

Mexico City 27 October 2016.

'I'VE BEEN WAITING THE WHOLE SEASON FOR THIS RACE'

Mexicans Sergio Pérez and Esteban Gutiérrez were two of the stars of the first official press conference at the Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez on Thursday – and Checo was quick to tell everyone how pleased he was to be home.

'First of all, I'm so happy,' said the 26-year-old Force India driver. 'I've been waiting the whole season for this race and finally to be here with all my people... Formula One is getting bigger, it's growing. It's something that makes me very proud and I'm so much looking forward to give them a lot of happiness on Sunday.'

Two seats away from Pérez was his compatriot Esteban Gutiérrez, the Haas driver making his first appearance in his home race. 'It's an incredible feeling to be here and see how all the people are excited,' he agreed. 'I feel honoured to be able to share this great weekend, this great moment, with all the people that are going to be here supporting us.'

While Pérez is staying with his Force India team for next year, Gutiérrez was asked the end-of-season question many drivers dread: how are your plans shaping up for 2017?

'They (Haas) want to wait a few races,' he explained. But he was quick to point out that he is not sitting around: 'I think it will be important to close something soon,' he added, 'because we cannot risk to just wait a few more races until the end of the season and risk to fall in between two chairs. So we are doing our best and things are looking very good for next season.'

No such problems for Checo. 'I see a good potential,' he said of Force India. 'Every season we have been moving forwards. The next top teams are locked out, they don't have any vacancy, so really I felt like my next move was going to be sideways or probably backwards. I see, going to a new generation of cars, that my best future is staying where I am.'

There was time for a little good humour, too, when Pérez was asked, first of all, about his greatest fears and then about death – a topical question because México celebrates El Día de los Muertos on Tuesday!

'Nice questions,' he laughed. 'To be honest,' he said, 'it's snakes!' was the answer to the first one. As for death, he added: 'It's a point in life that you don't want to reach! But everyone will reach death in their life. Sooner or later everyone will reach it but it's a point of life no-one wants to reach!'

Championship leader Nico Rosberg was also in the press conference and, typically, the Mercedes driver was quick to tune in to the local vibe. 'I wish all Mexicans a great celebration of the dead,' he said before moving on to the more immediate challenge of the weekend ahead.

Rosberg, the 2015 México winner, could conceivably become world champion this weekend, but that's not top of mind. 'It's not within my control if I get it this weekend,' he insisted, 'so for me it's all about just winning the race and then we see what happens.'

'Winning here was awesome,' he recalled. 'And also to get so much support from the Mexican people, even after that, through the whole year, social media, it's really nice to see, so I look forward to meeting everyone again this weekend.'

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