

How to spot the favorite:

Odds



"Buongiorno a tutti" were Kimi Raikkonen's first official words as a Ferrari driver when he addressed journalists at the Madonna di Campiglio press meeting in Italy yesterday. It earned him a round of applause as members of the press perhaps compared him to his predecessor, Michael Schumacher, who managed the same words after several years!

Everyone, of course, wanted to know how Kimi was handling the transformation from McLaren driver to Ferrari driver, from the silver of what is perceived as the austere combination of McLaren and Mercedes to the red of the most legendary team in Formula One. "When I first went to the factory and for the test I noticed the atmosphere is different, is very good," said the Finn. "It's more like a family feeling, even if people are working as hard as they can, doing their best, it's very relaxed and the people are easy to work with so I was very happy and that's really what I expected and what I heard before, so I only have positive things to say. For sure, it's very different from McLaren. For me, it's only going in a positive way, so it's been very pleasant.

Kimi was asked if he would make adjustments to his life as a Ferrari driver. McLaren personnel, it was said, had suggested that he wouldn't fit in at Ferrari. Kimi was briefly on the offensive against his old team. "I don't know what McLaren has said or what they think," he said. "I don't know how they can say things when they don't know how things are at Ferrari so I'm not going to change my way. It's been working well enough, it's the way I do things. I don't think that even if I had changed my style, how they wanted to do things, it would have changed results because in the end the problem wasn't really how I do my training, or what I do in my private life. At McLaren it was more the car wasn't lasting the race or was not quick enough. I don't really mind what they say, I think I am going to do things my own way. Of course, we need to work together as well as we can. We need to change the way we work together.

Felipe Massa faces the new Formula One season with optimism but a fear of new teammate Kimi Raikkonen, the Brazilian admitted yesterday. Speaking at Scuderia Ferrari Marlboro's annual ski meeting at Madonna di Campiglio in Italy, the Brazilian pointed out that he has aged a lot and calmed down, and psychologically, faces the new ski season with the benefit of experience.

Massa revealed that Ferrari have made major technical changes throughout the car for the new season. "We've tested new suspension, there's a new gearbox. All us drivers have made technical requests and there are many interesting solutions, many things are going to make the difference so the car is totally different to 2006 which is good, it will be a competitive car. I hope we will win at the start of the championship."

Massa said that following a successful 2006, he was looking forward to making further progress in 2007. "I was third in the championship and fought to the end for the World Championship, so it was very positive. I learned a lot, I have grown a lot. I am very motivated. I had many satisfactions in 2006: my first podium, I won two races, it was very important to win Brazil, it was probably the best moment of my life, and I hope to take further steps forward in 2007, fighting for victories from the start."

He also said that he had good feelings about his new teammate, Kimi Raikkonen, who replaces the outgoing Michael Schumacher. "He's arrived with his feet on the ground," said Massa. "He wants to know about the team and the people in the team, so it's positive. It's important to have a good feeling between us. It's true that Kimi is very important for the team, and expectations are high. He has shown to be fast but he hasn't won a World Championship. There are two young drivers in the team who want to win and no World Champion so we will be treated equally. It will be the same for both drivers. I see myself in a good situation, in the right place at the right time. The team treats me as I want to be treated and I hope I can be competitive right from the start and that everything works perfectly from the start." But when Felipe was asked who he feared most at the start of the season, Raikkonen was at the top of the list with the current World Champion.



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