing a test in England with MP Motorsport for the first time for more Renault car, and I had just sent a phone, he said, I don't know what's happening, but in the rain, he's like one second quicker than a guy, he's already one year, and he was the first morning in the race car. He said, this is unbelievable what's happening here, so that was the first time I heard already amazing stories, of course, like Tom Seller in F3, he was spectacular.

First time, I remember him in a Formula One car, he was in a test, in free practice one in Japan, on that time I was the reserve and the third driver of Sauber in 2014 it was, and it was, yeah, you know, when he jumped in the way that he was doing the lines, the way of the confidence he had already, all the press was there, there were like 100 photographs making pictures in front of the garage, and he stayed so cool, he was like, you know, I jump in, I do my thing, and he was straight away quick, and yeah, I think from the beginning onwards, when he jumped in a race car, was spectacular, when he jumped in a Formula One car, he has something magic, and you know, he only knows one thing, and that's racing, and he's doing it all his life, even when he's home, he's on the simulator, playing things, even when he has a winter break, one month doing nothing, he goes with his father with the Porsche GT3 on track, having fun, he's just, you know, he lives and breathes racing.

You mentioned his father there, Guido, I mean, how much of what he was doing early on in his career, do you think has helped him now? You know, I'm recalling all the stories of him, you know, helping him to learn how to drive in the wet conditions, or going through all these scenarios that he might experience in the future, in Formula One, or wherever it was going to be, and just preparing him, allowing him to be the best driver he could possibly be when it mattered most.

I think Joss is the most important guy in his career, what happened until now. I think as I work with Joss as well, he's hard, he's tough, he has the experience, he's been racing himself in go-kart, in race cars, Formula One, a couple of years, so he knows everything about the sports, and to guide your son through that, it's something really amazing, that how he did it, and how much of a passion, commitment he gave to Max, and that's been unreal, I think a lot of people don't know the background stories, but he gave everything what he had to put Max in Formula

One, and they still work together, you know, Joss still gives advice, they still speak about the car, the setup, the procedures, the things what has to be done, and I think Joss made a lot of, well, he made some mistakes in his career, and I think he learned Max to not do the mistakes in his career, and I think, you know, the combination Max and Joss is just perfect, and I have a lot, a lot of respect for Joss, and also the whole management, and his mother and his sister, because it hasn't been easy, but yeah, he's nearly three times World Champion, so that's also for Joss. Tom, what do you think, I mean, you alluded to it with what you liked about him in terms of referencing Montoya, and that kind of go-for-everything attitude, how do you think fans have warmed to

Max Verstappen's style, what is it about his style that makes fans enjoy what he does on track? Yeah, I mean, I think he's one of those characters that some of his moves on track, you can have a love or hate relationship with it, because when you get those aggressive privacy, they are controversial, but it's something a lot of people love as well, and I think you could see it straight from when he was Torosso, you know, I think it was around the

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outside at Spa, you know, he put an unbelievable move, I think it was on Felipe Nasser at Spa, and it was these kind of things that you were like, wow, and if you can stand out in a car that's, you know, can only really manage 10th place or 11th place or whatever, it just showed how good he was going to be the one day, you know, he did get a good car, and obviously when he did make that switch to Red Bull, he ended up winning his very first race as well, which was absolutely crazy thing to happen after all the controversy, and I think like Guido's alluded to it, it almost just seems so cool about it, and nothing really seems to phase him, and I think that's why we're seeing that level of dominance now really. Yeah, it certainly doesn't seem to be that phased by the records, these continually breaking week on week. Guido, can you pinpoint a time when the Dutch fans truly fell in love with him? Was there a moment or a win? When did Max Manier in inverted commas start? I think when I got kicked out of follow one. No, I think, you know, it's, I think from the beginning onwards, when he jumped in in follow one in 2015, as Tom mentioned, you know, the passes he made, he was spectacular, there was something new, he was fire, he was young, he made follow one spectacular again, because on that time maybe it was a little bit boring, and with Max's stop, but there was always something going on, and there was passes, and crazy races, and what you said, he went from Toro Rosso to Red Bull, started to win the race, he was like, wow, what's happening here? And even in Holland that time, everybody was like, you know, in football, and other sports, and suddenly, I think since his first win, it really started to explode in Holland, and you see now, it's the third time in a row in Zandvoort, we have a race, it's fully packed every day, the merchandise goes crazy, everybody in Orange, if I even on the street in Amsterdam, I go to the butcher to buy my steak for the night, they're crazy, how was it? Cool, it's, you know, it's just about, it really is huge at the moment, and as one guy asked me last week, and you know, in the time we had like, Johan Cruyff was the biggest athlete in Holland, but I think now Max is probably maybe bigger than Johan Cruyff. What other Formula One drivers have this level of fandom? I guess you could look at perhaps our younger crop of drivers like Lando Norris, and Charlotte Claire, they've obviously, they've got huge followings, but perhaps not a, maybe a national following of just one country that seems to adore them so much, is that fair? Yeah, I think so, I think that is probably part of it as well, you know, in the UK we've been very fortunate to have a lot of world champions come through, and of course, you know, when Hamilton got into Formula One and was successful straight away, F1 definitely grew to a point that it was a successful sport, and exciting anyway, but yeah, I'd probably, a comparison maybe what I could think of is maybe Fernando Alonso that, you know, Spain had never had a Formula One race winner before, and Fernando came in and suddenly started, you know, challenging Michael Schumacher for race wins and then world championships, and suddenly Formula One exploded there, and I think you've seen that with the Netherlands even more, you know, like you mentioned at the start of the show, I'm stuck in Amsterdam for a couple of days, and you walk around, and you still see like, you know, even in Amsterdam, like Manchester Stop and pictures on the wall, or in shops and stuff, so yeah, it's a huge thing,

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you know, over there, because yeah, they've now got this huge star that's, well, he's completely, you know, dominating the sport at the moment. Certainly is. Guido, how has he changed, do you think? How has his driving style changed over the course of those years? Is it got, would you say, perhaps a bit more cautious, reserved, or maybe he doesn't, he certainly considers perhaps finishing the race, perhaps rather than going for those gaps that maybe aren't there, is that fair? Yeah, I think it's also, he's more mature, he has more a few years now in the car, and more a few years in the paddock, more races. At the beginning, when he arrived, he was just full of fire, and every get-piece, he went for it, but he's also thinking now of the long-term picture, you know, he wants to win, of course, as many races as possible, but when he has a problem, or when there's something going on, for example, last year, Silverstone, when the car was working, he still finished in the points, you know, he's thinking about the championship, thinking about the long-term, and I think that's something that he really grew up from the last few years, but don't forget, when he was fighting Lewis Hamilton for the world title, he really had to go flat out and fool for it, because on that time, he didn't have the best car, and he still won it, of course, and the last race, it went completely crazy on that time, but then, when he got the best car, the paddock, let's say, he's doing an absolutely amazing job, so I think that the most what you can say is more mature, on the human side of being, is the same, I know him for all my life, for me, it didn't change, of course, a lot more people are interested in Max, and they want to have something from him, and pictures, and what so on, but to me, we always stay the same, he stays two feet on the ground, even the whole family, they're so down to earth, and I think that's his strong point.

I want to get into some questions now from people at home. At Adam on Twitter, do you think Max would prefer to be battling Will to Will competitively with other drivers for victories, or is he happy winning pretty much unchallenged by 20 or 30 seconds every race? I know that didn't happen this weekend, but I can obviously, we can point to a lot of races that did happen over the course of this season. Tom, what's your view? Do you think Max at the front would rather be going Will to Will more regularly? I mean, I think he's been asked this quite a few times this year, and I think he's said, you know, this is what I've worked towards to be in a dominant car, you know, and it is, of course, it is much easier as a fan, I would, you know, it's great that he's winning, but I personally would like to see him have more of a battle, because that's, you know, the exciting side that made me support him in the first place, but, you know, he's finally got that car that can dominate the sport, so he knows that everything's running like clockwork, and he can just go in and have not quite a Sunday drive, because you mean the last time, I mean, it was an absolutely crazy race, and he still ended up winning, so I do think that, yeah, he enjoys that racing side of it, but he's probably, I guess you have to put it in, put yourself in his shoes, even though it seems a very long time ago now, with how dominant he is, he was the one that was watching Mercedes be 20 seconds up the road, and no one could catch

them, and now he's finally in that position, I think he, you know, he's enjoying himself.

Do you agree, Guy, though?

Yeah, yeah, fully, I think he prefers to win with 20-30 seconds every race, instead of battling, because it makes life more easy, where you're on the lead, you know, you can control the race, you can control the tires, you're, it's just something more easier, but

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of course, when the competitors will come more close, I think he's ready to fight.

What are your thoughts, this is a tweet from Jen, what are your thoughts on Max's project to bring sim racers into the real thing? Guido, what do you, what do you make of, obviously, from my understanding, he spends a lot of time sim racing, do you think, I have a couple of questions to this, do you think that is helping him in Formula One, do you think he is a better driver, because he's a good sim racer, and also, yeah, what do you, what do you make of this project that, that he's trying to, to use sim racing to get more drivers into F1?

I think, yeah, he becomes a better driver, because he drives a lot in simulators, and of course, he also drives in real life, so the combination is perfect. But only if you only do sim racing, and then you go to a race car, you don't have the feeling of the g-force, the brake force, the steering wheel, what service, completely different. But I think what his project wants to be, is like coming in, making a sim driver be really, really fast, and then put him in a race car. And I think he's really going to push for that, and I'm sure when he finds the perfect guy, who is also very good in the simulator, put him in a race car and see what happens. And it's not easy. We've seen it, I think, with an English driver, he went also with Gran Turismo in a simulator, then he went to GT, I think he did the work, he did even win a couple of races. So there is an example that it can happen, but it's, it's not easy.

Tom, do you think it's a very separate part of motorsport at the moment, sim racing, and can you see in the future that becoming more and more aligned, in order to perhaps become, maybe feeder series is too strong, but identifying talent at sim level, because ultimately it's a lot cheaper to race a sim than it is to race a Formula One car, right? So if you can identify talent early on, then I guess it's, it could be beneficial for both parties.

Yeah, definitely. I think the, obviously, like you said, it's a very different, not completely different skill, but obviously, you don't get that same feeling as being in a, in a real car, but I do think that the more it improves, I mean, you know, growing up playing Formula One games on a controller is now very different. You can quite easily have, you know, great sim setup, some of the sim setups you can get now, you know, it's so realistic and the games are more realistic and the simulators and things that you can do at home. So people can now, you know, I think the key thing is the money side of it, that it's cheaper to, even if you buy a very expensive simulator or an iRacing or whatever, is a lot cheaper than going to GoCarts, flying around the world and all that side of things. So you can identify maybe a talent there, and then a team or, you know, if they get the financial support to grow, they could get into it that side. I think, I think there's a way that that could, I don't think you would ever overtake GoCarting, but it's another avenue to discover talent, I guess.

Yeah, certainly. Let's move on to another question. Kevin on Twitter, why is, why is Max so far ahead of the current field? Everybody says a dominant Red Bull car, but yet Perez struggles. It's nothing like Hamilton and Rosberg. Who is going to be the driver to race and challenge Max Guido?

I'll go to you on that one. Who do you think is going to be the one who's going to get closest to Max over the next few years? It's hard. I think at the moment, he's such on a different level than compared to everybody else. I mean, look at all the teammates he had the last couple of years. I mean, he destroyed everybody. And I think I rate Perez quite high. He was my teammate in GP2 that time. I think he did a very good job with all the other drivers he'd been racing Formula One, but he has a tough time. And of course, it's a mental thing sometimes, because,

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you know, if you have a driver who's always quick, he's always fast, he always pulls, gives you, I don't know, three, four, five, six tenths, or even more qualifying, it just hurts mentally. And, and I think that's a little bit what's happening, because Perez, I think is a good guy. He's quick in the beginning of the year, you know, when he's in the flow, he's doing a wonderful job. But once, you know, he gets, he gets a real much stopper next to him. He's struggling. And yeah, if you maybe have to pick a couple of drivers who can come close with the same car, with the same team, he's picked up on Fernando Alonso, looked at the performance he did again last weekend, he was really on fire, you know, the experience as he's still super fast. Lewis Hamilton, same. Yeah, I think he's rated very high. I mean, I've been racing in myself, very young age, I think he's very, very good. And what I want, I rate very high, is Landon Norris. I think he is, he is the one, maybe in a few years to become very, very close to Max's stopper. Tom, are you, you get much traction on kind of a Lando and Max's team partnership? Do you see that fans want that? Can you see that happening in the future? It's a difficult one, because yeah, I mean, I think before McLaren's resurgence, I would have said, you know, maybe Lando does need to take a risk and maybe go alongside Max. I personally don't think Lando would beat Max in that team. You know, it's Max's team, Max's dominance, like Guido said, like he's just mentally on top of every other driver at the moment, because he's got that mentality of never seems to have a day off. You know, he wants to just dominate all the time and never kind of lets that slip. But yeah, Lando now in the McLaren, I think it's better for him to stay and be a team leader, because I don't think that, I personally don't believe that anyone that would go into that Red Bull alongside Max would beat Max. They'd rely on building another team, like a team around them and Mercedes, Naster, Martin or whoever, to get on Red Bull's level to challenge for a title. I don't think you can get into that Red Bull team and beat Max, because they're just, you know, it's perfect harmony at the moment between man and machine. Yeah, I think that's probably true. In terms of the future, Guido, and we've heard, it's sort of, I feel like it's gained a bit of traction this year in terms of what Max will do, how long Max will race in Formula One. You know, we know that it's all he's done really, isn't it, since he was four or five years old. Racing, as you said earlier, has just been part of his life for so long. Can you see him taking either a break from Formula One and coming back, or can you see him racing in another series and then coming back to Formula One, or maybe just retiring very early on in his career? Well, it's a tough one. Of course, he's been a long time in Formula One already, and I think he wants to continue, you know, he has a contract until 28. So, for sure, he wants to win races, he wants to win championship, but he's not looking for records. And I know personally that he still is a big favour of doing different races, like 24-hour Le Mans. He really loves to do that, he wants to win it. Daytona, he wants to win. There's another race, 24-hour race. In South Africa, he was very, very high on the list that he wants to do. So, he wants to explore other things in racing, he wants to see different categories, he wants to race with teammates, and I'm sure he's going to go and do that, when, of course, we don't know. But I don't see him really saying, look, I'm stopping now at Formula One, I'm going to do something else, and I'm going to go back to Formula One, a bit like Fernando Alonso did. I think when he stops Formula One, he's going to focus on the other projects, and then he will not come back. In terms of those other projects, I guess that

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points to the fact he's a racer, right, through and through. He's not just focused on Formula One, he wants to try Guido, the other projects as well, because I guess he'll get so much satisfaction. Even racing with Joss, I think that's been spoken about before, hasn't it? How that they would potentially like to race together in the future?

Yeah, of course. And they like to do it, but it depends a little bit on Joss, if he's still on it and he wants to do it. I also ask him, can we not do Lamar together? I mean, we put a full dude, touch squad, Joss, Max, and me in it. I think, how wonderful would that be?

But he's still a Formula One, and he has to focus on the next couple of years in Formula One. I think once he's done with that, and he's, let's say, ready to do something else, he will do also amazingly well in every other race car he will jump in. I just want to move on to what Fernando Alonso said after the race yesterday, that it's underestimated sometimes what Max is achieving. I thought that was a really interesting quote, because obviously, Fernando understands just how hard it is to win a world championship, to have the longevity that he has had in the sport. Tom, I mean, do you agree with Fernando that perhaps we are, as an F1 community, maybe, still underestimating just how impressive what Max is doing at the moment?

I think so. There's obviously, you know, there will always be that side of Formula One where people try to diminish people's achievements because they've got a very good car in it. That's something we saw with even, like, Lewis Hamilton when he was dominating. There was that area on Twitter where people were like, oh, well, you know, it's just the car. And it's easy to say that, but you have to get to that. When you get that car, you have to deliver. And Max, you know, this season, I don't think that Red Bull is an unbelievable car, but we've seen in the history of Formula One cars that are on that level, and no driver has managed to get this level of dominance. And I think that's something that Max could achieve this year, that I've always felt that, I think you go back to 2020, I think it was, when the Mercedes was absolutely clear, and you can watch old races from that season. And the whole field is lapped by the Mercedes. And there's one driver that's not, and it's Max, and somehow he would challenge Bottas. Sometimes he'd even beat Hamilton in that. And it didn't make you wonder, geez, how good is this guy going to be if he got a car that good? And we're seeing it play out exactly right now. Because so far, if this carries on, it will be the greatest season we've ever seen in Formula One, because he's had two second places and won everything else that never happened.

Before. So yeah, he has that. It's easy to say he's got a very good car, because he does. But then one, you can look at his teammate, and also you can compare it to other levels of domination and things in the past. And the reality is that he's matched a record of nine wins in a row. You wouldn't put him past beating that. And yeah, his dominance is quite crazy this year, to be honest. And I think it all comes down to what Guido said earlier about his mental sort of, he doesn't want to give anyone a chance. And I think that that is why he just can continue to dominate the way he has done. Well, I know, obviously, Guido, from a from a Dutch perspective, I'm sure Max can do no wrong. You know, he is widely celebrated, and he's on the front page of every paper when he wins. Do you think globally, internationally, we still not quite recognizing, like Fernando says, that we're still not quite recognizing the achievements of what Verstappen has achieved? I don't know. I think, I think he is because all the the internet sites, all the podcasts, all the websites, all the newspapers, they, they, they truly think very,

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very high of Max Verstappen. But I think the other side, because he's very down to earth, he still can have a, let's say a little bit of a normal life. I think he was a little bit more outgoing with going to all the events where you have the things where on the VIP, on the red carpet, the show, whatever, I think Max, he only wants to race and wants to have fun with his family and with his friends and then goes to a race and then back home. And that's it. And I think that's a little bit of different way. But as a driver, I think everybody has huge respect for him, even Fernando Alonso saying that last weekend. And that's nice to see. And I think that's all what he cares about. All right, perfect. Just, just a couple of questions then, really, really on Monza this week. And we know that Max is going to go for 10 in a row. Guido, your thoughts then on, on, on, on how possible that is in the Italian Grand Prix this weekend. Do you think we will be in a week's time looking back and saying, wow, we've now got a new record breaking Max Verstappen? 100%. Because for me, I think he's just on fire. I think that car will do really well in that race. I guess Ferrari will come close as well with Leclerc being always quick there. I think the Ferrari, they have like a bit of a pressure from all the fans and all the Ferrari, all the T-Vosys. So they have to do well. I think that car is still quick on a straight line, the Ferraris. So they will battle Max Verstappen. But on the other hand, I think Max will take pole position, win the race, and we'll have a new record. But the question is actually, how many more races are you going to win? Maybe it goes up to 12, 13, 14. It can happen. Yeah. Wow. I mean, if we, yeah, if we go up to those numbers, it'll be, it'll be extraordinary. Tom, just find a word from you, really, on, on, on actually Ferrari at, at Monza, because obviously we missed Imola. So this is the first time Ferrari sort of returning to, to home turf this year, not been a great season for them. It's been, it's been up and down, and it wasn't a great race and Zanvo for them. So what do you think the expectations are going to be like of the T-Vosys this week? And how are they going to manage that? Because, as I say, the car, the car doesn't look as good as good as it should. Yeah, it's a strange one with Ferrari, because last year they were, you know, making mistakes and, and having those issues, but they were released at the front challenging, you know, they could get wins and things like that and podiums, whereas now, the expectation, I guess, is a lot, a lot lower because they're, they're battling for you. The podium, if that, sometimes four fifths, six. So I don't think there'll be, they'll look, they'll always be pressure on Ferrari at Monza to deliver, but I don't think there'll be the huge expectation for them to win, like maybe we saw last year, because the car was, was better. I think a lot of people, unsurprisingly, will expect Max to win the race, but I think, you know, Ferrari to maybe get on the podium would be a great result for them, really. Yeah, well, we will certainly see what happens. Guido and Tom, thank you so much for your time. Really, really appreciate it. We will be back next Tuesday to look back on the Italian Grand Prix. I hope you can join us then. Bye for now.