

Williams car 'denied' Massa Baku victory

London

Felipe Massa would have won Formula 1's Azerbaijan Grand Prix if a failure on the damper system had not locked his Williams car's rear suspension solid, according to Paddy Lowe.

Massa was running third in June's race, having started ninth, when the race was red-flagged.

When it resumed, Massa suffered the issue and was passed by eventual race winner Daniel Ricciardo before rapidly falling down the order and retiring.

Several drivers claimed they could have won the race without issues, but following analysis, Williams chief technical officer Lowe believes Massa would have done it.

It would have been his 12th victory and first since the 2008 Brazilian



Felipe Massa (file pic)

Grand Prix, where he lost the championship to Lewis Hamilton.

"After Baku, which was a pretty eventful race, there were a lot of people that came up to me afterwards and said we could've won that race if only," Lowe said.

"I analysed it and I don't actually agree with most, but I definitely agreed with the

Felipe scenario. "If only we hadn't let him down with a car failure, he absolutely would've won that race. It's such a shame that in his final year, we denied him that victory."

(autosport)

Renault 'must avoid' showdowns in future

London

Renault must avoid putting itself in situations where so much is at stake in the final race of the season in future, claims its Formula 1 managing director Cyril Abiteboul.

The French manufacturer moved ahead of Toro Rosso to claim sixth in the constructors' championship in the Abu Dhabi season finale, earning it a \$6.5million bonus.

Abiteboul says the stress of such a last-gasp performance needed to be steered clear of in the future.

"The message is that we must avoid putting ourselves in such a position again," Abiteboul said. "It can be a very stylish way to finish the season, but we need to have a programme that is allowing us to secure what needs to be secured before that."

Abiteboul said Renault had been quite "extreme" in its settings during the final weekend of the campaign to make sure that its points target was not wrecked by reliability problems.

(autosport)

Ricciardo 'too sensitive' to 2017 F1 season

London

Daniel Ricciardo believes qualifying was his weak point during the 2017 Formula 1 season as he failed to match his performance from the previous year.

The Australian triumphed in Baku but scored 56 fewer points and ended up two places further down in fifth in the drivers' championship compared to his 2016 campaign.

Qualifying has traditionally been a strength of the Australian's but he admitted he struggled to get the most of the new generation of F1 machinery over a single lap.

"I used to be called a Saturday driver, now I feel I'm probably called a Sunday driver," Ricciardo said. "Who would have thought?

"I'll put it down to a couple of things. I wouldn't say I've struggled with the car, but it's been a bit trickier to maximise.

"There were a lot of laps on Saturdays... I mean I crashed twice in qualifying, which is very uncharacteristic - Australia and Baku - where it was trickier certainly.

"For whatever reason, Max didn't find it as complicated to start the year. Naturally, I was probably too sensitive to it as well.

"A lot of the time, it was probably better to just drive it and deal with the grip I had as opposed to try and finetune it too much."

Ricciardo said when he and his team decided to

push on and avoid making too many tweaks, things started to improve but then they fell back into old routines.

"We got to a point where we thought 'it is what it is, it won't be the perfect car, just deal with it,'" he said.

"So I put together some good ones. Then we got perhaps stuck in our old ways, there were quite a few practices this year, especially Friday FP2 where I was on top.

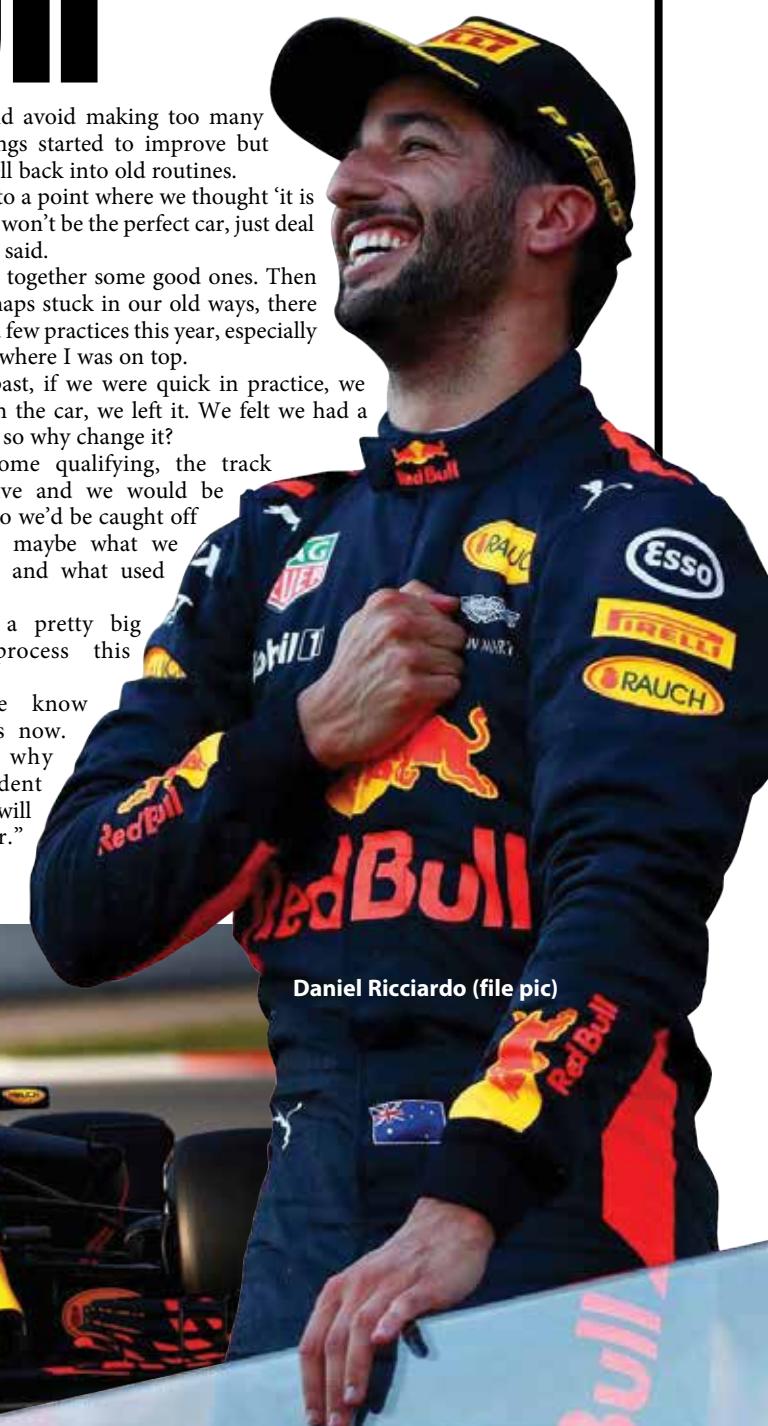
"In the past, if we were quick in practice, we didn't touch the car, we left it. We felt we had a good thing, so why change it?

"Then come qualifying, the track would evolve and we would be worse off. So we'd be caught off guard with maybe what we used to do and what used to work.

"It was a pretty big learning process this year.

"But we know the reasons now. That's why I'm confident next year will be better."

(autosport)



Daniel Ricciardo (file pic)



Hewitt to make Australian Open return

Sydney

Lleyton Hewitt is coming out of retirement to play doubles at next month's Australian Open.

The former world number one officially called it quits after his home grand slam in 2016 but returned to the court twice more last year in Davis Cup and at Wimbledon.

Now he is making another appearance,

this time alongside fellow Australian Sam Groth, for whom this will be the last tournament of his career.

Hewitt said in the Herald Sun: "It's going to be a bit of fun - that's what the Australian Open is about.

"I'm going to really enjoy it. We've been hitting a lot of balls, hitting every day, and we're not just going out there

making up the numbers. We want to give it a fair crack."

Hewitt won grand slam singles titles at the US Open in 2001 and Wimbledon the following year, while he was also victorious in doubles at Flushing Meadows in 2000 partnering Max Mirnyi.

The 36-year-old is currently Australia's Davis Cup captain. (autosport)



Lleyton Hewitt (file pic)