

Toto Wolff has called for the investigation into [Christian Horner](#) for alleged “inappropriate behaviour” towards a female colleague to be conducted with transparency and said that senior figures in Formula One had a duty to act as role models.

Wolff, the Mercedes team principal, is the first senior F1 figure to address the allegations against his [Red Bull](#) counterpart since they became public on 5 February.

At a press conference in Bahrain on the first day of pre-season testing, Wolff was the only one of five team principals present willing to discuss the investigation and called for it to be aired in public as an issue that was important to the whole sport.

“There is a lot of speculation that has been happening over the past weeks and lots of things that are going on,” said Wolff, who has had a spiky rivalry with Horner over the years as their teams have gone toe-to-toe for the drivers’ and constructors’ titles.

“What is important is for a process with rigour. I think what Red Bull has started as an independent investigation, if this is done in the right way, with transparency, that is something we need to look at.

“F1 and the teams, we stand for inclusion, equality, fairness, diversity and it is not only talking about it, it is living it day in and day out. These are the standards we are setting ourselves. We are a global sport, one of the most important sports in the world, and we are role models. It is not just a team issue. It is an issue for all of F1.”

The investigation into Horner was launched by Red Bull Racing’s parent company Red Bull GmbH after the complaint was submitted to them. The complainant has not been identified but it is understood Horner is alleged to have used what has been described as “controlling” behaviour.

Horner has repeatedly denied there is any truth to the allegations and maintained he would defend his position vigorously. At the launch of the new RB20 car last week the 50-year-old was unequivocal in stating his innocence and that he had no intent of stepping aside. “I am absolutely committed to this team, I have been here since the beginning, I have built this team,” he said.

He has not been suspended and is in Bahrain running his team at testing this week.

Red Bull’s team principal Christian Horner crosses the pit lane during the first day of the pre-season testing at the Bahrain International Circuit on Wednesday. Red Bull’s independent inquiry is being conducted behind closed doors, the name of the barrister in charge has not been

made public, nor have details of the complaint or of the investigation itself. Horner was interviewed for more than eight hours by the barrister but no further information has been released and there is still no timescale for when the investigation will be concluded. It is believed it may continue beyond the first race of the season in Bahrain on 2 March.

This week F1 and the FIA both issued statements calling for the controversy to be resolved but refrained from making any further comment.

When the new cars took to the track for the first time in 2024, the opening session had a familiar, if ominous, air with Red Bull's Max Verstappen comfortably on top. Having swept to his third world championship last year, winning 19 of 22 races he opened with the same pace with which he closed out 2023.

The new Red Bull was a [significant evolution of the 2023 model](#) but hit the ground running. Verstappen completed 66 laps in the morning, finishing seven-tenths clear of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc with Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso in third, eight-tenths back.

In the second session Verstappen demonstrated both pace and reliability once more. Clocking up a total of 142 laps for the day he was once more quickest, finishing more than a second up on McLaren's Lando Norris in second and Ferrari's Carlos Sainz in third.

Mercedes have brought an entirely new design of car this season, after two years of struggling and George Russell finished 12th fastest. His teammate Lewis Hamilton, in what will be his final season at Mercedes before he moves to Ferrari next year, is expected to drive on Thursday.