



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

2008 BRITISH GRAND PRIX

SATURDAY POST-QUALIFYING PRESS CONFERENCE – July 5, 2008

DRIVERS:

1. Heikki KOVALAINEN (McLaren Mercedes), 1m21.049s
2. Mark WEBBER (Red Bull), 1m21.554s
3. Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN (Ferrari), 1m21.706s

TV UNILATERALS

Q: What a moment for you to score your maiden pole in front of a British crowd and in a country where you spent much of your motor racing life.

Heikki KOVALAINEN: Absolutely, it has been going really well all weekend and we managed to put some more pace to the car last week and all week here it has just been carrying on from that. Obviously like you said I have been around this Silverstone area for many, many years of my life. I know a lot of family and friends around here, so it is great to make the first pole here and tomorrow we will just carry on where we left today.

Q: It was a very difficult qualifying session with changing conditions. Talk us through qualifying and how you approached it.

HK: Yeah, it was quite difficult conditions especially at the beginning and in the middle of the first session as there was quite a dark sky and it was possible to get some rain. On my first run in Q1 I had a bit of traffic and I didn't manage to do a very good lap at the beginning, so I had to go out and try and do it before the rain came, just to make sure we were not knocked out in the first part of qualifying. Then the second part of qualifying went much better without any problems and in the last part the conditions were again difficult. I think the wind picked up in the last part of qualifying and it was very difficult. The first run I was all over the place but managed to put the second run together much better and I am very happy about it.

Q: You were devastatingly quick in sector three which means you are very quick now in slow corners where Ferrari have had an advantage?

HK: Yeah, that's true. The team has put a lot of effort into sorting out that particular area and I think they have done a brilliant job in sorting out what was wrong there and trying to put changes in place and the team has made a really good step forward with the car. I am very happy about that but of course tomorrow is still a long race and anything can happen but the balance of the car now in high speed and even in low speed is as good as it has been this year.

Q: Mark, the first ever front row start for Red Bull Racing. What a day for you.

Mark WEBBER: It is a bit of a surprise actually. We have been pretty strong most of the weekend but we didn't realise how strong I suppose until we got into, especially Q2. We were surprised. My 19.7 was pretty competitive but obviously these guys have a different strategy compared to us especially in Q2. In relation to the rest of the guys we are normally competing against, we looked to have a nice margin over them, so obviously Fernando is still there and some of the other guys. It is a credit to the team, they have worked so hard over the last few weeks like all the teams have. But Red Bull live very close to here, just down the road, so the same thing for us, it is a bit of a home grand prix for all the Red Bull racing guys, so it's a proud moment for them obviously. But five per cent of the job is done. We have got to race tomorrow and it could be wet as well. There is a long way to go but we did our job today. I felt very comfortable in the car and I could push it to the limit and as Heikki said the last part of qualifying when I went out in Q3 with the fuel in I thought the

guys must have put double the fuel in than expected because the car was all over the place. I saw people on the big screen running wide and obviously everybody was having trouble on that first run. On the second run I got a lot better lap. My engineer told me I was P1 at Becketts but I knew that was going to continue and Heikki got the pole and I am happy for him. We got second but I was still surprised that we hung in there. I can't wait for tomorrow now, I wish the race was now.

Q: Silverstone obviously means a lot to you as well as you started your F3 career with a team based not far from here.

MW: Absolutely, Alan Docking Racing was very close to here for me and this is the first track I drove on in Europe away from Australia, so having won here in Formula Ford, got pole in F3 and won in Formula 3000 and sportscars and now front row in F1, so it's been a good place for me and a happy hunting ground, so it's good.

Q: Kimi, what sort of day has it been for Ferrari?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Comparing to yesterday it has been much better. Yesterday was very difficult, so we put quite a lot of effort into sorting my car out and it seems to have worked okay. For sure we are not exactly where we want to be but it's never been our strongest point the first couple of qualifying. Nobody knows how much fuel everybody is running and for sure, McLaren and especially Heikki have been very fast this week, so tomorrow we will only know how fast we were today. But it was pretty good today in qualifying and I was very happy with the car. In the last qualifying the first drive was quite difficult with a lot of wind. The second one went much smoother, so P3 is okay if you look at where the others are who are in front of me in the championship. For sure we want to be in front of everybody but tomorrow hopefully we can still manage to do it.

Q: Talk us through qualifying and how difficult it was to get the car right in the conditions.

KR: In the test the car was good and then suddenly yesterday it was very difficult for me for some reason. We changed the car a bit for today and it has been a good condition and the circuit has been good but of course in the last qualifying there was a lot of wind and it made it pretty tricky in a few places. But it is the same for everybody and you always expect that here. Sometimes it hurts more and sometimes not if you get it right in those moments. I am pretty happy now with the car and I think in the race we should have a very good car, so it is a place where we can get some points.

Q: Heikki, talk a little bit again about being on pole here in front of this crowd and with another Finnish driver of some repute alongside you.

HK: For sure, Kimi is around me and Mark and both are good drivers, very competitive, so it is not going to be easy tomorrow. Our pace has been very good all week and I am confident that our strategy will be a strong one as well tomorrow. The only target is to win the grand prix.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Heikki, this pace came all the way through from testing last week, didn't it?

HK: Yeah, I think already on a few occasions this year the pace has not been too bad even in Australia. But to put the whole weekend together has been a bit difficult with various incidents happening all the way though the season so far. But we have never lost the focus with the team and carried on working and improving my car and my driving and our package. From Lewis's results we were fairly confident that I could be there as well. To be honest since France I think hopefully things have turned a corner and it has been a pretty trouble free time since then. Hopefully all the troubles are behind now and we can carry on where we are today and build on this place.

Q: The concentration on slow corners should carry you through parts of Hockenheim and certainly Hungary. It should be good for the next three races.

HK: To be honest any corner is no problem for me. High speed or slow speed you have to find a way of going around them better than the others. As a team we are focussed on that. If you look back earlier this year then perhaps in the slower corners we have been struggling a little bit. There has been quite a lot of effort from the team in that area and I think we have improved that. The last sector in this circuit is particularly good without having lost anything in high speed. I am very confident that we are going in the right direction and I am very happy about that.

Q: During testing your former team boss Richard Dutton told us how he'd coached you in the section coming out of Bridge going into Priory, keeping way over to the right there.

HK: Yeah, I don't know if it's exactly the key to pole position but surely I feel it's the best way for me to take that corner, to carry the most speed, and surely I learned a lot from Richard, I learned a lot from Fortec Motorsport earlier on in my career. I still keep in close contact with my old friends. I've been based around here at Silverstone for many many years, so it's always nice to come back here. We have a lot of families from the team: mechanics' and engineers' families etc. here, so for us it's a special race for sure.

Q: Before the start on Friday you were 23 to 1 to win this race, before qualifying you were down to seven to one; don't know what you are now. What about that?

HK: I don't know, I don't do betting. I try to earn my money in a safer way.

Q: Mark, your previous best qualifying here in Formula One was tenth; you seem a bit mystified where this has come from as well.

MW: We've been quick but we didn't expect to be on the front row. We changed the car overnight and the car was much better this morning. You never, never know what the other guys are doing. You focus on yourself and that's what we've done today. The result for us today has been very, very impressive. The guys have done a really, really good job and it's a credit to them. Obviously the factory's just down the road and everyone's in a good mood and working hard. So for us to be on the front row with these guys is a credit to their efforts. When it comes to the guys that we're racing in the championship – in our championship – we've got a good buffer for tomorrow's start of the race. I'm hoping for a dry race. If it's wet, then we'll deal with that but we seem to be pretty competitive in these conditions, so it's good.

Q: Can you give us an idea of what had to be changed, what was it you didn't like yesterday?

MW: Again, working on this last sector, trying to work there and also in Club, eight and nine, trying to get the car a little bit better there, but the wind is so variable and the cars are very sensitive to the wind as all the drivers will tell you. You can't change the world, you generally have to stick with what you know because the conditions do change, so you have to make the most of being consistent with the car and getting the most out of it when the conditions are moving around a bit. That's what we did today. The first run in Q3 was a very poor lap. Other than that, all our laps today have been pretty good.

Q: Do you think people are gambling towards wet weather settings and wet weather strategy for tomorrow?

MW: No, I think it could easily be dry but I've put 200 quid on Heikki at 23 to one, so I'm in good shape.

Q: Given your best finishing position is eighth here, what are the chances tomorrow?

MW: Actually I think it's the only time the team under Stewart, Jaguar and Red Bull ever scored points here, so it's not a good record for us here in terms of points' finishes, so we've got a long way to go tomorrow, and if we can keep the reliability that we've shown in the last few races, and focus on the job in hand, and not get above ourselves and get good solid points again. For sure, if we finish eighth, that would be a bit disappointing, but if other guys have strong days you never know what can happen, but if we can deliver tomorrow in a dry race, good clean stops and a good start, we can get some good points.

Q: Kimi, how happy were you after testing. What sort of mood were you in when you came here?

KR: I think we were pretty happy with the car but coming here, after the test, yesterday the morning started well and then in the afternoon I was nowhere, so it was a bit of a mystery, how we lost all the speed but we managed to find it back. We worked pretty hard with the guys on the set-up and got it back more or less where we wanted to be. We would rather be in first place but I would say that qualifying has not been our strongest point, especially the first and second ones. I thought that we had pretty good speed in the third qualifying. It depends a lot on everybody's fuel levels but I think it's going to be OK.

Q: Are you therefore suggesting that the car will be better on full tanks or is it better on fuller tanks?

KR: For me it's been (that) all year. I'm pretty happy every time we get into the last qualifying when I put in more fuel because we always seem to find more grip and the balance seems to get better. Maybe that's why we don't get the best out of the tyres in first and second qualifying but as long as you get through those it doesn't really matter where you are.

Q: Are you quite confident for wet or dry tomorrow?

KR: Yeah, this morning we seemed to be fast in either condition. I think our car is normally pretty strong over the race distance, so it's a bit of a similar situation as to what it was here last year. Hopefully we are OK. I'm not sure but I think we should be.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Heikki, congratulations on your pole. How great does it feel after all the bad luck you have had and how was the lap? Was it a perfect lap?

HK: First of all, I don't feel that I've had such bad luck. We've had many opportunities, we haven't been able to take them to the various incidents. Everybody gets these in Formula One in the long run and obviously it's not ideal to have so many of these happening in one season but nevertheless, everything is still possible. Now we just need to keep the focus one hundred percent as we've done all the time and the results will eventually come, and today is a good step in that direction. I don't think it was a perfect lap. It was very difficult conditions and it was so easy to make a mistake because of the wind and because of the grip level but compared to the first run in the last part of qualifying it was a lap without any big mistakes, it was quite tidy and I think that was the key today, to take pole position.

Q: (Juha Päätaalo – Financial Times Germany) Heikki, you look quite calm now. Can you talk about your feelings when the team told you on the radio that you are P1 by a mile? Was it like 'OK, finally I got it' or was it more emotional?

HK: It was more like... of course, I was very happy but the race is tomorrow and the target for this weekend is to win the race, so there's still a long way. We can be happy about today but tomorrow is going to be tough, it's going to be a hard race with the guys around us but I think we have a good opportunity. I think the pace has been strong all week, so the strategy should be competitive as well and I look forward to driving the race tomorrow.

Q: (Ian Parkes – The Press Association) Heikki, just saw you having a bit of a laugh with Kimi there. Were you politely asking him not to run into the back of you at the first corner as happened in Turkey when you were last on the front row?

HK: No, no, not at all. We were talking about completely other things, to be honest!

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Moto und Sport) Heikki, McLaren looks much stronger than they did in Magny-Cours. Is it due to the nature of the circuit or to the latest changes on the aero side?

HK: I think in France we were not able to show the true potential of the car due to the various incidents, and even there our pace relative to Ferrari was better than it looked, although they were very strong there. I think also the improvements that the team has made over the last week, at the test and both for the car and the small improvement also for the engine, it has paid off and the car is definitely better than it was in France. I would like to think that this is the key and hopefully we can carry on in this direction to the end of the season.

Q: (Dan Knutson – National Speed Sport News) Mark, on a different subject, the Australian Grand Prix contract has been extended. Your thoughts on Australia and Melbourne keeping the race until 2015.

MW: I'm happy about it. I think all of us enjoy going there: drivers, mechanics, photographers, journalists, so it's a very good way to start the season, even if it is the first, second, third race whatever. If it's the start of the championship, it's always a nice place to go. I think everyone enjoys (it) if you can have a bit of a break there afterwards as well, maybe go up to KL afterwards. I'm happy. Honestly, you never get a free meal off Bernie (Ecclestone) and the guys have had to fight hard for it, so I'm really happy that Bernie's managed to come to a deal with them, not just for one

year or two years, it's another good solid term and the Australian public loves to have a Grand Prix there. We've had it since Adelaide in '85, I think, so it's coming on over for 30 years or so. It's a credit to how we put on the event down there and it's obviously also a credit to the Formula One show to go there.

Q: (Andrew Frankl – Forza) Heikki and Kimi: let's forget all this sponsorship business. If you could race in four years' time in the Olympics for Finland, in Finnish colours versus Webber in Australian colours and Hamilton in British Racing Green, is that something that appeals to you?

HK: I think it's a very funny question because it's very unlikely to happen. You have to ask Kimi if he wants to be part of the team but for myself, to be part of the Finland (team), why not?

KR: It's a long way in the future. OK, it's nice to think about those things, probably why not, but I'm pretty sure it will never happen, so there's not really much point in talking about it.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Kimi, there is a McLaren in front of you. Does it make any difference that it's Heikki instead of Lewis?

KR: It's better for me. Point-wise Heikki is a bit far away, so even if he cannot beat him, it's not such a big thing, so it's good for him and better for me that it's Heikki than the other guy.

Q: (Tomas Rihtr – TV Nova) Mark, let's assume for a moment that you will stop a little bit earlier than the guys around you. Will it be difficult not to try to go too fast, not to over-drive the car in the first stint?

MW: These days every lap is on the limit. We don't really pace the grands prix that much anymore. We go as flat out as often as we can. So I'm stopping on lap three and after that I will have a long race, so we will go from there.