

Times move fast in Formula One. After Bahrain 2023, we were talking on this channel about where Mercedes have gone wrong and talking about the decline of the sport's most dominant team. Just a month later, Lewis Hamilton finishes second in Australia on Merit, behind Max Verstappen, and there seems to be a renewed sense of optimism in the Brackley camp. The quick turnaround has got us thinking, has Mercedes been lying about their pace all along? Australia 2023 was without doubt a roller coaster for Mercedes. Having been six tenths of a second off Red Bull in qualifying for the first two races, in Melbourne, that gap was little more than two tenths. And the black cars briefly round one, two in the race after a fast start. George Russell reckoned piston failure on his Mercedes engine cost him a potential victory, while Lewis Hamilton was able to beat Fernando Alonso to second place and bring home Mercedes's best result of the season so far. There are clear reasons for the team's big improvement. Australia's Saturday running wasn't your typical qualifying session, where teams ran super low on fuel and do two fast runs. The tire degradation was so low, teams could run continuously for the entire session, keep the tires alive, and do multiple runs to find small improvements over time. Once Mercedes found their sweet spot, keeping the tires warm, it allowed them to reach their full potential. Also, Albert Park is a unique circuit, much smoother than your typical street track. Because the track is so smooth, it allowed Mercedes to run their car lower to the ground and generate more downforce. And finally, Albert Park is difficult to pass around. It was the first time in F1 history we had a track layout with four DRS zones. The time difference, or delta, needed to pass, was over a second to lap. Mercedes having track position, a clear gap, and Fernando Alonso's Aston Martin lacking top-ends feed was the perfect formula for Hamilton to take second. But it was also clear how far ahead Red Bull still is in race trim, for Stappin' Over took Hamilton with ease to go on and win the race. Lewis praised Mercedes for the progress they've made since Jedda. While Fernando Alonso mocked his rivals, saying, If you read their comments, it seems that they have a car that is out of Q3, but I don't think that it is that bad. Suggesting perhaps Mercedes are overplaying the extent of their deficit to the front. George Russell gave an interesting explanation of Mercedes sudden improvement. I feel like the last two weekends we have really put the car in a great window, and migrated away from where our simulators have been telling us. That is perhaps a reason why our pace was poor in Bahrain. We probably could have had the car in a very different window to have more performance. So we need to look and understand why the sims are telling us one thing that we're going in a slightly different direction from. So Mercedes may have some problems with their simulators back in Brackley, but does this migration away from trusting the numbers, suggest the W14 is now a potential race winner? Unlikely, Toto Wolf was still in awe of Red Bull's true speed. He said, they have a straight line speed advantage with the DRS open, which is just mind boggling. If you have a car that is quick on the straight, you're doing the right things. It's up to us to sort this out and find tools in order to have that same straight line performance. When the staff and past Hamilton for the lead during the race with his DRS open, he was travelling nearly 20 miles an hour faster due to the RB19's unique Flora arrangement. On lap 12, when Max used the full speed of his Red Bull to pass Hamilton, he finished the lap two seconds clear of the pack. Don't let the optimism fool you. We're still likely looking at a one car championship, but given Mercedes has always been a team to downplay their own strengths, even when they were dominating not too long ago, it's easy to see why so many were then surprised and reacted cynically to their sudden turn of pace in Australia. What have you made of Mercedes season so far? Do you think they've been telling the truth about their real performance? Let us know in the comments and remember to like and subscribe for more Formula One content. .