



CONVERSATION WITH ALFONSO DE ORLEANS

Feature writer Cyril Nikitenko recently sat down with Alfonso de Orleans, President of Racing Engineering to discuss the upcoming GP2 season.

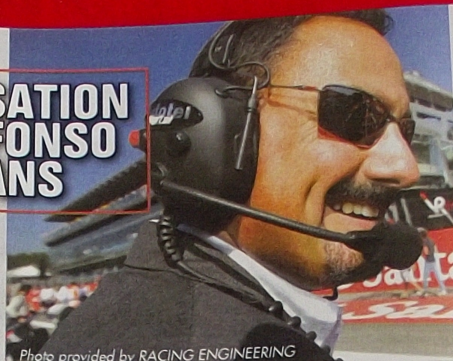


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MIN: GP2's 2013 calendar is even more international than in 2012, your thoughts on the series' expansion... How will it effect the teams? There's plenty of GP2 fans in the US, maybe a visit to Austin in 2014 would be a good idea?

RE: I think an international calendar is very good for the championship. Racing as many races outside Europe is not only good for the championship, but it also allows drivers to learn tracks that otherwise they would never really have a chance until they race in F1.

But at the same time, we have to be realistic. Unlike F1 which have their freight and fly away costs covered, that is not the case with GP2. So the more races we have outside Europe, the more the budget for the season increases. In this economy, as you know, it is not feasible to increase the costs any further. I actually think we should be working on reducing the costs since every year, it has

only increased. Not the other way around. So if future races cover our freight and travel costs, then I am all for having as many races with F1 as possible. It can only help the drivers.

MIN: Racing Engineering was fourth in the teams' standings last year and as high as seventh in the drivers', what are the objectives for 2013?

RE: With the drivers we have, we can win both championships. Only keep in mind that this won't be a walk in the park. There are some very good drivers racing in GP2 this year, so we will have our work cut out for us. But we have been working flat out since the end of last season to be as prepared as possible for the 2013 season. Who knows, we might have an ace or two up our sleeve.

MIN: What's happening on the driver front in 2013 for Racing Engineering?

RE: Our drivers will be Fabio Leimer and Julian Leal. Both drivers have three years experience in GP2 behind them. They know the tracks, the car and how to work towards good results this season. I am quite happy with our driver line up. We have two good drivers that know how to work as a team. That in itself is worth much more than what people imagine. It makes the team improve quicker than others and feedback is quickly shared among other cars. It's a win-win situation that many drivers still have not understood.

MIN: With F1, the time between the last race of the season and the first official test is always filled with a lot of intense behind-the-scenes work, but what's happening in GP2 during these winter months? How does Racing Engineering approach this period?

RE: First of all, I obviously cannot tell you very much of what we do since that is internal. But what

I can tell you is that we have not been on holidays. Some of us have even worked on Christmas day and New Year's Day. There is a lot to do and because of this, we actually don't have that much time. It might seem like a long period between the last race of last season and this first one of this one, but it actually might not be enough. We have testing later and early in the season, and everything necessary to prepare it. Not an easy task, but I am confident we will be ready.

MIN: Finally, you're based in a very emblematic area of Spain, Andalusia, next to the legendary Jerez circuit, why do you think this particular track is so popular with GP2 and F1 teams, what makes it a great testing facility?

RE: The weather and good food. I am sure no one will disagree with me on that one! Jokes aside, the track has the great advantage that during the winter months it is very good for testing while the rest of Europe is under snow or with very cold and wet conditions. It also is quite safe compared to other tracks, so a good place to test rookies or get work done that we would otherwise not risk at other tracks. It's one of the reason why we moved down here, and we have not regretted it since. Besides, it's a good place also to invite sponsors and guests. They enjoy the area and in testing, everyone is more relaxed and approachable.



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