

Hello, everybody. Welcome to Bahrain, where we are gearing up for the opening round of F1 2023. Join us back at the hotel. We've had an interesting day at the track, an interesting drive back from the circuit, actually, where they've been advertising the entertainments for the crowd this weekend. It's DJ Snake and Craig David. So I know Craig David's going to be talking about seven days, and certainly nobody's thinking about chilling on Sunday. We're all gearing up for Sunday because that is where we're going to find out who is in the best shape leading into this longest ever F1 season. But while in the mood for song titles, how about Midnight at the Oasis? It's not exactly at Oasis. It's the hotel pool, but certainly a nice place to be. We have the hotel singer doing her set in the background, so maybe you'll get some ambience of where we are. And it was an interesting day at the track today. First day back, even with testing, there's always a bit of tension in the air, there's a bit of first day back at school feeling. I did miss Sebastian Vettel and Daniel Ricciardo, actually. I thought that was the first time in an awful long time that we hadn't seen Seb's smiley face or Daniel Ricciardo full of the joys of spring around the paddock. So a really different feel. I know, you know, we've seen champions and race winners come and go, but something about the presence of Seb and Daniel Ricciardo that I really missed in the paddock today. But otherwise, it was a good day, an interesting day, lots going on. And, well, where should we start? Well, the surprise really of the morning was from Aston Martin that Lance Stroll would indeed be driving the AMR 23 that he'd recovered from his injury to his wrists and his hands after what we got some more information that he'd hit a pothole while riding his bike training. And effectively, we believe had gone over the over the handlebars and had stopped himself using his hands and his wrists. I think all those stories about breaking both wrists were obviously completely wider of the market exaggerated because he certainly hadn't broken both wrists.

He had a bandage on one of his wrists. The other one looked pretty much fine, but he said it had been an intense few days while he got back into shape and he knew he'd be able to do the Bahrain Grand Prix, not only this one, but Saudi in a couple of weeks time as well. So he cut a bit of a apprehensive figure. He obviously doesn't know how it's going to go. He's in the simulator and everything seems fine so far and clearly doesn't want to let his team down and doesn't want to miss any time in this car that's obviously better than any Aston Martin he's had before. So Lance was up and ready to go, albeit a bit apprehensive I felt for the season, for the race weekend to come. Max Verstappen in good form, seemed happy to be there, was wearing his long, his trademark long jeans. Well, not trademark, he just tends to wear long jeans. He doesn't wear shorts like most of the other drivers were today. Actually, come think of it, Lewis wasn't in, was in long trousers as well. Anyway, I don't know why I mentioned it, just one of those things that more or less everyone was in shorts, cooling off nicely by the way. We are expecting 25-26 degrees throughout the weekend, not the sort of heat that we've seen in Bahrain in the past but certainly hot enough to challenge the cars as well as the sandy conditions and the track conditions with the tyre degradation which we'll get on to in a minute. But Max looked good, he looked really relaxed, was starting to sort of play down Red Bull's perceived advantage coming here. We're saying, look, we haven't seen, as was Checo Perez actually,

we haven't seen any of the engine modes from anybody else. We think we know the fuel loads because you can more or less figure them out on the long runs. But we don't know engine modes, we don't know what anybody else was doing and it's all up in the air still. I did then say to Max, okay, but is the car better than last year? And he says, yes, it's better everywhere in every department than last year. So I think we can take it that they're in good shape going into the weekend certainly. Carlos Sainz as well, Charlotte Claire and Carlos Sainz were talking today. Carlos Sainz actually came out with something interesting. He said that he's potentially looking for wasn't really looking for a quote in terms of, you know, I'm going into this weekend, the best prepared I've ever been. But that's effectively what Sainz said. And the reason why was because he's concentrated on preseason testing, trying different things more than usual. He said that's why he feels he's going into the season, particularly well prepared. As for the Mercedes duo, well Lewis Hamilton said, look, there is no plan B if this car and the upgrades that we've got to it from race six doesn't work. There is no plan B largely because they can't do one under the cost cap, which I thought was a very good point. But Lewis was talking about his how he's been gearing himself up for the championship as usual in the way that he would normally do. So no change there. Still at Mercedes, George Russell was talking as well. He's saying he's looking forward to his second full season at Mercedes. And he says we're in much better position. We're in a much better position at Mercedes than people think. Red Bull are clearly ahead, but we and we won't be challenging them for race wins this weekend. But certainly we think we can do that. We've accepted the challenge. We can do that later on in the season. So I thought that was key. Something George Russell also gave us a little challenge talking of challenges was to go and have a look at the asphalt. Now, this is something that's going to be crucial to the outcome of the Bahrain Grand Prix. And well, if you want to sound clever down the pub, then you can tell your mates that or sound clever at home over the dinner table. You can tell your family, did they know that the asphalt here, the grains, the granite in the track was imported by ship all the way from Wales to Shrewsbury, somewhere near that. Anyway, so it's a very particular kind of granite. What it means is that you look at your average road, it's covered with sort of a bit of black gunk is the is the best way to describe it. It's probably a mix between aggregate tar and bitumen and all the rest of it. But the stones at the Bahrain track are very exposed. And that what that means, it hasn't been resurfaced over the years laid very well in the first place. What that means is that not only it gives a very consistent feel throughout the lap, but it's very abrasive on the rear tires. Last year was a three stop race because I think they had a safety car where they were able to do that third stop. But this weekend might actually turn up to be a three stop race on pure tire degradation alone, even with or without a safety car. But normally has been a two stop race in the past might well be a three stop race as strategy is definitely going to come into it. As for that Mercedes, we've done Ferrari as well. And who else Alpine, you had a word with Esteban Ocon. He also said that while they looked like, you know, nothing particularly impressive during the test, but I think Alpine had the slowest lap times of all, watch out for them because what they spent their time doing was just trying different things out that they would never have the time to do in a test, things that would take ages set up wise that

you wouldn't, you know, in an hour's practice session would be crazy to do because you miss out on so much time. So they weren't chasing lap time at all. And, you know, they are going to they think they're in much better shape than they might seem. And conversely, trying to downplay expectations was Fernando Alonso. And I sort of tried the, I said, agent 0014. And he said, Ah, yes, the mission. So I wonder whether in all the kind of used to the Aston Martin 007 link up by now, Fernando is kind of thinking, I wondered if Fernando was kind of thinking, Hang on, I haven't had my allusion to to James Bond yet, but well, we'll see if there is. But his mission is to get the car in a place where he's potentially challenging for the for the for the podium, and maybe even more, he made the good point that while his race run was ultra consistent, it wasn't in the heat of battle. And once you get contact with the enemy, once you get pit stops, once you get other people racing and around you, those race times and those lap times in a race tend not to be as consistent testing, obvious point, but one worth, one, one, one worth mentioning, I think, actually, while in, in prime conditions and prime testing conditions, it might be a little bit misleading and their pace might have looked a little bit better than it turns out to be. But we'll see, because not only is 95%, this is another point Alonso made, not only is the car 95% new, but he also says they're going to change two thirds of it over the season. And I'm still to work out how that's going to work. I assume he means that while it's 95% new, they've still found loads of stuff that's going to make it improve two thirds of it that's going to improve over the season. So clearly a lot in the development tank, if you like, for Aston Martin over the year. And it was the development tank where Lando Norris put his finger on McLaren's what's looking like a slow start of the season. The reason he said that McLaren are in the state that they are Lando cut a bit of a down, downhearted figure. What he said was that over the winter, they realized too late, that was Lando's phrase too late. But the reason they were the route, the development route they wanted to go down was the one that was going to be optimal for the season. Now I've been joined by a helicopter. It's just going on. Sorry about that. But yeah. And by the time they actually got the car together, they realized that they were going to be effectively undercooked for the start of the season. That's not a problem because McLaren have lots of good stuff to come. So not now, but later in the season, we'll see the best of McLaren. Let's have a little bit through, look a briefly through minute, but for some other things that I thought were interesting. Logan sat down at Williams, Logan Sergeant came up with an interesting one on his first weekend proper F1 race weekend as a driver. He said, I'm still trying to figure out how my Thursdays should go. And I said, Well, you can try the Kimi Raikkonen approach was essentially to devote as little mental energy as possible to any of this media stuff and just concentrating on your driving. He looked at me and said, Yeah, I'm not sure how Williams would feel about that. I'm kind of an ambassador for them and I need to put as good a face forward as I possibly can. Well, that's way of doing it. But yeah, it's that's certainly one that the more experienced drivers have figured out and Logan will have to figure out in his own time and how much effort you put into the media stuff on Thursday, knowing that that's not going to help you and your car go quicker. Alex Albon was referred to as the captain of the team. He said, Well, that's possibly true. But in any case, he thinks that they're going to be you're only going to see the real Williams in six or seven races time when they start putting some developments

on that car as well.

Just rounding everything else up. Battery Bottas looked fit and well and ready to go for Alfa Romeo Sauber was talking about how it's interesting having Andrea Seidel as the CEO of the team and the new direction that he can bring and has F1 Kevin Magnussen saying how nice it is to actually start the season in such good shape given how he was a late replacement last year for Nikita Mazepin. Right, that is the latest from the track. We're going to go and seek out somewhere to eat alongside the poolside entertainment here and just recommend that you join us for all our coverage on Sky F1 over the weekend. You can find all the details and the times that we're on where you are around the world on our social channels at Sky Sports F1. Looking forward to seeing you there. Bye-bye.