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Key F1 Players Back Fans Demands

Key representatives from Formula One's teams, sponsors, media and governing body took centre stage on the second day of this year's Motor Sport Business Forum to discuss the findings of a global survey of over 70,000 motor racing fans.

Fans said that the changes in the sport over the last two years have had a positive impact but still called for more overtaking and further technical innovation.

The panel, consisting of WilliamsF1 CEO Adam Parr, FIA Technical Consultant Tony Purnell, ING's F1 Programme Director Isabelle Conner and F1 commentator and journalist James Allen, answered questions on a range of topics from technology and the environment to media and sponsorship.

Purnell said: "The survey gives us the best possible mandate as a regulator to push further in the direction we are going. There's an awful lot we can do with the cars to help promote closer racing. Looking at the survey, the fans want overtaking, they want high technology and they don't mind this high tech being used to increase overtaking.

"The problem at the moment is that so much money is spent on things the fans can't see or relate to. The future is in damping the competition down a bit by not competing in those areas that have no effect on the product. But we will keep the high technology element by making it very clear where we are competing and try to encourage innovation and super-high technology in those areas.

Parr concurred but warned that more needs to be done to improve the fans' experience of the sport.

He said: "We relish the challenge of KERS. To do it on a sensible budget makes it even more exciting, in fact it is one of the most exciting things I've ever been involved in. We are pushing the boundaries of energy storage and energy storage is one of the most fundamental problems on this planet. We know from talking to companies outside our sector that we are doing things that are beyond the realms of what anyone has thought of.

"But giving the fans a successful race weekend is also fundamental to the sport. Within the Formula One Teams Association (FOTA) we are trying to address how we can help promoters and fans. We do feel that making the weekend as a whole more engaging for fans is important.

“We have to do more to make those events really quite special because they are expensive for the fans and for the promoter. Within FOTA it is one of our top priorities to try to do more including looking at the race format and the qualifying format. It is very high on our agenda and we’ll have some ideas for 2010 but hopefully for next year as well.”

The generally positive message was echoed by Isabelle Conner who said that the sport has been “incredibly good” for ING and the company is delighted with its sponsorship despite these difficult economic times.

She said: “Just two years ago many people in the world did not know ING. F1 has really put ING on the map. We now have 80 per cent brand awareness amongst the general public.

“F1 is the most global sport you can get and if you’re trying to get on the map I can vouch for the success of it. We spend between 50m-100m Euros a year on F1 marketing, advertising and sponsorship. If we just take the on-track branding and title sponsorship we had more than four hours of TV airtime on 200 channels and in 165 countries. That’s massive. Just in terms of visibility we have more than covered our investment.

“If we then add to that the revenues that have come in around all our activations - we did 92 activations around the world where we linked a product to F1 – that is the icing on the cake. For us F1 is not a cost, its a growth engine for ING.”

For further information about the Motor Sport Business Forum go to: www.motorsportbusinessforum.com