

Hamilton gets 'Guard of honour' from Mercedes

London

World champion Lewis Hamilton received a spectacular welcome when he came to celebrate his and Mercedes' 2017 success with his team in the UK on Monday. Hamilton was first honoured at their power unit plant in Brixworth, before he headed to their Brackley base where he was greeted with a 'guard of honour' from staff.

"This a very emotional day," said Hamilton. "I was not expecting this, thanks everyone for the warm welcome. Today is something that I will never forget, turning up at the front gate of the factory and seeing everyone out on the street to welcome me - I'm blown away. This has been an incredible year, it's been an incredible journey together."

Hamilton has the chance to win his 10th Grand Prix of the year at this weekend's season finale in Abu Dhabi, after which he and Mercedes will be officially crowned with their fourth world championships at next month's FIA Prize Giving Gala.

"Since I was fortunate enough to join this team in 2012, I have seen it go from strength to strength," added Toto Wolff, Head of Mercedes-Benz Motorsport. "I still see many of the same faces who were here when I joined, but also new faces as we have continued to build the strength of this group. We are fortunate to have the right resources, which isn't always a given, but importantly we have the right people."

"We have not allowed ourselves to become complacent, but remain motivated and energised. For me, I could not imagine working with a better group of people. I would

like to say thank you very much to all of you."

Wolff's fellow team boss Niki Lauda echoed his colleague's comments, saying: "For the fourth time in a row I'm in the fortunate position to say thank you to the entire team. 2017 has been a challenging year because of the rule change. A rule change always means uncertainty; no one knows what the other guys are doing."

(formula1)



Lewis Hamilton



Alonso ranks his 2018 title contenders

London

Fernando Alonso is "very optimistic" that he'll be in the championship fight next season taking on Lewis Hamilton and the Red Bull drivers for the World title.

The double World Champion was asked by Sky Sports to rank his rivals for next year's Drivers' Championship and gave a surprising assessment.

Although Sebastian Vettel was Hamilton's toughest rival this season and is on course to finish runner-up in the championship, Alonso reckons his Ferrari replacement will fall by the wayside.

Instead, he believes it will be McLaren and Red Bull taking on Hamilton for the 2018 title.

"We'll put me here on the top," he told Sky Sports when asked to rank next year's championship contenders.

"We are very optimistic that next year will be

the year we come back to the top.

"Then I will put Lewis as the World Champion now and I'll put Max, Daniel and then I'll put second step all these three guys [Raikkonen, Bottas and Vettel]."

Asked to then rank Hamilton among Formula 1's World Champions, the Spaniard replied: "I think he is one of the greatest, obviously he has won four titles now."

"It is true that the last three titles, the Mercedes' World Championships were in a dominant car so those are a little bit easier. "But," he added, "I consider him one of the greatest because when he was with McLaren in difficult times he was still performing supreme and still winning races in cars that weren't in a position to win races."

"He deserves the success because he was always at the top of his level." (planetf1)

Williams deny Kubica deal is done

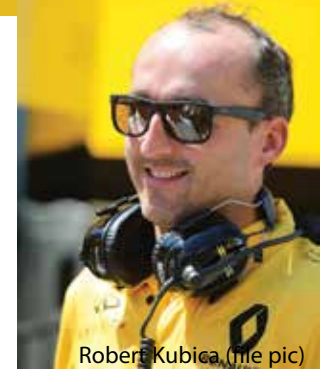
London

Williams are talking to Robert Kubica about the Polish driver making a comeback with them next season but a decision has yet to be made on a replacement for Felipe Massa, the Formula One team said yesterday.

Responding to media reports that a deal had been done, Williams said no driver announcement was imminent.

"Although conversations are ongoing with Kubica, it is still yet to be finally decided who will replace Massa," they said in a statement.

"We will make an announcement when we have something to announce but nothing is planned this weekend in Abu Dhabi."



Robert Kubica (file pic)

Sunday's race at Yas Marina is the last of the season, with Brazilian Massa saying farewell to the sport he entered in 2002.

Canadian teenager Lance Stroll is certain to stay with the former world champions but a handful of drivers are in the frame to replace Massa.

They include the 32-year-old Kubica. The Pole partially severed his right forearm in an horrific 2011 crash during a rally he entered for fun before the start of that Formula One season, and there are lingering doubts about his arm movement.

However the Pole has twice tested a 2014 Williams car, after failing to secure a seat at Renault, and is being represented by retired 2016 world champion and former Williams driver Nico Rosberg. (Reuters)