

# Pirelli returns to the F1 Circus: Q & A Paul Hembery

*The Italian tyre supplier is back to Formula 1 and marks a substantial change in all aspects for drivers, engineers and strategists behind the pit wall. Forget exhaust pipes, diffusers and KERS. As (nearly) always, tyres will make the difference. Pirelli's motorsport director, Paul Hembery gives us some clues about it.*

**by Félix Iturbide**

*Interview for Grand Prix Actual Magazine. February 2011.*

*(Pictures: Sonia Prado & Pirelli Motorsport)*



Félix Iturbide & Paul Hembery on the interview last 19 february. Barcelona F1 tests. Circuit Catalunya.

**We are in the penultimate tests, following those in Valencia and Jerez, what are your impressions at this point of the preseason?**

*"Everything is fine but cold. The temperatures in the morning sessions are very cold, conditions that we will not find during the season. It's a little bit frustrating from a tyre manufacturer. We need hot conditions or heavy rain..."*

*... Difficult to hear an Englishman that he wishes rain because we constantly suffer the rain (laughs). We would have liked to work the with the teams with the three types of compounds, slicks, intermediates, and full wet in the best conditions. Also, it's important for the teams from a strategies point of view.*

*Regarding wet tyres, we have very useful information about the tests months ago in Paul Ricard, Jerez and Abu Dhabi, so we have different experiences on wet asphalt, but we do not know how they work with 2011 cars, for example to know the right moment to make a pit stop and put wet tyres on wet asphalt.”*

**Have you experienced problems with graining and blistering during the tests?**

*“No, we had no problems about it. The first day, some car suffered graining on the front wheels, but nothing serious.”*

**Can you tell us the final colour scheme to identify different types of compounds that we'll see in the Grand Prix?**

*“Unfortunately, not yet. Our plan is to explain everything and how to make the distinction in the final test in Bahrain.”*



**Or in Barcelona ...**

*“Yes, or Barcelona. Who knows where to be made at this time.”*

(A.N. Two days later (20/02) cancelation of Bahrain final test & GP were official)

**In which way can affect a possible change to Barcelona, for example, the circuit for the final preseason test for Pirelli?**

*“It won't affect our development plan, but logistically it affects us because most of the tyres and most of the equipment is already in Bahrain or on their way...”*

*...Teams have not told us anything about it and therefore we are not sure. They have to tell us as soon as possible because I have to remind that with no tyres, there'll be no testing at all (laughs). We have said that the decision will be made on Monday. No problem if the dates are more or less the same as those for Bahrain because if they anticipated, that would be critical for us and we would have a problem."*

**Last year we saw several drivers with problems warming up the tyres to the optimum temperature. We would see this problem again this season?**

*"We have tried to improve the warm up of the tyres. We note that problem and learned that we had to work at it. Obviously, we have talked with the drivers and our challenge is to create a tyre that forces them to make a two-stop strategy, which is not so easy, because the margin to decide whether to go to a strategy of one or two stops can be five or ten laps and also from two to three stops. That's a huge challenge to be honest."*

**So, I understand that your main target is to force the teams to make at least two pit stops during the races, right?**

*"Indeed, two stops. The engineers and some drivers may not like it because it's a new element to think about it. Now, with the brand-new tyres, they have to learn how they work, their geometry, how to use it and even affects the driving style."*

**Do you think the drivers can really make a difference between each other's as they learn to use their compounds?**

*"Undoubtedly, as we have done in other categories. As an example, with Sebastien Loeb when competing in a tarmac rally, he was capable to set the quickest time and he was also who lightest used the tyres. When you looked his tyres at the end of the stages, they were the ones in better conditions."*



Pedro de la Rosa testing with updated Toyota TF109 & slicks tyres in Barcelona racetrack

### **Do you think that here we can experience this in Formula 1?**

*“Yes, yes, it's a very similar situation. It is true that here we are talking about a difference of 3 to 4 laps but that can make a difference enough to affect strategic decisions.”*

### **The GP2 Asian Series races in Abu Dhabi were the first official experience as a tyre supplier of the category. What's your feelings and conclusions about it?**

*“Everyone was very happy. We had a very abrasive circuit and all the tires held up well until the end of the race. We saw a lot of overtaking; some drivers push the tyres too much so they overheated. We saw great races and the feedback we had was very positive.”*

## The feedback you receive from GP2 cars is useful in Formula 1?

*“Well, there is a big difference in performance between them. We're talking about four or five seconds per lap but at least they compete on the same circuits and that gives us an idea of how the different compounds are working and they give us some indications.”*



Pedro de la Rosa & Paul Hembery. Pirelli's presentation last november. Circuit de Catalunya.

## What is the situation with the Spanish driver Pedro Martinez de la Rosa?

*“With Pedro, we sincerely hope he stays with us in 2011. I know the press have published news about his possible move to any team as reserve driver, but I saw him yesterday and the plan is he will be testing with us in 2011.”*

## What's the working program planned for this year?

*“Apart from the work at the factory, we will change a little work on the track, we will modify the car to create more downforce, hopefully not losing too much high speed.”*

*The next test will be in April at the Istanbul Park in Turkey and then hope to return to Barcelona, Monza, possibly Jerez due to abrasive asphalt and maybe at the end of the season we'll return to Abu Dhabi and Bahrain."*

**Can you tell us the experience of working with the staff of Toyota Motorsport?**

*"It is very good. Although they reduced its program, the people that we use is very good, very professional and very helpful to us in our work program."*

**I guess the Pirelli development work will not end in 2011.**

*"True, we must continue working because 2013 cars will have big changes with a big impact for the tyres, so in 2012 we have a major development program, but again we need to understand how they will develop the car and how it will affect the tyres. A drastic reduction in aerodynamics is what people are suggesting, the front wings will be reduced, etc. so we need a bigger tyres a wider tyres. There are many questions marks and also how we test that. Maybe with a hybrid car."*

**The Toyota TF109 is not a viable option for such development, isn't it? If not, what car you would use?**

*"True, it is impossible to use it. About the car, we do not know. We asked FOTA they have to help us. We need to simulate such a loss of downforce."*

**Apart from the simulations that can be done at the end, everything has to be tested physically on the track, right?**

*"Yes, we need a car. FOTA has to give us an idea of what we could use because the changes are very large."*



Pedro de la Rosa testing night and wet configuration in Abu Dhabi racetrack

**During 2011 season, you think we can see any race with standard conditions, with teams using strategies of four pit stops as Ferrari in the Grand Prix of France in 2004?**

*“Four, I do not believe, but I can imagine several races with three-stop strategies.”*

**Finally, what would you like to explain to the fans of Formula 1 who read on the news some drivers complaining in one form or another about the behaviour of the Pirelli tyres?**

*“It is clear that if we want to make a tyre for one stop strategy, we could, or even a tyre for the whole race weekend, but it was clear everybody wanted races like Canada last year and that was the request. Then there is the issue of graining, and we are not experiencing problems with graining and this is a hard thing to manage. What we're doing is a tire that is consumes, very quick. We had to introduce "new ingredients" to change the situation of last year. Of course for drivers it's a major change that they will have to get used to. However, it's the same for everyone and some of those who complain when they would be on the podium at the end of the race, they won't complain and will celebrate it with champagne (laughs).”*

**In other words, the best drivers should be happy because now, they have a new arm to make the difference?**

*“Of course. Drivers can make a difference against other drivers because now they have an extra element of skill.”*

*Ferrari first contact with Pirelli P Zero tyres. Abu Dhabi racetrack. November 2010*

***(I would like to especially thank Mr. Anthony Peacock -Press officer- and Mr. Paul Hembery for their kindness from the very first moment. Felix Iturbide)***

