



{YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS}

MAX MOSLEY

The charmingly ruthless ex-FIA president is in a mischievous mood. On the agenda: the closure of McLaren, 'nonsense' bloggers and his problem with F1's new tracks. But he'd happily buy Ron a beer and reckons Bernie should be knighted...

WORDS HANS SEEBERG PORTRAITS ANDY TIPPING

“Come on, let's go for lunch – then we can have a good old gossip about all the things I couldn't say into that Dictaphone!” Max Mosley has spent an hour answering all your questions in his FIA office overlooking Monaco's Casino Square; every query has been dispatched with his trademark charming brutality.

Mosley is quite a contradiction. He is softly spoken, with classic British

gentlemanly manners straight from a 1960s Bond film. Even his fiercest detractors would concede that he has a very specific charisma about him, and it's a trait that makes it rather disarming when the clinical precision of his legal mind launches into a dissection of Luca di Montezemolo, Ferrari or the woes of 'Spygate'. It's like Tony Hart suddenly speaking with the bludgeoning clarity of Gene Hunt from *Ashes to Ashes*.

A couple of hours in Max Mosley's company make it almost impossible to believe that he could be capable of the sort of ruthless leadership that's been associated with him since he became president of the FIA back in 1993, but don't be fooled: everything he says is meticulously considered. This is a man who is not afraid of upsetting people, as you're about to witness over the following pages... ➤

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Why have you got it in for Ron Dennis so much?

Paul Cullen, UK

I really haven't. There's this theory that I don't like Ron and it's simply not true. On a personal level, he and I get on perfectly well, but clearly 'Spygate' has something to do with the perception. It's nothing to do with liking or disliking Ron, but I think he made a mistake. He should have come to us at the very beginning and said, "Look I'm really sorry, we've got this information. We shouldn't have it and I'm going to take whatever steps to correct it," instead of coming to the World Council and saying, "Nobody knew except Coughlan," which later turned out not to be true. So that was very unfortunate. But there was nothing personal about it – it's just the way things were. I hope and think that if I bumped into Ron in the street we'd go off and have a coffee together. Or a beer maybe.

What took you so long to step down as FIA president?

Thomas Guilfoyle, USA

Well, I did step down in 2004, but the FIA membership told me there had to be a succession. I told them I wanted Jean Todt to be my successor and, obviously, it's a matter for the FIA to elect him or not. Originally, in 2005, he was going to stand and I wasn't, but then he got offered the big job at Ferrari and I had no choice but to continue. But I did actually do it for five years longer than I wanted to. I was always going to stand down in 2009, and the only thing that put that slightly into question was when Luca [di Montezemolo] started saying, "We've got rid of him." Of course, at that point, it was tempting to go on for a year, because it would have been quite easy to destroy FOTA and the breakaway series would never have happened – they would never have been able to get the commercial deals together and it would've folded. But it would have meant going on for another year and Jean would probably have got fed up and found

something else to do. So, in the end, it was just better to stop.

Was there ever anyone in Formula 1 that you totally trusted, and did they trust you?

Barry Coldbreath, UK

Yes... I totally trusted Jean Todt, Gerhard Berger, Franz Tost, Frank Williams... and I've probably forgotten somebody I wish I hadn't. Bernie? Um... you could trust



Current FIA president Jean Todt has Mosley's "total trust"

Bernie... [pauses for 17 seconds] Bernie can be trusted, with the proviso that in the final analysis he will always look after his own interests, whereas that would not necessarily be the case with the other people I mentioned. Did they trust me? You'd have to ask them.

Were you aware that there was a campaign on Twitter last year to get you out of office called 'Max Out'? How does it feel to know that so many F1 fans were against you?

Sarah Green, UK

If the fans really understood the issues, I don't think they would be against me, because everything I've ever done has always been done with a view to keeping Formula 1 going and stopping it collapsing. It's a much more fragile structure than people realise. It doesn't bother me that a lot of fans were hostile, because I believe their hostility was based on misinformation. I mean, a lot of it is just assumption – you read things on blogs that are complete nonsense. You get people saying things like, "Why don't you just leave the regulations alone?"

What we want is innovation." Well yes, of course we all want innovation, but if it's allowed to go unchecked it puts Formula 1 out of business. It's all very well to say people can do what they like technically, but if they're going to go bankrupt in the process and you end up with just three teams competing, then it's no good. Formula 1 is all about out-and-out competition, but you can only really have that if you have a cost-cut... yet there's one team that's been adamantly opposed to that, and that's Ferrari. And, in my view, the reason they have been adamantly opposed to a cost-cut is because they're not prepared to take on the other teams on an equal basis. Back between January and May in 2008, we had a series of meetings with all the chief financial officers of the teams, and everyone was agreed on the cost-cap and on the methodology – but Ferrari were always against it. I think it's because they know that if they had the same amount of money to spend as the other teams, they would fail.

If you had to share a taxi with Ron Dennis, Flavio Briatore or Luca di Montezemolo, who would it be and why? Or would you rather walk?

Richard Ginn, UK

Well firstly I'd have no problem getting in a taxi with any of them, but if I did have to choose – and this may sound strange – I'd say Flavio. If it was a long taxi ride he would probably be the most entertaining companion.

Who was responsible for your personal life ending up in the newspapers?

Richard Walsh, Ireland

I'm still working on that question. We've got suspicions, but there's a huge gap between suspicion and proof and I'm not prepared to even move until I've got proof – which sooner or later I will get. I've got some people looking...

Do you regret that the new tracks in F1 are characterless seas of Tarmac, designed to test safety standards rather than driver skill?

Gianni Fasulo, UK

I certainly don't like the modern circuits. I think the fundamental problem is that they're all done by the commercial rights holder, using only one company to design them. Each new circuit should be put out to tender just as you would with a new building, and the best overall proposal

should succeed. But, unfortunately, the FIA is not in a position to insist that this should be the case.

Why did you always tend to favour Ferrari so much?

Martin Wellbelove, UK

We never did favour Ferrari, although there was this perception that we did. After I'd been in the job for a few years, I developed a very good relationship with Jean Todt: I knew he didn't tell me lies, and I think he knew the same. You could go to Ferrari and they would be completely honest and open with you; most of the other teams wouldn't do that, so that created a certain perception but it didn't mean we favoured Ferrari. But you see, lately, Ferrari is not run by Todt but, essentially, by Luca di Montezemolo. Luca is very, very good with people and he's certainly a very personable, pleasant person but, in my opinion, he's also a very weak character so he's easily led. He allowed himself to get into a situation of conflict between Ferrari and the FIA whereas if Todt were

in charge, it would never have got to that stage. The classic case of people saying we favoured Ferrari was the barge boards, which were legal if they were at a slight angle to the chassis and illegal if they were vertical. Now I think that they were probably vertical, but we took them off to look at them, and then it was possible for Ferrari to say, 'No, they were at a slight angle', and they got off on that basis. We should have impounded the entire car, but you live and learn and we would never make that mistake again.

How hard did you take Ayrton Senna's death personally?

Gavin Malewski, UK

Strangely enough, I would say that I probably took Roland Ratzenberger's death on the same weekend even more personally because I thought he'd never had a chance and never made it. I went to his funeral while all the celebrities went to Ayrton's, because I thought that somebody should. But I was really sad because, in the end, you know that you have a degree of responsibility, and I

was already saying then that we needed to do something about safety. But the conventional wisdom was that it was perfectly safe and we hadn't killed anyone for 12 years. You think, 'Maybe if I'd pushed a bit harder...' because they were completely unnecessary deaths. I liked Ayrton too. I had this strange meeting with him once in Japan – it was very soon after I'd been elected and he'd been very rude about my predecessor Jean-Marie Balestre. Ron wanted him to apologise but there was no way he was going to do that. So Ayrton came to see me and I said, "Ayrton, there are two kinds of people in this world: amateurs and professionals. An amateur does something because he feels like it; a professional does something because it aids whatever it is that he's trying to do. What you did about Balestre was amateurish." He thought for quite a long time and he said, "You're right." Then his eyes welled up and he said, "What you don't understand is that I've been doing this since I was six years old, and that man took a race and probably a championship away from me." In the end, we cobbled ➤

“If the fans understood the issues, I don't think they'd be against me”



Mosley in his unsuccessful F2 days: "If you don't have the talent, you need to recognise it"

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together a statement, but it made me feel a great sympathy towards him. To me it's the most awful thing in the world when somebody dies because it's so final... and in the end you knew those two deaths could have been avoided.

Just who do you think you are?

Shambus McClure, USA

That's one of the less intelligent questions, isn't it?

Given the seriousness of Renault's intentional crash to fix the race result at Singapore in 2008, their attempts to cover that up and their possession of McLaren technical data, how can you justify their mild punishment in comparison with McLaren's \$100m fine?

Mark S Everett, USA

In Renault's case the technical information was minimal compared with that in McLaren's case and, as far as Singapore goes, they held an internal investigation and without any prompting from us got rid of the people concerned. Had McLaren done the same, I don't think there would've been any question of fining them \$100m. The problem with McLaren was that they first of all came to the World Council and told us something that turned out not to be true and, when they came back, we still weren't being told everything. I think they got away lightly, because what I was putting forward was that they should be suspended for the rest of that season and the whole of the following one. If a team has stolen technical information from another team then the only fair thing to do is to kick them out of the championship until that information is no longer current. The difficulty is that I think it would've been the end of McLaren. Would I have felt responsible if they'd gone under? No – I'd think that *they* were responsible. If you don't come clean straight away and you get caught, you've got nowhere to hide.

Will you be remembered more for your sex scandal than your safety campaigns?

David Smith, Wales

I hope not... I hope not.

Bernie recently told *F1 Racing* that F1 shouldn't be run as a democracy. Why did the teams have problems with your style of leadership?

Jon JB Willis, UK

Teams hate change and, technically, most of them are only comfortable with refinement rather than innovation. I believed that we needed to innovate radically in technical areas and also get the costs down. Because both of these things involved making significant changes, the teams hated it. They would

rather spend £10million a year refining their gearboxes than spend it on KERS, because KERS is difficult. Every year they shave a few microns off the gears and it's slightly more efficient, but that's not what's going to keep F1 going for the next 15 years. But, ultimately, I was trying to get the money down, and those that have money didn't want that because the further you bring costs down, the more rivals you've got. If there are ten teams with the same money and it's just a question of who's got the biggest brain, then your chances of being in the top three are much smaller – and that's really what it was about.

Describe your character to us in three words...

Ben Clarke, Australia

[Pauses for 42 seconds] Lazy, well-intentioned... and enthusiastic. But those things are constantly in conflict with each other.

Was there ever a time as FIA president that you didn't enjoy it?

Adam Martin-Lawrence, UK

Absolutely. In a job like that you're under constant pressure and you're solving other people's problems; sometimes I used to go round in a haze of irritation because there was always something really annoying happening. On the other hand, there were moments that were enormously satisfying. There's always this perception that I like trouble and an argument, but it's not true. I like things to run smoothly, but I *hate* being pushed around. So when I feel challenged I just feel an overwhelming urge to respond. But, you know, there would be times when I'd go home and complain to my wife about certain aspects of the job and she'd say, quite rightly, "Well no one forces you to do it."

If you went on *Top Gear*, could you beat Jay Kay's record in the 'Star in a Reasonably Priced Car'?

Dewe Gede Putra Angga Pradnyana, Indonesia

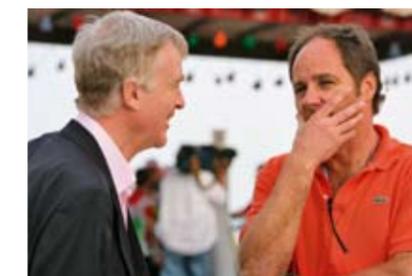
I'd try, but I doubt I'd be successful. I once went for a ride in a rally car with Colin McRae and after a few laps of this test track he said, "Right, let's swap places." So we did, and as far as I was concerned I was going really fast, but when I watched the video of my laps and his, the difference was just so depressing... actually it was funny. You watched it thinking, "Who's that poor old

boy in there?" When I got into Formula 2, I had exactly the same car as Jochen Rindt, Jackie Stewart and those kind of people, but I was just slower. And if you don't have the talent, you need to recognise it.

Who would be the best person to take over F1 after Bernie?

Antti Martikainen, Finland

Gerhard Berger. He's very clever: he fundamentally understands the business and always did his own deals. But there's only a small chance it would happen –



Max reckons Berger is the man to take over from Bernie

I'm not sure he'd want to do it. Gerhard is an entrepreneur, and if he does business, he does it for himself to make money. I can't really see him working for CVC. I think a more likely figure would be some sort of outside, very able manager and deal maker – somebody who runs a big enterprise successfully. Bernie's great talent is in making deals, but he's got his weaknesses like we all have: his one blind-spot is the internet. I think that's a great pity, because so much could be done with it.

What do you think of Michael Schumacher's return to F1?

Michael Bielicki, Poland

I think he's an absolute racer; you saw it when he was being completely crazy racing those motorbikes, one class up from club level. I saw him just after he started doing it and I said to him, "I have to say, Michael, I don't think you should do it but it looks such fun." He said, "It's brilliant – you have to come and try it." I said, "Hang on, I'm nearly 70!" But that's how he thinks. The reason people leave Formula 1 is because they lose the urge. But he hasn't.

To whom, or in what situation, do you not mind losing?

Eric Harkink, Holland

I always mind losing, but sometimes one has to accept it.

I once heard that Brabham won the 1983 title with illegal fuel. What's the most successful 'cheat' that you discovered too late?

Peter Goodchild, UK

I think it was the BMW fuel in 1983, but it wasn't actually illegal because the rules were quite wide at that time. The interesting thing about that fuel was that it was something they found in the fuel company's cellar in the old files – it was the fuel that was used in the war for supercharged planes but with no lead in it, because Germany was short of lead during the war. So they decided to try it. I remember being told that it added an instant 100bhp.

Do you think that Ron Dennis should get a knighthood for his achievements in motorsport?

Rocky Tampin, UK

He should... and Bernie should, too.

How would you have felt if Ari Vatanen had won the FIA presidency instead of Jean Todt?

Kevin Joyce, Ireland

I'd have been very worried, because I think Jean, with all his ability, is finding it quite a struggle. It's so much more complex than when I took over, and I think it would've been completely beyond Ari. There is endless scope for making mistakes, and I don't think Ari would have known where to start.

Was the lifetime ban given to Flavio Briatore too severe?

Denise Harvey, UK

Possibly, but we offered him the chance to go to the FIA Court of Appeal, which, for reasons best known to himself, he never accepted. Clearly the offence was about as serious as it gets. I've spoken to him once or twice since it happened, although it has been a bit quiet for the past two or three months. It's not awkward talking to him now – he's quite grown up. The only thing that annoyed me was when he said to the Italian press that I enjoyed punishing people, which was a reference to my problem with the *News of the World*. I thought, 'You shouldn't have said that, it's nothing to do with it.' I would never refer to any of the interesting rumours about him... **FO**

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