

# Driven by Data:

## Inside the Fast Lane with Carlos Sainz

### Podcast Transcript

**Dragos:** Welcome to Driven by Data: Inside the Fast Lane. I'm Dragos Stoica, Country Manager for Brillio Romania, and I'm your host for today's episode.

Our guest hardly needs an introduction. He grew up with racing in his veins, stormed through the junior ranks with championship wins, and has gone on to prove himself as one of the most exciting drivers on the grid. Known for his resilience and sharp race craft, he has already delivered outstanding results this season — including strong finishes and a brilliant podium in Baku that had fans on their feet.

It is my pleasure to welcome Carlos Sainz.

**Carlos:** Hello.

**Dragos:** Carlos, first of all, congratulations again for the fantastic podium in Baku. From the outside, it looked like one of those races where everything just clicked for you — the race pace, the strategy, the pressure. Walk us through it from your seat. When was the moment you knew you were going to be on the podium?

**Carlos:** I think you said it correctly. It was one of those races where everything came together, which, to be honest, has been a bit of a struggle this year — putting everything together.

We've been very quick from the beginning of the year, but up until Baku I always felt like we were leaving a bit of lap time on the table, or making mistakes — either from my side, with the strategy, or other things. Finally, in Baku, everything came together: from a very good lap in quali, nearly scoring pole and starting P2, to then putting in very strong laps in the race.

I think it was 52 laps with no mistakes and bringing home the podium — and we had to fight for it. We got overtaken by Russell in the pit stop, and there was a lot of pressure from Antonelli, but we managed to make it stick.

**Dragos:** It was fantastic. And it's a track where you need a lot of speed, plus it's a street track in a city, which makes it even more special. It also gives you the opportunity to grow a lot from there.

**Carlos:** Yes, it's a track where you cannot afford any mistakes. Because there was very low tyre degradation, we had to push quite hard through the whole race. That brings you closer to mistakes because you give yourself less margin, get closer to the walls, and have to push flat out.

It was a very intense race. I remember being quite tired, especially mentally, because it was a sustained, non-stop pace. But I had a lot of fun, and I was so happy to see the whole team so

excited. I've never seen so many happy faces together in my life.

**Dragos:** Very interesting — and very nice. Now, thinking about this, you've raced all over the world. You've already celebrated a decade in Formula 1. If you could relive one race just for the pure fun of it — the energy, the atmosphere — which one would you pick?

**Carlos:** Oh, that's a very difficult question. As you said, I've done 10 years in Formula 1. I'm very honoured to have scored many podiums, four race wins, a few pole positions, so it's very difficult to pick one exact race.

I remember Mexico last year, feeling at one with the car and putting everything together — perfect in quali, perfect in the race. That race also included a good overtake on Max at the end of the straight, so it had a bit of everything. Maybe that was the most fun one.

**Dragos:** I'm looking forward to seeing how you'll be this season.

**Carlos:** Let's see what I can do in Mexico, yeah.

**Dragos:** Moving forward, every fan hears about data being the secret weapon in Formula 1. From you as a driver, what is one piece of data you look at that tells you you're ready for a race?

**Carlos:** For me, the main piece of data we look at is the telemetry of your teammate. Throughout the weekend, you keep comparing yourself against your teammate — in this case, Alex — because he's the only one with exactly the same machinery. The only thing that changes is the driver.

You can clearly see his strengths and weaknesses, and you try to elevate yourself by copying his strengths and improving your weaknesses. That makes me quicker, then I go quicker, and that pushes him to go quicker. We're

in constant pursuit of perfection by mixing both of our talents.

That's why, for a team like Williams — a team that wants to fight for world championships in the future — it's super important to have two very skilful, competitive drivers who push each other to the maximum. At the same time, it's important to respect each other, but having a competitive teammate always makes you quicker.

**Dragos:** Definitely. And with a teammate comes the engineers and colleagues who help you, showing lots of graphs, numbers, and charts. Let's say you only have five seconds before getting in the car. What's the one number or insight you'd ask them to show you?

**Carlos:** I'd ask them to show me the two or three corners, or the sector of the circuit, where I'm slower. If I'm quick somewhere, I know why — I've just done the lap. But sometimes you think you're quick and then you see a corner or sector where you're giving up a tenth, a tenth and a half. If you improve that, you're automatically a tenth and a half quicker. And if your teammate in the same car is doing it, you say, "If he does it, I can do it."

So before going out on track, we check that sector number. Maybe we also give a last check to the weather, wind, and track temperature, to see that conditions are stable before we decide what to do with switches on the steering wheel or the front wing — and then we go.

**Dragos:** Interesting. In practice sessions, which are very important, what is the key information you focus on? And how do you process it quickly enough to adapt your driving style for the rest of the session?

**Carlos:** That's where we have very good engineers in Formula 1 who help us understand the data as best as possible. I'm not a computer-data expert; I have 10 years of experience, but it's thanks to the people at Williams — at the track and at the factory — interpreting everything they see from more than a

thousand sensors on the car.

They then translate that data to the driver and say, “We think if you go in this direction with the setup, or this direction with your driving, you’ll extract more performance.” So it’s not only down to me; all the individuals at Williams are good at understanding the data and spotting the clues it gives us so we can follow the right road.

A driver has an instinct about why the car is doing something we don’t like, or why it’s not performing as it should in certain areas. I always try to spot in the data why that is, and point the engineers toward the part of the lap where we need special emphasis or analysis.

Without data, you can give as much feedback as you want, but it’s difficult to prove your point. Thanks to data, you can find evidence and prove it. Then the engineers can find a solution.

**Dragos:** I’ve always seen that data drives Formula 1. Nevertheless, you’re also known for making instinctive calls. What’s the latest example where you followed your gut instead of the charts and it paid off big?

**Carlos:** The most recent example is Singapore. We were considering starting the race on the hard tyres. We all agreed that starting on the hard to go to around lap 50 — like we did, I think it was lap 52 — was probably the best solution for our race.

But based on my experience in Baku with the hard tyre, I told the team, “I think the medium is actually just as quick as the hard and can go as long, and maybe it gives me a bit more grip at the start in case I can gain a few positions.”

At the last minute, we changed to starting on the medium because my instinct told me that if I managed it correctly, the medium would still make it to the end. That’s exactly what happened. After the race I said, “In the end, we made the medium

look like a hard,” which is exactly the phrase I used in the strategy meeting before the race.

That was pure instinct. I woke up on Sunday and thought, “This is what we should do.”

**Dragos:** And it paid off with a fantastic point in Singapore.

**Carlos:** Yes. We needed a very good strategy and race execution to get that point. What’s interesting is there were no safety cars — which normally is what helps you in those situations. In Singapore, in the last two years, there were zero safety cars, which is strange because it’s usually a chaotic race.

But this time, there were no safety cars, no external factors helping us, no DNFs, no incidents. So we needed a perfectly executed race, and that’s exactly what we did.

**Dragos:** Congratulations. It wasn’t shown on TV, those last laps when you were overtaking, but it was fantastic.

**Carlos:** It was a fun end to the race — 10 laps flat out, pushing like crazy to overtake as many cars as possible. When they told me on the radio there was a possibility to get the last point, we went for it and we achieved it.

**Dragos:** Congrats again.

**Carlos:** Thank you.

**Dragos:** Brillio is all about accelerating decisions with data and AI. For a driver like you, how has technology changed the way you prepare compared with when you first came into Formula 1?

**Carlos:** For me, the biggest development has been learning how to use data to my advantage — understanding it in the best possible way to exploit my strengths and address my weaknesses. Data analysis should almost be mandatory now in

the “school” of motorsport — even from karting to single-seaters. If I had a kid or a school of drivers, I’d tell them: spend time learning how to understand data, how to read it to see what the car is doing together with your driving, and how changing your driving changes the behaviour of the car.

For me, those 10 years in Formula 1 with five different teams, brilliant engineers, and infinite amounts of data have made me the driver I am today and helped me support the team in developing the car. That’s the key and most important part.

**Dragos:** I see you after every lap, when you come back to the pits, always looking at the screens, analysing with the engineers where you can improve. You invest a lot of time in this.

**Carlos:** Yes. You can use data for short-term gains and long-term benefits. In the short term, it’s the screens you see when we come into the pits — that’s where I look at Alex’s onboard, data comparisons, sector times. That gives me an instant benefit: the next lap I go out, I’ll already be quicker.

Then you have the long-term benefit. For example, if we’ve been weak all weekend in turn nine in Singapore, and our rivals are two tenths quicker there — all 18 other drivers — it means our car has a fundamental weakness in that corner, because neither Alex nor I, pushing all weekend, could match them.

So we dig deep into the data for that corner, analyse the exact point where we’re losing time, and send that set of data to the team back at the factory as a perfect example of the type of corner where our car isn’t yet good enough. From there, the car will be developed to improve that type of corner, rather than a corner where we’re already quickest.

So you get short-term success from data and long-term development direction.

**Dragos:** Brillio is Atlassian Williams Racing’s Official Digital Transformation Partner and Official Data & AI

Services Partner. From the driver’s seat, how do you see these kinds of partnerships making a difference for you and the team?

**Carlos:** Brillio is a fundamental part of our business, our sport, and our development. With the way Formula 1 is evolving, we need these kinds of technical partners.

Nowadays, the amount of data we collect from a Formula 1 car is enormous, and the number of software tools we use is huge. We need a technical partner that helps us understand how to exploit the maximum out of all these new technologies. Brillio gives us exactly that opportunity.

**Dragos:** Thank you for that. Now, moving forward — at Brillio, we’re all about turning raw data into real decisions. As a driver, how do you feel that impact — whether it’s better preparation, smarter strategy, or just helping you push harder on track?

**Carlos:** Probably all of the above. A key part of the weekend is preparation — how to arrive at a race as well-prepared as possible. There are weeks, sometimes months, of prep before the race, where we build all the datasets and analysis.

Then comes decision-making — fast decision-making — once the weekend starts. We need smart, quick calls in the least amount of time possible, in a very high-pressure environment. You also have the human factor: you get tired over a weekend, so you need tools that help you make those decisions.

With Brillio, we have that combination of better preparation, faster decision-making, and support tools that help us perform better across an F1 weekend.

**Dragos:** You have a reputation for being

relentless — always fighting, never giving up.  
Where do you think this mindset comes from?

**Carlos:** I think it's deep down in every human being. You just need some fire inside you to extract it. The human race is relentless; when you have a target, a motive, an objective, you fight for it. You need to find in yourself what's worth fighting for and what you really want from your life. That usually triggers the instinct to have that fight and grit.

For me, I'm so passionate about what I do. I love racing so much, I love being competitive and being at the pinnacle of motorsport, that no matter how many setbacks I have, I stay motivated. That triggers me to always come back.

**Dragos:** And you always prove it — you come back even better than before. I've seen that in every team you've been with.

**Carlos:** Yes. I've experienced tough times, and then the good side, when you overcome those moments, tastes so good. That feeling motivates me. When I'm going through a bad time, I think, "I know this will taste even better when I come out of it." So far, that's always been the case.

That's why I also encourage people at home to think positively and think about how good it's going to feel when they finally come out of a difficult time.

**Dragos:** Thank you for sharing that. These are things we all need to learn from you — they're extremely important in daily life. Now, let's do some quickfire questions. I know you need to be prepared for the next race, so just pure instinct — no overthinking. Let's see how it goes.

**Carlos:** Okay.

**Dragos:** Overtake or pole position?

**Carlos:** Pole position.

**Dragos:** Especially in Monaco?

**Carlos:** Yeah, in Monaco — but everywhere. In F1, feeling like you're the fastest man in the world at that moment is a very good feeling. If you're on pole in Formula 1, you're the best out of 20 over one lap. No one can go quicker than you around that circuit in that moment, because in theory we're the best in the world. It's a good feeling.

**Dragos:** Now, an even harder one: night race or day race?

**Carlos:** Day race. I'm not a big fan of night races.  
**Dragos:** Nevertheless, Singapore?  
**Carlos:** Yeah, but I still prefer standard day races. It's fine to have some night races, but I prefer days.

**Dragos:** Monaco yacht party or dinner with family?

**Carlos:** Dinner with family.

**Dragos:** One Spanish phrase that every Formula 1 fan should learn?

**Carlos:** One Spanish phrase... I think the most famous is vamos, no? I think everyone knows vamos.

**Dragos:** Exactly — it's the first Spanish word I learned from you.

**Carlos:** I think if you know the word vamos, you're ready to play sport and move forward in life.

**Dragos:** And separately from Spanish, I also learned "smooth operator."

**Carlos:** True.

**Dragos:** Now something more personal: if you had to teach me one skill to race, and you had only 10 minutes, what would you teach?

**Carlos:** One skill about racing? I'd teach you how to use the brake pedal correctly. A lot of the lap time we produce in racing comes from the brake — how you use it to stop the car and to balance the car.

If you know how to use the brake, you already have a lot of your driving done correctly.

**Dragos:** I was expecting you to say acceleration.

**Carlos:** Acceleration, everyone understands. If you press, the car goes forward; if you lift, it stops accelerating. But people don't understand how much you can manipulate the balance and behaviour of the car with the brake pedal.

**Dragos:** I'm looking forward to that lesson. Now, if a movie was made about your podium in Baku, what would be the name of it?

**Carlos:** Hmm. I'd say Finally.

**Dragos:** Final Destination?

**Carlos:** No, just Finally. That's what I thought. I was waiting 12, 13, 14 races to put everything together, and it finally came. Finally.

**Dragos:** And congrats again.

**Carlos:** Thank you.

**Dragos:** It was fantastic. And that brings us to the end of this episode of Driven by Data: Inside the Fast Lane. Carlos, thank you for taking us behind the visor — from the unforgettable podium in Baku to how data and instinct come together in your decision-making.

**Carlos:** Thank you very much, guys. It's a pleasure to be here with you and share some good experiences about racing.

**Dragos:** On behalf of everyone at Brillio, we wish you lots of success in your next races.

**Carlos:** Thank you. I hope to meet more Brillio people in the future, soon enough.

**Dragos:** Thank you so much, Carlos. And to our viewers, thank you for joining us. Stay tuned for more conversations where speed meets data and racing meets innovation. Until next time, I'm Dragos Stoica.