

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and PIASTRI | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

Hello everyone, welcome to this week's podcast.

We've got a special episode for you this week.

I've managed to gatecrash Sky F1 filming day, and ahead of this year's Ashes, Sky F1 and the Sky Cricket team have come down here to film a cricket match.

Joining us are Team McLaren, Lando Norris and Oscar PIASTRI.

So while they're filming, I'm going to get through as many of the questions you submitted as possible before I chat to Damon and Rachel about the weekend's Spanish Grand Prix and how much Mercedes phones can read into their double podium.

Let's get straight into it and chat to Lando Norris.

Hello Lando, how are you?

I'm very good, thanks, how are you?

I'm very well, thanks.

How was the cricket first question?

How was the cricket?

I mean, we lost.

It was a sad thing, but it was actually really fun.

You got six?

Did you not get a six?

It was close.

In my eyes, it was a six.

Yeah, okay.

But I've not played cricket since I was 13 years old or something, 12 years old.

So I brought back some memories.

I feel like I'm as bad as what I was back then even, but it was good fun.

Yeah, we're speaking to you after Spain and obviously a slightly disappointing result.

Great quality session of course, but a slightly disappointing result.

We can move on from that because Lando Norris fans have been in touch with some questions.

Quite a few actually, so thank you very much Lando Norris fans.

And they on Twitter want to know if a bad result on a race weekend, is it very hard to get over it?

How do you get over it in your downtime?

Depends a little bit on the reason for the result.

If it's definitely through my own doing, a lot longer to get over.

If it's my mistake, whether I crash or I spin or get a penalty, if it's 100% down to me, even say 50% down to me, it's a lot worse than if it's just because we don't have the pace in the car, things like that.

It depends a lot on the situation we're in.

Sochi 21 was probably one of the hardest things to get over.

Not simply because of what happened, but also what we were almost achieved.

So it depends on the situation of how things happen, what is for and so on.

But I'm a lot better now than what I was.

I used to struggle probably a lot more back in 19, back in 20.

Now, I guess I just look at it in the constructive way of learning what went wrong, how can you

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

fix it, how can you be better at whatever the problem was, and just try to move on from that.

Is that a case of doing things in your downtime like golf or stuff that's just away from racing that's completely different and that takes your mind off things?

Sometimes.

Sometimes you just want to stop thinking of it.

It takes the emotion out of it.

I think it's the emotion side, which is the one which makes you sad and frustrated and all of this.

And that's what's not very constructive.

So to get rid of that, it's a couple of days off.

Just with my friends or family or alone, whatever it is.

Being pulled out by eight-year-olds.

Exactly.

So just all of these things.

It takes your mind away from racing, which is a good thing.

And then you can kind of come back and re-look at things from a different perspective and just with a fresh mind, which is always important.

So yeah, the relaxation, the taking time away is very important.

But at the same time, I always want to try and figure out what the reasons were and how can we do a better job next time.

Absolutely.

Right, stay on Twitter.

Would like to know how excited you are for the new technical appointments within the design group and with the new wind tunnel coming online.

How competitive do you think McLaren are going to be in 2025?

I don't know what he's picked.

He's picked 2025.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Of course, from the side of the team and the new people, very happy.

I think there's some big names coming in, which is always a great thing, a great addition.

People who have been in the sport for many years, who have been a crucial part in success of other teams, a lot of success in other teams.

So just knowledge is one of the biggest things in Formula One and personnel.

So I think getting some big guys in, not that we had bad people because that's absolutely not true, but just making the force bigger is what we needed to go and compete against these other teams, Mercedes, Ferrari, Red Bull and so on.

So yeah, it's a very good thing.

So fresh at the time being, but already, actually there's been some good improvements from the development rate and things like that, new ideas, new perspectives.

So already good progress has been made.

So therefore, I guess I look forward to this year.

I look forward to how we can go into a winter and be better prepared for 24.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

And by then, you know, we'll have the new wind tunnel and we'll have the new simulator, more people coming in 24 beginning.

So then I look even more forward to 25.

So yeah, a lot of exciting things.

I guess I tried in a way to not look too much at the future, but when you're struggling and difficult weekends, then you also want to look at the future, you know, so yeah, different minds on both.

But I'm very excited for what McLaren are doing, what they've done, and the changes we've got ahead.

Yeah, when you poach someone from another team, is it kind of like, I don't know, signing a striker from another team in football, do you get that kind of buzz and that thrill from going, oh, you know, we've got Rob Marshall from Red Bull, someone who comes with his experience and his credentials?

Yeah, I mean, I wouldn't have used the football analogy, but I think, yes.

I mean, I don't know these guys, I guess, personally, I've not been in Formula One anywhere near as long as the people who are the guys who recruited these guys, you know. So I just have the respect for knowing what they've done, what they've achieved, whether it was with Red Bull, Ferrari, Mercedes, whatever team it is.

Like you've got to have respect and, yeah, look forward to working with these people because they're like, I guess, the F1 drivers of whatever other job it is, you know, whether it's aerodynamics or performance or design, they're like the Formula One drivers of that. So it's cool and you look forward to working with those people because when you hear them start talking and they go into the details, I love that stuff, you know, it's impressive.

So, yes, very positive for the team, but it's not always down, it's not even down.

To me, it's down to the guys.

You weren't in the job interview process.

I was not.

I just said get the best people and that's what they try to do.

I'm sure they've done a very good job.

Kaylee on Twitter would like to know, when is Landog going to revive Lando.jpeg?

I think your last post was in April.

It was.

Is there a bank of photos maybe?

Oh, there's a lot.

Oh, there is.

Yeah.

I don't know why.

I just did the start of it because I wanted to.

Dip in.

Dip out.

I know.

Exactly.

It's just the time I felt like doing it and sometimes I don't feel like doing it.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

Simple as that really.  
Just time has changed.  
What I liked and enjoy doing changes at the same time.  
Sometimes I like to go away.  
Sometimes I like to stay home.  
Sometimes I like to take pictures.  
Sometimes I don't.  
Simple as that.  
So no reasoning for not doing it apart from just not wanting to do it.  
Simple as that.  
That's totally fair.  
And when I want to, I'll start again.  
Yeah, totally fair enough.  
Miles on Twitter would like to know, have you ever had a sweaty visor and confused it for rain?  
Oh, George, hey.  
I don't think I have.  
I don't know where I would have, it must have been working hard to sweat that much in Barcelona.  
Yeah.  
Not Singapore.  
Yeah.  
I was going to say the only place I probably had it is Singapore.  
I think probably every single year you start getting a bit of sweat drop down on your nose or on your hair or whatever.  
No, I've never confused it for rain.  
That's a whole different story.  
Have you ever spoken to George about that since?  
I've not.  
No, I've not.  
I've never said I'm writing a podium, but no, I've not, and he's got some work to do on that one.  
OK.  
Now, one thing I want to talk to you about, and Jack does as well on Instagram, is about the Vegas track.  
OK.  
So you've, there's a video of you on the Quadrant YouTube site, driving it, and it's well worth it.  
Like, please check it out because it's amazing.  
And your excitement for driving that track was clear for everyone to see.  
How excited are you after doing that, after doing that about driving Vegas?  
I just don't think people realise just how cool it's going to be.  
Like you're driving in Vegas, like streets of Vegas.  
I don't know.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

Like everyone knows of Vegas.

You've seen it in movies and like the stories or whatever it is, like everyone kind of knows of it.

So just the fact it's getting closed down just for us to go and race.

Yeah, it's what he's driving.

I think that's just such a cool thing to think of.

So I'm really looking forward to it.

I've never been to Vegas.

I've been in and out of Vegas many years ago.

I had to go and do an event, but I just didn't even get to see anything.

I just went in and out.

So I'm going to class this as my first proper time going to Vegas.

But yeah, streets, I love street circuits, first of all.

The layout, it doesn't look, it looks odd on a piece of paper when you see the track layout.

But I think it's going to be a good qualifying track, a good race track, most of all.

Which is always something to look forward to.

You know, if it's a good race track and you can look forward to a Sunday that you can go out and race, no matter if you're first or last, those are the places you look forward to the most in a way.

And then it's in Vegas.

So double whammy.

And you've obviously done it on the game.

Can you, as a Formula One driver, because there's not many of you who get to do the game and also get to drive a Formula One car, will that experience of driving it on the game genuinely help your knowledge and experience of the track?

Is there any crossover there at all?

Yeah, absolutely.

I think by the time it comes, we'll also have it on actual simulator.

I think we might even have it already.

Whether it's scanned or not, or whether it's just like a best guess of what it's going to be like.

But it helps massively.

First of all, it helps set up the car.

It sets you up with at least a good ballpark to kind of start with this car, the car setup.

And secondly, I think just for your standard reference points, whether it's using a 100 meter board somewhere or a 50 meter board or avoiding certain bumps, there's always things that you learn from it.

So 100% it helps comparing to someone who didn't do it.

It's a fact.

There'll be things that you know that other people might not if they haven't done it.

So yeah, it's not like you go there and you're like, yeah, I've got this guy covered because everyone in Formula One is kind of good enough to be able to reach level.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

But little things that it might take them two, three laps later to adjust to.

And by that time, you could already start working on something else.

So I believe it does, the reason I do it.

Yeah, nice.

Well, Lando, we'll let you go.

There's some kids over there who I think want one more bottle.

Yeah.

Off you go.

Thanks.

Pleasure.

Oscar, welcome to the Sky Sports FM podcast.

How are you doing?

Very good.

Thank you.

Yeah, good.

And we are here at this beautiful cricket pitch ahead of you taking to the pitch and giving us your best cricket.

How is it?

Yeah, I'll give it my best shot.

See if I've still got it, it'll be a bit rusty, but no, I enjoyed cricket growing up, so looking forward to it.

Yeah.

Yeah.

What is it about the sport that you like?

I mean, how much have you played?

So like before I started racing, I played a fair bit, and then even whilst I was racing, because in Australia, obviously our seasons are the opposite to here.

So the racing season kind of went from like April to October, November, and then the Christmas period was cricket season.

So I used to play cricket in the racing off season.

And when I went to school here in the UK, I played a few games in between races when I could.

So yeah, I've always enjoyed it.

I guess it's kind of just in my blood being Australian to enjoy it.

So no, I just really like it, and hopefully we can win the ashes this year, that would be nice.

Yeah.

Well, there we go.

I mean, quite a safe sport as well for a racing driver, right?

Because I guess if you're like taking to the pitch and rugby or anything like that, there's always the risk of injury, right?

Yes.

Very true.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

Definitely.

It's definitely a bit safer than rugby.

I mean, I've actually had more injuries playing cricket than I have racing cars, you know, a ball getting in.

Breaking fingers.

Yeah.

I haven't broken anything playing cricket, but yeah, you know, a ball at the end of the finger or something like that.

It's painful when it happens.

So hopefully that doesn't happen today.

Fingers crossed.

This is where it could happen.

This is where it could happen.

So look, it was Spain this weekend, and Saturday qualifying was obviously great for the team and you got into Q3, and then obviously, perhaps a slightly more disappointing race.

Where do you see McLaren being at the moment in terms of race pace, you know?

Is it a case of actually where you finished was probably more a real reflection of where the team is at the moment?

I think so, yes.

I think qualifying on Saturday was pretty unexpected to be that high up on the grid.

You know, obviously, Atlanta in third, myself in Q3, and I think, you know, without a big mistake I made in Q3, I think we should have been able to have that.

We should have both of us up there, which was very encouraging.

But yeah, I think the Sunday was a bit more back to reality, probably even harder than we thought it would be.

So yeah, we just seem to be really good in those cold, tricky conditions.

Monaco was a bit of a similar story when it rained.

So yeah, that seems to be our strength, and yeah, the races and when it's warmer seem to be our weakness at the moment.

So we need to try and get on top of that and make our Sundays a bit easy, because obviously that's where all the points are.

Yeah, definitely.

What about those upgrades that we hear are coming?

Is it either Austria or Silverstone?

What are you hoping is going to come from those upgrades?

Hopefully a pretty decent step in performance, I would say.

Baku was probably the first step, but in a pretty different direction in terms of where the car development was heading, and that's all been sort of as we expected from all the numbers.

And now this is building on that new direction.

So hopefully we can find a decent step of performance.

Of course, all the other teams are adding performance to their cars as well.

So yeah, we'll see how big of a step it is, but we're hoping to definitely take a good

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

step towards the top four teams.

Yeah.

Well, fingers crossed.

Okay, we're going to try and get through as many fan questions as possible, because I know that loads of people have sent them in until you're basically needed on the cricket pitch.

Here we go.

The first one's actually from Lando Norris fans.

So there you go.

What are the biggest differences between working in F2 and F1, and they sort of specified everything

but the driving aspect?

Obviously a different car, but what have you noticed is the big differences?

So everything but the driving aspects, honestly, is the biggest differences.

The driving is probably the most similar part.

It's just a bit quicker, but it's what I've grown up doing, the media commitments, the partner commitments, that's all, there's basically none of that in F2.

Playing cricket on a Monday after a race.

Yes, exactly.

But yeah, in F2, most of the media time you do is when things are going very well.

And partner commitments, there's not really any, and especially with a team like McLaren, that's a very different story.

We've got a lot of great partners on board, which requires a lot of commitments, but it's all part of the job.

So that's probably the biggest difference, and then just the calendar as well.

My F2 season I had was, I think, eight rounds, and we've already done, well, supposed to have done eight rounds, then we're in June.

So yeah, it's much more busy from that aspect.

Spending more time in the factory, more time with the engineers, working with more people, that's probably the other biggest difference the F2 team I was with had maybe 30 people.

And in F1, I probably have 30 people working on my car on a race weekend, and then there's eight or 900 people back at the factory building the car.

So it's a big step up from that aspect, but it's just a completely different league in everything except for the driving, I would say.

And even the driving, it's the best drivers in the world, so that's certainly not an easy part either.

Yeah.

Well, now you've obviously, I think, seven or eight rounds in.

How do you reflect on having a year away from the sport?

What do you think the impact has been of having that break?

I think there was positives and negatives from having the year off, obviously the negative being I'm a racing car driver and I want to race cars.

So that was difficult to go watch everyone else go racing whilst I couldn't.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

But in saying that, I tried to have quite a conscious focus on learning as much as I could from obviously Fernando and Esteban last year.

And the debriefs and stuff like that.

But also the sort of schedule of being an F1 driver, looking at all these partner commitments, the media commitments, and just sort of getting into that routine last year.

So I came into this year sort of having a rough idea of what to expect from that front.

But yeah, you can't replace track time for your own development.

So that's probably been the biggest thing I'm trying to catch up so far at this stage of the year, which obviously without a year off would have been a bit easier, I think.

Yeah.

I mean, learning from Fernando, not a bad person to learn from.

Correct, yes.

I'm sure he manages it pretty well.

Next question.

Lando is known for having many hobbies.

What does Oscar enjoy doing in his downtime?

Honestly, not too much at the moment.

Sleep is very high up there in the Ferrari list.

But yeah.

It could be a good sleep, can you?

Yeah, exactly.

That's just the best.

So yeah, just relaxing, sleep, you know, I try and spend time with my girlfriend when I'm not at the track as well, because obviously it's a busy year.

Apart from that, I've got a sim at home.

I like playing on that when I'm not doing anything or playing video games as well.

So yeah, nothing too fancy yet, obviously spending a lot of time trying to focus on my career and working with the team to go faster and faster.

Which is taking up a lot of my time, so I'm sure later down the line some more hobbies will come in.

Yeah, I'm sure they will.

Ashley on Twitter would like to know if you weren't a driver in the team, what else would you be doing?

I'd probably want to be an engineer.

Yeah, yeah.

Yeah, at school I took very engineering based subjects and I think there's an advantage to knowing what different changes on the car do and having a rough idea on setup ideas and stuff.

I think that would probably be the next part.

I would have done if I couldn't be a driver.

You've got quite a direct influence on the performance for the weekend as well.

So yeah, there's that element of pressure and competition, but also it's highly technical, which I like as well.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

What were your A-Levels?

Maths, Physics and Computer Science.

Oh my God.

So yes, I was most likely going to be an engineer probably.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

I can see.

Do you think because of that background you have a kind of slightly unique, out of sort of all of the drivers on the grid, perhaps that is a slightly unique aspect of your background is that you can perhaps speak to the engineers in a way that maybe they're not used to speaking to some other drivers like?

I'm not sure.

I suppose you only have your own experience.

Yes, I only have my own experience.

I think at this level, even without that background, you change an anti-roll bar or front wing, the driver knows exactly what it does after one time.

So I don't know if it's the most important thing to have that.

I think coming into the sport, it's nice to have a bit of background knowledge on that kind of stuff.

And obviously being the drivers now in F1, that's probably one of the other differences I didn't mention is we have a bespoke car for each team that the drivers can influence the development direction on.

So knowing a little bit of the background of that is always nice.

I don't actually know how many drivers finished school, so I guess maybe I'm a bit unique in that.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

But no, it's hard to say as an advantage.

I certainly don't think it's a disadvantage.

No, definitely not, definitely not.

And I guess the lesson is stay in school.

If you're a young aspiring racing driver, stay in school because you never know what might happen.

Exactly.

Yeah.

Michael on Twitter would like to know, what do you guys do to prepare yourself for a race? Any traditions?

I think all of us on the grid have like a routine before we get in the car.

So you know, like for myself, I do a warm-up, which is the same warm-up before each session at roughly the same time before each session, speak to the engineers about what the plan is for the day or the session as well.

But yeah, I'm pretty, pretty chilled with stuff like that.

Yeah, I can see that.

So I do my warm-up, I jump in the car and that's kind of it.

To get ready for a week, and of course, we're in the gym, we're running, we're cycling,

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

trying to be physically ready as well, which is also difficult because we're away so much now.

But yeah, just physically preparing to be the best and then time on the sim as well.

I think all of us probably do at least a day before each race to get ready there.

Yeah.

Do you look at what other drivers are doing?

You know, for example, do you see Pierre on the grid doing the tennis ball thing, go,

I want to do that?

Are you sort of trying to, because everyone's trying to get an advantage, aren't they?

No matter how small, everyone's trying to look at what other people are doing.

Is that the case?

I mean, I've seen him doing it before, but I think every driver has their own routine.

And I think at this stage, we more or less all know what works for us.

I've been doing a similar kind of thing through my junior career.

I'm sure Lando does a completely different warm-up to me, so it's individual for everyone.

Some people like to do a bit more, get a bit more hyped up.

Some people like to do less and just be more chilled.

So yeah, it depends on the driver and the personality, I think.

Yeah.

I can see the chilled.

I'm getting the chilled vibes.

If you're like this before a race, you're fine.

Yeah, exactly.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Pretty low energy before a race, I think, because yeah, I think if you're, in my opinion, if you're too hyped up, too wound up, then that could be when stuff goes wrong.

Yeah.

If you're too chilled and able to think straight.

Yeah.

Katie would like to know, when is Lando going to get Oscar on the golf course?

He actually offered me to come and, well, he offered a spot for me on, I think it was Wednesday before Barcelona.

Yeah.

I think his handicap is really good.

I've like never played golf in my life.

He's got a lot better, hasn't he?

Yeah.

Yeah.

So I've never played golf before.

So I wasn't...

You've never played, really?

Wow.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

Not properly.

Yeah.

Yeah.

A couple of mates for a bit of fun, but I wasn't going to jump straight in.

He gave me like an hour's notice as well, he's like, do you want to come and play golf this afternoon?

I'm like, maybe not.

Maybe the driving range, but I'm sure he'll get me out there sometime.

And Zach as well, because Zach's a massive golf fan, so I'm sure.

Yeah, you know.

Good time on the course with the bosses.

Yes, exactly.

I'm sure all three of us will be out there at some point during the summer.

Yeah.

Are you one of those?

I mean, obviously, I know you're cricket.

You're pretty good at cricket.

You're someone who was always good at sport at school.

You're just one of those annoying people.

I think before I started racing, I was decent at most of the sports I did.

Once I took up racing, it was just so hard to commit enough time to anything else.

So I kind of went downhill from there, to be honest.

Never been a massive fan of contact sports and stuff like that.

It's a bit ironic when I drive a race car at 300km an hour.

No, it's different.

But yeah, I don't know.

I'm OK at most sports.

I think, yeah, since I've been racing, it's been, I'm good at racing and everything else has taken a bit of a hit, but I'm happy with it like that.

Yeah, OK.

Final question, because I'm going to let you go and warm up for your cricket match.

Lucas would like to know if you could drive in any era of F1, which would it be and why?

I mean, I think the cars from sort of the mid 2000s to 2010s, so the V10s, V8s, lighter cars, I think that's probably the era I would have chosen.

Obviously, now the cars are their safest, so I probably wouldn't go back to like the 70s or 80s.

As cool as that would be.

I don't know how I feel about that, but yeah, mid 2000s, 2010s, just the noise.

I actually never got to go to a race with the V8s, so.

Did you hear them?

Am I right in thinking you could hear them from my backyard?

I could hear them from my backyard.

Yes, at Albert Park.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and PIASTRI | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

I could hear them from my house, but I never actually saw them in person, so yeah, that's probably the era I'd go back to, the cars sounded awesome, looked awesome, they were nice and light as well, so that's probably the era I would choose.

Yeah, nice one.

Well, Oscar, thank you very much.

Best of luck for the rest of the season.

Thank you very much.

Cheers.

Okay, thank you very much to Lando and to Oscar, but I found Rachel and Damon, who are going to help me look back at the Spanish Grand Prix.

Hello to you both.

You well?

Very good.

Very good, thank you.

Yeah, but a bit sore after running around after a cricket ball, but yes, it's amazing how much you can damage yourself playing cricket.

I'll find out tomorrow.

Oh, I was going to say, I think everybody's going to wake up tomorrow morning very, very sore indeed, and possibly Lando too, the dive he made for the weekend, it's sensational.

Incredible, isn't it?

He looks in all right shape by the end.

Right, let's do our one word race reviews of Barcelona.

Rachel, you go first.

It's more of a noise than a word, but it's like, that's basically my one word review.

Yeah.

Is that an English dictionary?

It's the only way I can describe it, because I wanted it to promise so much, and then there was the odd moment where you thought it was going to deliver a bit more, and it just was

...

Yeah, you're right.

Some surprising is my word.

In other words, we sort of knew that it was going to be a rebel track, but there were some ... that's my word, by the way.

That's fine.

I'm just extending the conversation a little bit more, so it's more interesting, but to fill in the blanks a little bit, and with Rachel, you know, you kind of thought something interesting was going to happen here.

It nearly did, but it didn't, but more promising for Mercedes, you'd have to say.

What was surprising was Aston Martin's performance.

I really thought they were going to do something special there, and it just sort of withered, and I don't know what went wrong there, but anyway.

The stars, you thought were aligned for Aston Martin at this race.

There were the numbers.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

I mean, I lost count of how many, you know, 33s, or this was going to be Alonso's next win.

It was all throughout the grid, wasn't it?

I mean, if we could write this grid for a season, it would have been, wouldn't it, ultimately?

But I think Fernando's issues, the damage to the car, what that would have been worth, perhaps for him in qualifying.

I mean, I said to him, was it 1.2 seconds worth?

And he said, no, no, no, about two tenths.

It was a lot more than that, really, realistically, but I think the damage was done.

And then the race was just, he just didn't have the pace.

He just couldn't get any more out of it.

I think Lance had a fantastic weekend.

I think Lance probably had his best weekend of the season, didn't he?

Great move as well, down on here.

Lewis as well.

He completely committed to that move, and it was a clean overtake, which is one of the very few overtakes of the race that was actually not DRS inspired.

I mean, George's overtake on Carlos was pretty brave, but that was set up by the DRS in a way.

But so not, I'm not a huge fan of Barcelona.

No disrespect to Barcelona, it's a fantastic city and a fantastic part of Spain.

But the track itself has always had this issue.

It's long, constant radius corners.

They're not very interesting corners.

You can't really get into them.

And yet you'd have to say the really good drivers still seem to perform on that track.

But it's not a place that you can actually, I don't think, you can hustle a time out of the car.

You just have to behave really as a driver when you drive around there.

But on that, though, what I found really interesting was on the Saturday after qualifying, speaking to so many drivers who got caught out by turn 10 and a little bit of wet getting onto the curve and finding a wet patch and having problems at turn 10.

And the drivers that didn't have that problem at turn 10,

I thought Lando was sensational in qualifying and put everything together.

And he said the conditions suited the car.

But he didn't get caught out by that.

And a lot more experienced drivers, Lewis, Fernando, did get caught out by it.

My word is...

Sorry, yes, Matt, what's your word?

Since you both asked.

I didn't know you'd got a word.

Well, I don't know.

I thought we were shooting us.

I don't know how to get a word.

No, come on.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

Come on, let's hear it.

My word, which I'm going to level with you, I had to look up online in a caesaurus, is pathetic. OK.

Do you want to know the definition of pathetic?

That sounds like me on my phone when I just predict a text and it gets it wrong.

Below something?

Yeah, producing an unintentional effect of anti-climax, which I think kind of sums up your...

Yes.

Is that... Did I do it right?

I think my...

Is the vocalisation of pathetic.

Pathetic, yeah.

I'm not going to take credit for knowing that word off the top of my head, but there we go.

It's a new word.

It's a great word.

We're going to hear that word a lot more, I think, in the future.

Do you think?

I hope not.

What did you type into Google to get that to come up?

Oh, I think it was like meh.

Or, you know, better words for meh, which is kind of what I was going to go with.

Yeah, that's it.

But let's move on and talk about Mercedes, because I think they were the big story and the big kind of drive that came out of Barcelona.

And, you know, 24 seconds behind Verstappen was Lewis Hamilton, but it was a 2-3 finish for Mercedes, their first double podium of the year.

Damon, how excited or maybe not excited, but how much heart can Mercedes fans take from that performance?

I think quite a bit, because they've actually shown in the race, they have, they've leapfrogged the threat from Aston Martin and Ferrari as well.

So they've actually shown in a circuit where it really pushes the car's ability to look after its tyres and have a good aero balance and have good aero performance.

It's actually shown that it's got the potential there.

Now, all the circuits are different.

That's the great thing about Asport, they're not all like Barcelona,

but Barcelona is one of those places where it tests the, it shows up, pure performance, aero package and ability to get a balance and be good on the tyres and so forth, which is why the Rebels were so dominant, at least Max's was.

But so I think there's encouraging signs there for Mercedes, definitely.

What about Lewis's smile in the pen after the race on Sunday?

It was so nice to see it and it's, you know, a lot of times you put a smile on because,

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

you know, people need to see you smile in the team or other people, but it was so genuine at the weekend and it was so, it was almost relief as well. And for George too, both of them looked as though a big weight had been taken off their shoulders, that this is the direction, we've got it at last. And I said to George, you know, what would you say to people who say, well, why didn't you put the side pods on sooner? I mean, I know it's not as simple as that. And I know, and George said, it's not the side pods. It's things that have gone in under the car, under the skin that you can't see. It's all the work that's gone into that. It looks, I guess, to people on the outside like, oh, look, they've gone down the Red Bull route with the side pods and suddenly it's working. There's a whole lot more to that. There's the impact structure that they couldn't change in things. Just explain what, because obviously the exterior changes, but that means all the interior has to change, right, because space is so tight. Exactly, exactly. And you've got so much, I mean, Damon knows better than me, but you've got so much under those side pods, whether you're talking about the radiators, where it joins with the impact structure, they couldn't change that bit at the front at all. So they had to do whatever they were doing with the side pods in line with that. And the sculpting underneath, yes, that looks very much like the other cars now, but it's more than just changing how that looks on the outside. An incredible amount of work goes through there. Yeah, because the bones, if you like, if you imagine it's like a body, you know, you've got the skin, which is the body work. And then you've got the organs in there as well. You've got to fit in. Great analogy. What did I think of that? But the skeleton is the chassis, is the tub. And you can't really, you know, you'd have to do a complete new car if you want to change all that. So they're a bit hidebound a little bit there until they get a chance to start from scratch. They've gone down a different road, as they said they would do if it was quicker. Although James Allison said, you know, you can't just copy other people, you've got to know where you're going. So it's maybe this has unlocked more potential, but whether it's able to unlock as much potential as it needs to be, Rebel is questionable, because I think they're stuck with what the fundamental chassis that they've got underneath there. But to hear Lewis say, I've enjoyed driving the car, that's a good sign. And it's also a vindication for him because he's been saying, I told you we should have done something earlier, blah, blah, blah.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

And they've gone and done what he's been pleading with them to do.

And they've seen some progress. So they're well done, Lewis.

Do you think it's now a springboard now that they've got this foundation, which appears to for the drivers to be better?

Damon, do you think that springboard will allow them to build throughout the season?

Constantly adding little upgrades, but now they're on the right path, right?

So it's going to be easier for them to work, I guess.

Yeah, I think to overhaul Rebel before the end of the season is going to be very difficult.

But to maybe compete with them to, I think, to cause them problems?

I think if they managed to firmly establish themselves as the threat going into 24 by the end of the season, then they would have considered that a victory.

I completely agree with you, because I think no matter how much we think they've caught up with this new design, I'm sorry, I think Rebel have a whole lot more in that car we haven't seen yet. So I don't think, I think, yes, they've closed a gap a little bit, but actually Rebel are developing all the time. Rebel have got updates coming, which is even scary.

They've got updates coming. So I think it's been, it's brilliant for Mercedes,

I think the morale boost for the team and for everyone's been working so hard these last couple of years is fantastic. And I think, yes, it's a springboard, but it's not a springboard for this year, it's a springboard for the future. Lewis, and I don't know if you heard this

after the race, but he was saying that actually the scary part is that Red Bull can kind of forget about 23 sooner or later, can't they? And their attention is going to turn to 24.

Probably already is. Yeah, probably already is. So they're going to get a head start on 24, and obviously, yeah, I mean, what do you think the impact of that's going to be for the season coming? It's probably not great news for the other team.

It's not, but also I think, for example, with Mercedes, now they have got this springboard for now. They will use all of that in 2024. I mean, if you find, suddenly find the right direction to go in, you can go straight down that road. Until now, you've been trying all these different directions. Now you've got it. You're on that motorway and you can go flat out and try and get this right for next year. And to a certain extent, while Red Bull might be able to sign off this year or write off this year because we've got it in the bag, Mercedes can go, well, they've got it in the bag. We can write it off. We can just concentrate on 24. And everything they're doing now be geared towards 24. So it is scary, but I also think now that they found a route, my worry is that Ferrari are going in the opposite direction. I'm worried that, you know, they changed their car. We saw a very different Ferrari last weekend in Spain.

They are now trying to chase that route as well. Where's the other challenge going to come from?

There is a lot of work for a lot of teams head scratching going on. Aston, maybe it was just the track, but that's a track you want to go well at because it reflects a lot on the rest of the season. I don't know where they're at right now. No, and it's a funny season in a way because we've seen quite a lot of disparity between form, apparent form on one circuit and the same form or the expectations going into another circuit. And everyone's scratching their heads a little bit about that one apart from, of course, Red Bull, which deliver on every track we go to.

But yeah, I mean, there's that aspect to it. So we can't say we look at Barcelona and say that is now the form book for the rest of the season because Canada is a completely different track.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

Britain is another type of track. So yeah, there's still going to be variety through the field. But, you know, I think that Ferrari definitely, what can you say about Ferrari, they somehow managed to, when one's up the other's down, they haven't got, it's like they're running with one leg all the time. It's just, it's always, it always seems to be a problem with them. But you know, so I think, I think going forward, I think that we've got, you've got the development curve and the cost cap restrictions to think about, because ironically, the better Mercedes do, the less scope they've got for the following year. So you've got Aston Martin, who are benefiting, if you like, from a poor performance relatively from last year, they've got ability now to, to soak up the, they haven't got the glass ceiling is much higher for them.

And you kind of wonder where the Mercedes ought to be thinking about doing really badly between now. Yeah. I mean, there is that, isn't there? Do you deliberately want to do badly so you get more wind tunnel time? Do you think the wind tunnel time is that impactful? I think so. I think, when there's a big difference, it's that impactful. When you've got the budget and you can spend it, but you can't, because you did so well the previous season, then it kind of makes you wonder whether you ought to do really badly. We can't have that, can we? No, you can't, but you know, if you're not going to win this year, you want to win next year. But then you get prize money for your position in the championship. So then you have to offset that with, yeah, but we're going to lose out on X millions. And is that worth that much wind tunnel time? There's so much. There'll be accountants and all sorts of experts who can tell me that's an absolutely stupid policy and strategy, Damon, but it's something that occurred to me. Accountants usually tell me I'm stupid, so it's fine. It's the sort of thing you ask, the question you ask. I mean, I'm sure there's a good reason why it's daft, but you know, I mean, we need, we need more teams at the front, don't we? I think, that's why we're all getting excited by perhaps Mercedes becoming a bit better, because obviously that means competition with Red Bull and that means ultimately I think better races for us viewers at home. Final thought on the Mercedes weekend as a whole was the incident qualifying. And, you know, what I thought, I thought it was very telling, and it probably was a great team performance, the two, three as well, because they had that incident qualifying. But Rach, I don't think it, I don't think it sort of leaked into the media. It didn't, it just was dealt with within the team, calmly, professionally. You know, maybe there were some hot heads that we didn't hear or didn't see, but, but, you know, didn't air their dirty laundry.

We had communications director Bradley Lord on the, on the, I won't say pit wall because he's in the garage, but on the section there. But that's the first time we've had Mercedes in session, somebody senior at Mercedes talking to us. So immediately we could talk to him and he could tell us, no, just a miscommunication, you know, all resolved or whatever. George and Lewis into the pen afterwards, miscommunication, no problems whatsoever, nipped in the bud, which is the way

it should be. Like you say, whether or not there's anyone chatting behind the scenes, we don't know. But actually they all seemed very calm about it and accepting what happened. Damage wise to Lewis, he said his car was fine afterwards. Once they changed the front wing, there was no problem. So no reason for there to be an issue. It happens. I mean, how many times did we see people, Pierre got two penalties for not seeing people coming up behind him? So I think communication wise, all the teams have got a lot to learn in that sense. But in terms of them falling out over it, no, that was nipped in the bud very quickly.

## [Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / McLaren special with Norris and Piastri | Can Mercedes challenge Red Bull?

No, because I think both of them realised there was a, you know, extenuating circumstances. There was something that caught them both out really in a way. And so it's one of those things, nothing, it was the malicious move in any way. So, yeah. Final thought on Mercedes, the Hamilton contract situation. Now, he let us sort of slipped in there at the end of the press conference yesterday in a very casual way, said, I'm meeting with Toto tomorrow and hopefully we can get something done. So who knows, by now, there might have been pen to paper, maybe not. I think the understanding is it's one of many meetings that have sort of happened, but it's progress. His talks with Mercedes now over his contract, I think everyone thinks always about time is about money. But from everything he's told me when we sat down, it's about what else Mercedes are going to do? What else are they going to do to support causes he believes in? What else are they going to do to improve diversity? What else are they going to do to look at the future? Which he says at the moment helps motivate him when he hasn't got a car that he can win with. So those are all things that I know he puts into his contract, time and money. Of course, it's important, but he's got a lot of money and he's been in it a long time. So he's finding other motivations as well. And I wonder though, Damon, if he hadn't finished second and on the podium yesterday and done quite so well, would he have said, I'm sitting down with

Toto tomorrow just to give Toto a little reminder that they're talking contracts, do you think still? Yeah, I think that he would probably have had that meeting lined up anyway.

But told us about it, I mean, sorry.

Yeah, so I think that it's more difficult to go in and start complaining about the car when you've come second than it is when you've come tenth. Let's say he kind of had appalling Mercedes way off the pace, you go and have a meeting with Toto and Toto's going to have to try and convince him to stay, probably. But I think it looks more likely they've got a team that they want to continue with. And so Lewis will stay with Mercedes. And also, I think George is going to stay, we might

even have already, there's a hint, are that he's already signed up. So Lewis will know who his teammate's going to be, all those little ducks in a row things before he puts pen to paper.

I mean, their signs are optimistic. It looks like they've turned a corner. It looks like the super tank has turned around and is now heading back in the right direction.

And also, by the way, when you hear the length of the contract, I think there will be some sort of ambassadorial role as well, even when he stops driving. I think Mercedes will hang on to him for a long time, whether that's driving or not. So even if you hear, you know,

however many years you hear it, I think he'll be there for a long time working with the team, whether it's driving or not. Team Principal. Oh, I don't think he wants to do that, do you?

I don't think he wants to do that. No. I don't think he wants to do that. You know, five years time, you can transition perfectly into Team Principal. Who'd want to be a Team Principal?

That's a lot of work. Yeah, it's a lot of work. Yeah, we'll have to see what happens to Toto, of course, before that. Thank you, Rachel. Thank you, Damon. And next week, we've got James Vowles

on the podcast, the Williams Team Principal. So there is a Twitter post up and an Instagram post. And if you see that, please let us know your questions. We'll try and ask as many of those to James as possible. Until next week, bye for now.