

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Miami had style, but was there any substance? | What was going on with Sir Jackie Stewart and Roger Federer?

The Miami Grand Prix was always going to deliver glitz and glamour in abundance, but did it deliver on the track? Max Verstappen, starting from ninth, was able to blow the rest of the field away, including his teammate to take victory. But for fans, was it a good watch?

This is the Sky Sports F1 podcast.

Hello everyone, welcome along to this week's episode. I hope you're doing alright. Joining me for this one is Martin Brundle, Natalie Pinkham and Karun Chandoch. Hello all.

Good morning Matt. Good morning. Hello, hello. Right, I want to get straight into our one word reviews. So Martin, you were there, you were in Miami. Give us your one word review and why. Interesting. I thought it was a good race. I don't know why people are moaning about it so much. The winner came from ninth on the grid. We had an intriguing battle, almost race-long between the Red Bull drivers. And down the field, incredible overtakes. George Russell on Charlotte Clem, Lewis coming through, Kevin Magnussen attacking, defending, counter-attacks. I thought it was fine. I mean, we won't be talking about that Grand Prix in the future much, but I thought it was good. I enjoyed it.

Yeah. I'm going to say interesting. Right back at you. It was very interesting. Go on, Matt. What about yourself? Well, can I have two words? I mean, it's sort of like one word.

It's a phrase. I'm going to say Miami Vice-Tappan. I'm not sure I could give you that for a one word race review. What? Miami Vice-Tappan. Miami Vice-Tappan. Because this guy needs his own show. He was phenomenal. Completely in control. I mean, they said over Team Radio, we did make it easy on ourselves, but actually it looked it, didn't it? The small criticisms over the years of Max's driving has been potentially, you know, if you kind of pick holes and find chinks in his armour, perhaps time management and perhaps keeping it clean. And he did both of those perfectly on Sunday. And yeah, he deserved it. It was just a great victory.

It's funny, isn't it? Because if you had perhaps flipped it and it'd been Max on pole and Chaco starting in ninth, you wouldn't have thought for one minute that Sergio would have overtaken him for the win. But somehow you just knew Max was going to do it.

Enthatic. Enthatic, I think. I think we can say. Karine, what about you?

Was that your word then, Matt? Is that what you're saying? Enthatic?

No, no, no.

You're jumping in before Karine nicks it.

Yeah. What was yours, Karine? Was it Enthatic?

It wasn't. No, I'm going to go with, I'm going to go with decent because I think it was a decent race. There was a decent show, a decent race. Yeah, as Martin rightly said, I don't think it is going to go down in history books. This is one of the greatest romperies. But there was enough going on in there. It was an absorbing contest between the two Red Bull drivers. We had that sort of counter strategy and there was a various periods of times where you wonder whether Max would get back at Sergio and how quickly. And there was enough going on and watching the Mercedes drivers come through the pack was interesting enough. There was intrigue around science and the penalty and how that would shake out. So I thought it was a decent race.

Decent. I'm going to go for spotless. And I'm going to go for spotless because there were no DNFs, no yellow flags, no red flags, no safety cars. All 20 drivers completed 57 laps, which, according to my maths, is 1,140 spotless laps. So there you go.

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Miami had style, but was there any substance? | What was going on with Sir Jackie Stewart and Roger Federer?

That's a good debating point because all I heard after the Australian Grand Prix was outrage. Why restart a race with two laps to go? Like you can just clip a couple of laps off when you fancy it. And there was bound to be crashes. Why did they do it like that? Why don't we have a rolling restart and not a standing? How can we create such chaos? And of course, so we had red flags galore there and lots of people moaning. But I think the vast silent majority absorbed their Formula 1, enjoy it and realise that sometimes it's a 5-4 last minute thriller and sometimes it's a nil old draw. And I think Miami was sort of somewhere in between.

You can't have a memorable race every single time in that sense because otherwise, I guess, you know, every single race would, none would stand out, would they? You've got to have the ebbs and flows of a season.

I suppose, though, when you go to a street circuit like Miami and there is such a build up, I mean, it is all the razzmatazz and excitement of the Magic City. You do expect it. And after, as Mark says, Australia, that's your anticipation. You've got adrenaline suing through your veins. If you're just watching from the sidelines, when that doesn't happen, you feel like it's a damn squid. But actually, when you break it down and consider it for what it was, it was a brilliant race.

Well, I think, you know, Baku was a terrible race, wasn't it? It was an artist's news fest. And I think this was, this was decent. It was sort of middle of the road. But I think I still go back to the point. I put a tweet out about it yesterday and I've been banging on about this since 2016 and every FP1 that I go with Crofty or FP2, whatever, is that I still think we should have a regulation where they have to use all three compounds in the race. It'll have a two-stop race because, you know, and I immediately got a couple of text back from engineers in the pit lane saying, well, we couldn't have done that in Miami because the soft tire wasn't good enough. But so what, you know, it would have done five or six laps. At some point, they would have all had to use it for between six and eight laps. And it would have jumbled things up around the pit stops. And I think more in Baku as well, I think, and I still haven't understood why it hasn't happened. Because any time you talk to someone at F1 or the FIA, they go, oh, that's an interesting idea. We should look into that. And then it's been seven years and nothing's actually happened. So I'm going to feel like you have the influence within the sport. I feel like you can make this happen. Clearly not. I've had seven years and I'm bagging my head against the wall. So it might need someone, someone more powerful than me. I'd go with that because, you know, the best race is unquestionably the marginal two stoppers, will they get to the end without needing a third stop, followed by the marginal one stoppers? We used to have it a lot, didn't we, with falling off the cliff. It all looks set for the last five laps. And suddenly, people just fell by the wayside. They've kind of managed that a lot better these days, both that Pirelli and in the teams. But I don't you don't necessarily want to fabricate it, but the tires are there. They've done a world tour. Let's put them on and use them. Exactly. Because a lot of the criticism now from the, shall we say, purest fans are saying, Oh, you're doing too much to create a show and fakeness. This isn't for me. This is a sporting regulation. Like you have any other set of rules, like you have 13 sets and defined in the rules. All I'm talking about is a line of sporting regs. So it, you know, it's it does it in a way that doesn't create

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Miami had style, but was there any substance? | What was going on with Sir Jackie Stewart and Roger Federer?

a fake race. And I think if you'll, you'll get some convergence, right? Because all the strategists think they're off a similar mindset of a similar personality, and they probably come up with the best similar optimum strategy. But with the way the undercut and overcuts will work. And when they use the tires, you will have some variance by definition. So yeah, I'd like to see it happen. I mean, we seem to be in a culture of more openness, do we? You know, we're trying sprints, we're trying quality formats, we're trying different things. I'd like to see a bit of, you know, variety for the main Grand Prix, because I feel like we've sort of not done anything with that in terms of the actual lights out to check a flag. And also, Karin, to your point about the engineers saying, Well, the soft just won't last. The point is, our predictions in terms of the behavior of the tires has been wrong. We didn't think the hard tire was going to be as competitive as it was. And Max proved everyone wrong on that, taking that strategy, alternative strategy to Checo. So you can't really make those predictions beforehand. As you say, even if they only last five laps, it'll be worth it. Cause chaos. Do we think that a one stop race is the issue here? Obviously, by doing that, Karin, you'd have a two stop race. Do you think having a minimum of two stops? I mean, obviously, you know, we've got rid of things like refuelling, you know, but is it a case of perhaps bringing elements back that kind of add that level of jeopardy to a race? Well, I think, you know, as Martin alluded to, they're doing this management thing now where basically they spend the entire race, the engineers tell them a lap time and they drive to that lap time. Whereas, you know, if they had to do two stops, then they can all go a bit quicker and push a bit harder. The problem we had in Baku, for example, you know, we had, we had Halkenberg and Ocon to me started from the pit lane and they just drove around and the likes of Norris and Sonoda and Piazza just sat there behind them because they're all managing their tires for this entire race and didn't really have a go. Whereas actually, if there's a two stop, they don't need to manage as much and they can all just have a bit more of a go. I also think some of the issues right now with Sunday are the fact that fundamentally Mercedes and Ferrari have under delivered this year. If you look at last season, the gap between the winner, i.e. the same winner as last weekend, Max Verstappen, and the best non-Mercedes, non-Red Bull was, I think it was 28 seconds or something like that. And this year was 26 seconds to Alonzo. So actually, you know, the gap between the winner and say P4 should have is about the same as last year, except that Ferrari and Mercedes have just not turned up to the party this season. What's excellent about Formula One? I mean, we're going to talk about this a little bit later as well, but what is the essence of Formula One? And for me, it is unbelievable speed and excellence. Those two things together, and that's what we should always be aiming for. It's about the finest engineering. It's about this, say, this extraordinary speed. But so should we, should tyres even be a factor at all in that respect? But of course they are. Whichever form of motorsport you watch, two and four wheel or whatever, it's about managing your tyres, managing your fuel, managing your pace and driving or riding to what you've got. So we will always have that to an extent. I don't think we can blame Pirelli on that one, but it would be fascinating if you had mandatory pit stops as well to know just how fast and how these races could look if tyre degradation was taken out of the

equation.

Now, what makes a brilliant Formula One race? What's like the ingredients? If you were to dream up a Hollywood script, there is obviously a Hollywood film being written about Formula One. What would you put in that final race? I mean, I think the keyword for me in this is jeopardy.

There needs to feel that sense of jeopardy. I'm not a fan of seeing big crashes, but I need to feel on the edge of my seat that I don't know what's going to happen next. And there's always an element of that in motorsport. Of course there is. And to your earlier point, I don't think we should be disappointed that it doesn't deliver every single week. I mean, can you imagine the rollercoaster that our nerves will just be frayed, but we do need to feel on the edge of our seat? How you achieve that, I just, I don't know. I mean, Baku is always unpredictable

until this year. It was really boring, as Chris says. I think competition for me is key. To me, that's the key word. And I think at the moment we're somewhat lacking that in terms of, you know, we've got an inter-team battle. But as Natalie said earlier, you know, all things being equal, we all kind of expect Max to come out on top, don't we? You know, Czechos had a couple of blinding races so far this year and all credit to him for especially what he did in Jeddah and the second stint in Baku. But I think on the whole, we need more than one team. You know, and if I look back at my favorite seasons of Formula One, it's involved having two, three, four teams in the fight. And we want to arrive on Saturday morning, not knowing what the top six is going to be in the grid. We want to know, and we didn't, you know, Miami, we had that jumbled grid, but because Leclerc and the Stablen made mistakes, isn't it really? And I, you know, I think that for me is the key to having a good, to answer your question on a good Formula One race or a season. I think something that's hitting this season quite hard as well is as the teams have loaded the cars up with downforce and maybe the regulation changed over the winter to lift the skirts, to get rid of some, to lift the height of the floor, to get rid of some porpoising and bouncing. I think it's undoubtedly harder to follow and stay close and generally race around another Formula One car. So, and it's bound to be because that's what the teams are there to do. They're there to load their car up with downforce and grip. And that means it, the driver behind is going to struggle more. So, you know, that the essence of what the 2022 cars were all about is beginning to fade away. On that, Martin, do you think we've had worse or less close racing than we did last year on the basis of these five races? I don't think it's that. I think, as Karim said, it's lack of competition. You know, Mercedes, for whatever reason, decided to just stick with something that didn't work last year. Ferrari have stepped on their own tails. Thank goodness for Aston Martin and Fernando Alonso, I would say. And Red Bull have just got it even more right. You know, that Red Bull is a genius car, particularly with the rear wing open. It's unbeatable. It is absolutely in a race where you will have DRS, which you don't always do on a very, very wet day, for example. But generally, of course, you do. And why do you have DRS on a qualifying lap, for example? You're not ever taking anybody. But whatever it is, it's just unbelievable. And that makes it unassailable, I think, in a Grand Prix now with its rear wing open. It's genius, though, isn't it? You know, we've had DRS now for, what was it, 12 seasons? There's a 12th season of it. And they've just gone there and thought, right, we need to find something that gives us this incredible advantage. And so even if we don't qualify on the front row, it doesn't matter as as proof of the weekend, because, you know, somebody will show me some drag

numbers.

And when they hit the magic button, the Red Bull loses about 24, 25% of its drag. This was the case in Baku, the speeds there. Whereas most others are sort of 14, 15%. So they've just given the drivers free performance. And so, yeah, more often than not, they're going to qualify on the front row. But even if they don't, they're still going to come through the pack.

Karoo makes the point of competition being what sort of grips us. But I think maybe we need to step back in moments like this and see it as, you know, doff your cap to Red Bull, because that in itself, this race to create a car is competition. And they've excelled at it over a period of time. And actually, all these things are cyclical, and we should enjoy it for what it is, and really, you know, respect to them for achieving that. They have no weakness, either. They can, you know, cyclically, they can back down to number 10. There's, they've got two incredible drivers, the cars quick and qualifying, it manages this time as well. The engine's strong. It can overtake. The strategy team is brilliant. The pit stop team is brilliant. I mean, there's and there's no lack of motivation. You know, Adrian is heading into nearly, well, his 40th year and the forefront of the sport, be it Indycar or Formula One. If not more, actually, probably, it was in he was in Copa Suka 7980. So he's 43 years in. And he's still motivated, isn't he? And his brain is still there. And he's any sort of motivates that team of people around him. And it's, yeah, there is just no weakness in that team. Is this the era, then, Martin of Max Verstappen after that win? I mean, it's a marker, isn't it? Especially after, after Baku and getting beaten by Perez? Yeah, I think over a season long, I think we all know that Max will turn up all day, every day. And on Saturday, you had Sergio saying, look, I'm not driving well in his own press release.

So, you know, I'm not getting it together. And it's indicative of what's going to happen. If you look at the points last year, because of Max's unreliability issues in the early part of the season, and then where it ended up by the end of the season, I just think Max will have an answer all day, every day, and will recover a P9 on the grid better than Sergio. But unless unreliability comes into play, because what we've got going on here, and we've seen it in the past with absolute dominance, you know, maybe in 88 with Senna and Prost and what have you. But if you don't win, you must finish second, because when you've got a dominant car, you know, your teammate,

that's what's available to you as first and second. You can't afford to miss the second places, because, you know, you will struggle to play catch up at that point. And that's what we're looking at here. I mean, Sergio's doing a great job in terms of, you know, he's raised his game, he seems to work with this car better. But we are in a dominant Max Verstappen phase with a given a red bull underneath him. And I was going to say that one of the comments that caught my attention in Baku was George, and it didn't sound like a flippant throwaway, jokey sort of line. He said, we're not sure if we take, we think if we take the rear wing off our Mercedes, we still won't be as fast down the straight as a red bull with a DRS open, which was an extraordinary thing to say. But I think it underlines what Karun was saying, just how good it is. Nat, do you think, do you think Sergio has stepped it up a gear this season? But is that still going to be enough? I believe he's stepped it up. I don't believe it will be enough. I think, to Martin's point, this car does seem better suited to him. And I think Saturday was a surprise for him that he was on pole, obviously that happened for things outside of his control.

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Miami had style, but was there any substance? | What was going on with Sir Jackie Stewart and Roger Federer?

But I feel that with Max, that slightly petulant churlish streak in him has been ironed out. And beforehand, you think, you know, is he going to go for moves that aren't on and cause an accident

in his typically bullish way? I feel that he's grown out of that. There wasn't the sense that towards the end of the race, I mean, they look beletic, didn't they? His overtake on Peres was just, it was perfect. It was in harmony. I think it's going to be very frustrating for Sergio, because he has to be at his very best weekend out. Whereas Max, even, you know, an A minus is enough for Max to win a race. And I think it will be, it reminds me a lot of Rosberg and Lewis, I think he's going to have to find something else. Because everyone's got a weakness, he's going to have to find a weakness in Max that he can exploit in order to beat him.

Max is very much in the driving seat. Well, there's no shame in that though.

No, there's no shame in it. No, if anything, Rosberg fair play to him. He worked very hard, which is one of the reasons why he said he retired. It took so much out of him to win that one world championship. And if Peres can take the world title, then, you know, he'll have earned it. But it's not going to be easy. And finding that weakness in Max Verstappen, identifying it is going to be the hardest thing to do.

Yeah. So, no, what I meant was there's no shame in being beaten by Max Verstappen, I think, because he... Oh, I see. Yeah. Yeah. No, what I mean is, you know, he, if you look at, and I've said this before, you look at the history of the sport, every five, six, seven years, a genius comes along. And you're, you know, before Max was, was Lewis, before Lewis was Fernando and Kimmy sort

of came together, you had Michael, Senna, etc. And you know what? If you're, if you can take the odd

win off one of these geniuses and finish behind them and rack up a whole bunch of wins, you would have had a very good Formula One career, frankly. Well, a bit like Valtteri when he was driving alongside Lewis. Well, I was thinking more so. At some point, he had to concede that he was never going to beat him. Yeah. But he just got more and more angry and frustrated and bitter about it. But I think of someone like Eddie Irvine or someone like David Coulthard, you know, when he was, DC was up against Micah and there was a period where he was getting angry and angrier. But then at some point you just go, you know, there'll be a year where the car suits me a bit better and I'll have a chance. But actually, guess what? You know, you can have nine years at McLaren or whatever, make a lot of money, win some great races and build a great career. And this is it. You know, I think it's a poison challenge, isn't it? If your teammate to Max Lewis, Schumacher, et cetera, and Martin, you've been in that position, it's quite good because it means you've, you're inevitably one of the best cars on the grid or one of the top three. But the downside is you've got to be, you're always compared to the genius in the other car. To add to what you're saying there, Karu, in the, you know, a Messi or Ronaldo or Federer or, you know, Harland knocking in goals left, right and center at the moment, we're witnessing something

special, something incredible. So I don't know why we need to run and hide from it or talk about it being boring or whatever. It's the, you know, if a Stappen's extraordinary in control of a very challenging Formula One car and it's for everybody, you know, it's not about the lowest common denominator

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Miami had style, but was there any substance? | What was going on with Sir Jackie Stewart and Roger Federer?

Formula One, it's about, as I said earlier, it's an excellence. And so everyone's got to raise their game and they will, they will find a way. We know that these circles of dominance fall away and, and it's for others to get their, get their acts together. So I think we should embrace it and, and, and enjoy it.

Much like I feel about you two being on the team.

Rising tide.

Too much, too much.

Can I grab Mb's line and segue into, segue into those who need to raise their game? I mean, what was happening with McLaren of the weekend? Unbelievable. Out in Q1, I mean, drowning around on the back, they looked like they'd seen a bit of a breakthrough in Baku, you know, both cars were sort of hovering around the points and, you know, qualified, Lando got in Q3 and did a good job. And then they, you know, one week later, absolutely nowhere. Mick on Twitter sent a message in, and I'm, Martin, I just, I'm trying to get your thoughts to this, you know, is Zach Brown safe in his job was, was the question? I don't, I don't know if that's a bit too strong for, for this point in the season. But, but yeah, you're right. It's, it's, it's tough times at McLaren, isn't it?

It is in their restructuring, you know, I think what's, what's unquestionable is Zach's genius on the financial side, on the sponsorship and marketing side. They're restructuring now with Andrea Steller and some other people coming into the team. They've got a new wind tunnel coming, they're hanging an awful lot on that, you know, feeding into the team very, very quickly in the next year or two. So, you know what, you'll often hear me say in commentary in Formula One, you're either giving pressure or you're taking it. There's nothing in between. And McLaren in general and Zach in particular will be, will be feeling the pressure. Andrea Seidel's gone off to Alfa Romeo, but that's not exactly flying along brilliantly there at the moment either, is it? So, it's difficult, it's a difficult business and, and we'll see what the, what these changes do for them. But Lando's incredible. He's like, this is my team. I'm here for a good number of years now, I support them. But in the end, his, you know, his chin's going to drop if, if they're midfielders at best. Now, what, what's Lando thinking? Do you think right now? The start of the season? I think, as Martin says, he's doing a very good job of saying, towing the party line, saying the right thing, keeping morale up because, and just to draw on what Lauren Rossi said about Alpine a few days ago, I cannot see any benefit in publicly embarrassing, criticising, humiliating your team. There's no good can come from that. Keep it behind closed doors. What, what, what do you think? They don't know that they're not doing their best. I mean, it's name and shame. I don't, I just, anyway, I've never understood that, that approach. And I think Lando is mature beyond his years, the way that he keeps that positive front up. I mean, I have to say, Daniel Ricciardo must be sitting there thinking, and he'll be frustrated, no doubt that he is not in Formula One racing at the moment. It's a bit of a sad picture seeing him on the pit wall. But to be paid tens of millions not to drive that car, I mean, it's, it's, and take time out and press the reset button and work out what you want to do with your future properly with a clear head is not in a bad position now, is he? No, and also, I think alongside that, you know, you've got to mention Oscar because I think he's actually in a tricky position because he's, you know, when you arrive in F1, you want to make an impact, you want to make a name for yourself and straight away, you think of when Lewis arrived

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Miami had style, but was there any substance? | What was going on with Sir Jackie Stewart and Roger Federer?

2007 car at the forefront, Bosch nine podiums in a row to start his career. Oscar's not got that opportunity. And he's actually doing a great job in Miami, 900s of Norris in qualifying in Baku, 32,000s of Norris in qualifying, you know, he's, he's actually doing a cracking job, I think, but it's just sort of going under the radar because of the situation.

Yeah, but that's not a bad thing is it, Karim, to be under the radar in your rookie year, in a way, he's learning the hard stuff away from the spotlight.

Yeah, it takes the pressure off, but I think you'd always much rather have the spotlight because you're trying to establish yourself, you know, Norris is, Norris has made that impact. He's established himself as a genuine future star. We all, you know, we all talk about the fact that if he gets an opportunity, he'll be a championship contender. But Oscar, unless it's people like us who go and deep dive and look into the results and look at these numbers, 99% of the people don't really know, you know, that he's actually not far off Norris. So I think it's, it's tough.

I think it's a lot tougher for Lando though. I mean, he, he, you know, he could have won those three races on the bounds, couldn't he? Well, back and he's seeing George and Carlos and contemporaries winning Grand Prix and challenging for podiums. So all Oscar's got to do is stay close

to or beat Lando. Lando needs to try to beat everybody else on the grid. So it's really challenging time for him. Martin, do you think he should be on the phone to make, to, you know, Ferrari, for example, Carlos is having, isn't having a great run? At what point do you start to get twitchy if you were Lando, you think?

You want to, you want to be reassured. I mean, everybody, I mean, get the crystal ball out. I mean, and I was talking to this, I had a lovely interview with Fernando at the weekend and you know, he meant, I don't think it made the cut that particular piece, but you know, we, we all tried to see the crystal ball and who's going to have the downforce and power and grip and get their teams together. But yeah, Lando will be looking around. He's got to be looking around, but he's nailed on with the contracts and the contract recognition board. So he's got a while there. And I do, he's got time as a young man, but he's, he's, he'll be keen to, you know, McLaren will have to deliver up for him in the next 18 months or he'll be scouting around hard. Patience is a virtue though. I mean, it wasn't that long ago that we were saying how frustrated George Russell was, just chomping at the bit to get into a faster car and out of that Williams. Alex Albon, right at the front with Red Bull and then relegated back and it felt like his career was over, then he comes back in. I think there's been, you know, a fair bit of movement with those young guns and they can all take heart from Aston Martin's recent run of performance. So

things can change relatively quickly. And, and perhaps McLaren are hoping that with all the money and resource that they're throwing at this, it will happen, but it can't come soon enough, can it? What a great job, George, though, of the weekend, wasn't it? I thought he was a standard of the weekend, picked his, clearly the car's difficult to drive. We saw him qualifying, but, you know, got, got in the top six, picked his moments. It was so important for him to clear the Alpine early in the race and get a bit of free air and then, and break away and then run his own race. And to finish fourth, you know, I thought that was a stellar performance. What I think on the road, obviously, because science got the penalty, but four seconds ahead of science, not million miles off Fernando, I thought another really, really impressive drive from George.

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Miami had style, but was there any substance? | What was going on with Sir Jackie Stewart and Roger Federer?

Only one thing better than his driving crew, his radio messages.

He's so polite. Even when he tries to be cool, he sounds like trying to be, trying to be cool.

That's how we roll, guys. It's when he goes, it's when he goes crikey.

Crikey. Sugar. Sugar. Sugar is my favorite. He's such a sweet guy. Is that a, is that a Kingsland thing, Martin? Were you as polite on the radio? We're always very polite in, in Norfolk, but I was going to pick up on that and say, yeah, for me, it was a close call between George and Kevin Magnussen for driver of the day, because I loved the way K-man kept coming back at Charlotte Claire and the works for our ring. You know, he looked like he was done and dusted in past and no, he wasn't through or when he went again. And, you know, from the start of fourth on the grid, I know he made the most of some opportunity, but, but those two did have a fine race and Lewis, I thought Lewis had a strong race too, for Mercedes.

I think Sir Jackie Stewart got a driver of the day for me.

Well, let's move on to talk about that because, uh, yeah, look, we have to ask you, Martin, there was a tweet here from fuel by coffee, which asks very simply, did Jackie Stewart get into trouble for getting Roger Federer to talk to you? Come on, let's, let's hear it.

I don't know. I mean, I mean, what a legend, 83 years old, I happened to cross him at the front of that sort of rope. It's like, it was sort of like trying to get into a dodgy nightclub, wasn't it? The pair of us, we had no chance where we had the wrong dress code or something. I don't know. And I found that whole procedure a little bit weird on the grid, but yeah, so I, there were so many people around and I particularly want to talk to Roger as I got to the front there. And I just happened to say to Jackie, he's like, do you want to talk to him then? I said, yeah, well, I'll get him. I'll get him, you know, and then he jumps under the rope and now there's three people running after him. And I'm like, oh my God, I've just gotten Jackie Stewart thrown out of this place. And we've both been thrown out of better places than that. And it was, it was hilarious really. Then I started to panic a little bit if I'm honest. I'm like, no, he's 83, you know, I don't need him over there risking himself just for an interview. So he was great. And, and I, you know, that's a true mate, isn't it? When, when they go the extra mile for you like that. I think what a lot of people don't realize is Jackie's seen Martin's side of the fence, you know, he used to cover formula for many. I mean, I've got, there's a book on my shelf up there called faster, which I highly recommend it's Jackie's diary from 1970, the year after his first world championship. Now imagine this is the reigning formula one world champion, right? And he goes off to cover races in America as a reporter, as a journalist, as a rating world champion while also racing in F1 is completely mad when you think about it. But you know, so Jackie's seen, Jackie's seen this side of the fence. He's seen how tricky it is to be a broadcaster and, and cover things out of the grid. He is a national treasure which needs to be protected at all costs.

Sometimes from himself.

He was just brilliant. Yeah, from himself. And that's the thing. We, we offer him protection, he doesn't need it.

You can't beat up. So Jackie Stuart.

That might be my, my most famous line in commentary actually. But everybody's got a job to do on the grid and put some control function into it, including me, trying to get some interviews or what have you. So you're the one who spends it out of control, Martin.

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Miami had style, but was there any substance? | What was going on with Sir Jackie Stewart and Roger Federer?

Yeah, I know.

Tell me, Mark, what are the anxiety levels like? Because I could hear you saying,

I've got 30 seconds, I've got 15 seconds, all this hard work from Sir Jackie.

Is it a waste of his time and energy? You'd be like, sorry, I'm out of time. How do you feel in that moment?

Yeah, I was, obviously I was in what we call a hard count in our, in our business, don't we, into throwing to the presentation. And it's sort of non-negotiable, as you know, when you're anchoring the show, Pinky. And now I'm watching Security Guards, Roger Federer, then George Russell gets involved trying to explain what's going on. And Sir Jackie Stewart, I see this sort of negotiation going on over there. And literally, I'm, my count in my ear just finishes as Federer turns around and walks over, escorted by Sir Jackie. So I thought, well, I've got to talk to him now. I think we got away with it somehow. But huge amounts of anxiety level. That's why I've never watched the damn things and haven't watched it for 26 years. Have you not watched it back yet? I can't believe it. I've seen it on social media that bit. Yeah, I've never watched a grid war back ever. I don't know who that bloke is running around being cheeky and rude, my sort of alter ego sometimes. It's good shirt. It was a good shirt. It was a punchy shirt, wasn't it? It was Miami. Martin, what is it about? What's it about the U.S. grid wars that seem to deliver? I mean, you had a few incidents in recent years, I think, you know, Megan Thee Stallion being the other one in Texas. What is it about the United States that delivers these moments? Well, there's an awful lot of A-listers, celebs, whatever. So last year, when, between us, we managed to get Patrick Mahomes and Paulo Banquero mixed up, we got a final list of 60 celebrities who were coming on the grid. This was last year. So in amongst doing a live show, we're feverishly trying to be sure who all, you know, we get teed up through the weekend, but you get a final list of who's actually going to show up. This year, it was about 40. And I'm trying to learn all of these people in amongst our live show at the beginning of the race and then trying to spot them. And then you, so you Google them and they don't look anything like their pictures online, nothing like it at all. I was supposed to be talking to Patrick Mahomes finally on the grid. He was in a sort of a very pink sort of shorts and tops matching suit or something, but I never did see him again. So it, and they come on in a wave, by the way. They don't drip feet them onto the grid. There's just massive waiver people. And then I'm trying to work out who they are, half of whom I've never heard of. And then they've got, you know, 50 million followers or something like that. It's completely capped in chaos. I have no idea what I'm doing and how it happens, but it seems to happen in the end. But, you know, then one of my nieces will go, oh, so cool, Uncle Martin, you spoke to whoever. And I'm like, did I? There's the jeopardy I'm talking about, Mark. That's what we need.

It was a brilliant grid walk. Definitely going to live long in the memory. I also want to talk about, because that was part of this sort of pre-race show on the grid, which I think we can call it. And it's received some mixed reactions from the drivers. Some of them are a little unhappy. George Russell called it distracting and said that there's not another sport where 30 minutes before you go out to do your business, you're out there in the sun, all the cameras are on you, and they're making a bit of a show of it. Karun, what did that get in the way of? If you're a driver on the grid, what are you doing before the race and how would being a part of this sort of grid show interrupt that? You know, I saw some of the comments and the first thing I thought is

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Miami had style, but was there any substance? | What was going on with Sir Jackie Stewart and Roger Federer?

none of these drivers have been to Le Mans or to Sebring or to the Indy 500 recently because, you know, Le Mans, the race starts at three o'clock because everyone knows, but you're on the grid from noon. You know, it's like, it's a three hour, they play the national anthem of every driver competing at the 24 hours of Le Mans. You know, it goes on and on and on. But guess what? It's part of it. It's part of the show, you know, but they don't have a morning warm up anymore. They don't have, you know, the only actual driving bit is the Grand Prix itself. So if you've got to go through some of the, some of the other stuff that happens because of the commercial reasons, you know, the reason all of them are being paid as much as they've been paid is because of the commercial benefits of Formula One. And there's, there's sponsors and partners and people queuing up to be a part of the show. And it is a show. You've got to, you've got to embrace it. So look, I think there's things we can, I'm not saying it's perfect. And I think there's, there's timing can be better. And it can perhaps, you know, the positioning of each of these slots can be different and could be better to help the drivers do what they need to do from a sporting perspective. But I think having the show is, is fine. It's good, you know, so it makes some people cringe and so, you know, and that's just what it is. But I don't have a huge problem with it. I think it, it needs tweaking, but I think it's fine. Lewis was in support of it saying it's called the sport is continuously growing and evolving. And they're not just doing the same thing they've done in the past. They're trying new things, trying to improve the show always. And I'm in full support of it. Now, what did you, what did you make of it watching at home? Look, I absolutely loved it. We're in the entertainment industry for goodness sake. And this is something that we should embrace, look forward to. I know there are critics of it. I can't begin to pretend what it feels like to get into a car and drive 200 miles an hour. I just love the fanfare. The Americans know how to do sport, all seeing your dancing, jazz hands, the works. And it was captivating, watching from home on a, on a, well, we just had the coronation, which was, you know, pretty spectacular within itself. But it was a dreary old day back in the UK. And I just loved the sunshine and the razzmatazz. And yeah, as, I'm going to throw George's quote back at him. That's how we roll. Take it, baby. Very good. Very good.

Martin Fernando Alonso said that, you know, it's, if we're going to do it for the fans in Miami, you know, why are we not doing it for the fans in Italy or Spain or, or wherever we go on the Formula One calendar, do you think it's something that needs to be, you know, one size fits all for every race or something that we kind of modify depending on where we are?

Well, I think it's a fair comment. Why would we just do it in America or wherever? But we have to accept we've got a new audit, the demographic age group of our audience has changed a lot in recent years in Formula One has grown dramatically. And we need, we need something for everybody. Obviously, as a man of a certain age, I perhaps I'm less need that sort of showy so I thought it was a bit too dimensional, if I'm honest. They'd already seen the drivers anyway on the driver parade in some old jalopies and gave them away. I found it odd that it had it's back to the grid. We couldn't see it. It was sort of, and it was, I don't know, did it really add anything, some sort of generic lines and the drivers come out, but I'm very open to change. I think you have to keep your mind open on this. But what I, what I do think is when the green light goes on, the cars leave the pits, that's a moment of very high energy for Formula One, where we're getting close to the Grand Prix. And then what happens after that? And this army

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Miami had style, but was there any substance? | What was going on with Sir Jackie Stewart and Roger Federer?

of people and equipment and these beautiful racing cars and the finest drivers in the world, all heading to the grid. And I think you need to keep that energy. And what happened 26 years ago was some very creative people I was working with in F1 on F1 TV were like, they came up with a gridwalk idea because they wanted to keep the energy between the green light and the start and the formation lap and, you know, and sort of keep it on the boil. And I, my concern is things like that, let the whole, let the boil go and let it sort of fade away a bit. So we have to, we have to think about that. But we do, we can't just keep doing the same old thing decade in, decade out. I accept that. Whether that adds to it, whether we could do it at a different time and just, you know, go to the grid and go hard racing because we used to go to grid 30 minutes before and now it's 50 minutes before the weekend. It's open for debate, but it didn't add anything for me being there on the day. It's just, when I hate to see those shots of the drivers loitering in their garage almost, you know, playing cards or something, they're off the grid. They don't want to be around. They just going to lose 20 minutes somewhere. So that doesn't feel energetic enough to me. Yeah, I think, you know, you've got to think about when we go to Vegas, where everyone's going to have grand plans. But guess what? It's going to be six degrees at that time of the night in the desert in November. And the drivers will definitely want to be back in the motorhomes or the pits trying to keep warm. So I think it's a good point. I mean, what they do in Indycar, I think could be the answer where they do this driver presentation, but it's done like a couple of hours before the race. So sort of the time where we do the drivers parade in F1 and they do this big razzmatazz for the people at the ground. But then, you know, the build up, as Martin said, is still a shorter time with a more compact high energy intro. So, yeah, maybe as I say, it needs a bit of tweaking and that's a better balance.

But honestly, Matt, anything that connects the fans to the drivers, I think the one thing that we often take for granted, because we know and talk to the drivers all the time, we understand their personalities. Fans want to know what makes races tick. And most of the time they're immersed in this cockpit with a helmet on their head. One thing that drive to survive has been greater, and all these deep dives that we take into the driver's backgrounds and behind the scene stuff is that you can relate to them and they are young lads who do something superhuman. And anything that connects the fans to them has got to be a good thing, because then you feel not only that they're relatable, but you invest in them. And therefore, you're gunning for them when they're racing and that you go on a journey with them. It's all part of that process. Yeah, it certainly is. I think it's going to be interesting to see how it evolves over the coming year, and I think it's here to stay. So we will follow that progress. I want to end the podcast just with a question from someone at home. He sent this in yesterday, said, it's from Brian, it was on Twitter. We're now five races into the season, and the majority of teams are no further forward than at the start. Is the volume of races hampering off track development? I don't know if anyone has a thought on, obviously, we're now in 23 races, that could possibly go up next year to even more. We even had a break in April. So, Martin, I'll start with you. Do you think that the volume is affecting development?

Well, it's a challenge for the teams. Obviously, if you have accidents, Alpine have had a shocking run, haven't they, in terms of lots of broken parts, and Charlotte Clear's having a good go at dismantling his Ferrari as well from time to time. But I think it's the cost cap that's making a bigger difference. But part of that is going to so many races as well. So I think in terms of

the development, they've got their fundamental packages wrong, some of them, and it happens, and they might be next winter before they can even address that. So I think it's a combination of things. But cost cap has really energised Formula One in some other respects too, so I wouldn't knock it. But if you took Red Bull out of the equation right now, that would have been a storm of a grand prix, from the front to the back of the grid. So I think we need to just keep a perspective on it. Karun, what about, is it a case of, for example, Mercedes have got upgrades coming to Imola, haven't they, in the next race? Would those upgrades have come sooner, perhaps, if we hadn't already had so many races? No, they take as long as they take. I think that's what people know to understand. You can't just think of an idea, just put it on the car, the next race. There's a six to eight week lead time before you come up with an idea, design it in CFD in a virtual world. Then once you're happy with that, then you make a model which goes in the wind tunnel.

There's an X amount of testing that has to happen with that. Then it goes to the composite department

to make the parts and get to the actual race. That whole process is six to seven weeks, at least. So what we're going to see in the car in Imola is something they would have started back in Bahrain, the process to get here. I believe there's a decent upgrade coming to the Mercedes in Imola. I'm really intrigued to see where that moves them. I don't think it'll move them into Red Bull territory, but I think they're hoping it'll clear them ahead of Aston and Ferrari. That's their ambition, I think, with the updates, I will see. I don't think you could put the blame on the number of races. No, I think it just is what it is. I think Martin's absolutely right. Teams haven't hit their targets with the base car. They've arrived so many of them at the opening race who have under-delivered.

As I was saying earlier on, I think Red Bull, I was talking to Rob Marshall, their chief designer in Australia, he came out. I was saying, have you guys just made this massive jump? He said, not really. We think we've gained about seven tenths of performance, which year on year is what we expect. Aston under-delivered last season with their car. Actually, they've made a bigger jump because they under-delivered last year. If you look at where Alpine and people like that has, they've made a sensible gap. It's more, I think, what we were saying earlier, McLaren, Ferrari, Mercedes, Alfa Tauri. There's a bunch of teams who have actually not hit the targets that they should have done for this season, and we're creating this disparity in the field.

Now, these races are going to come thick and fast, aren't they? We've got a triple header just around the corner. It's going to get pretty busy. Absolutely. I think there was an argument that said that the unintended unplanned break through China's cancellation was going to somehow work in

Red Bull's competitors' favour because it's not like they're closing the factory, they can work hard to make up the difference in a way. It doesn't feel like that has happened.

Christian made the point that they have to make hay whilst the sun shines and really capitalise now before the wind tunnel restrictions kick in, and he feels that the others are going to come back stronger. So, perhaps, actually, the amount of races may work in the other's favour. Who knows?

It will take its toll, though. In a few races' time, people are going to be pretty exhausted, but it'll be fascinating to see whether they can bridge that gap because it is disappointing.

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Miami had style, but was there any substance? | What was going on with Sir Jackie Stewart and Roger Federer?

It really is. If you're a McLaren fan, hugely perplexing, frustrating, disappointing, but also any fan of the sport, you want to see those at the front being challenged, and they're not. 26 seconds, as we said at the very start, is a huge difference between Red Bull and the nearest competitor. But, again, thank God for Fernando because he's kept it interesting, hasn't he? He certainly has. He's going to get bored of podiums soon, I'm fairly sure. But he's sort of racing. He's sort of racing nobody at the moment, isn't he? You know, this other weekend, he was racing. He was just sort of driving around by himself. But that elusive 33rd win is going to come. It will, because one of them will trip over each other. Yeah, maybe. But, I mean, he was so bored, he was watching Lance on the screen, wasn't he, at one point? That was so interesting because I thought that was a really, that was a really interesting little moment because he was actually asserting his, I think, authority on the moment, said, you know, I'm so in control of the situation, I can even throw a compliment out there at my teammates, who, by the way, is languishing much further back than me. True. Martin, you obviously interviewed him. You referenced earlier in the podcast. You interviewed him this week. Can you see that win just around the corner for Fernando? He was, when I asked him that question, he was very direct and immediate in his response. Yes, he sees, he can see, he can steal a race or two this year. He thinks where there are a lot of slower corners involved and maybe you even heard him in the cooldown room after the race saying, you won't pass me in Monaco if I get in front of you. And that's what's in his mind. I love that attitude. So, yeah, he was showing off a bit, wasn't he? Because he obviously saw Lance overtake on a big screen somewhere and was like, yeah, I'll just congratulate him on that. That was, just to let you know how easy this is for me this afternoon, which was, which was brilliant. So, yeah, as we said, thank goodness for Fernando and Aston Martin at the moment. Okay, that's all we've got time for. Thank you very much for your company. We'll be back next Tuesday. Until then, bye for now.

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[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Miami had style, but was there any substance? | What was going on with Sir Jackie Stewart and Roger Federer?

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