



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2014 Russian Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript

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Drivers – Fernando ALONSO (Ferrari), Jenson BUTTON (McLaren), Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso), Felipe MASSA (Williams), Adrian SUTIL (Sauber), Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull Racing)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: It's just five days since we were in Suzuka, I would just like to hear your views on the events of last weekend – starting with Fernando.

Fernando ALONSO: I think it was a very tough race. Obviously all of our thoughts are with Jules. All of our minds are there because we have huge respect for our work but when there are big accidents there are no words to describe – but you can feel. As I said, it was a tough weekend and right now we are here, a difficult weekend again. Emotionally very difficult. Ready to race, to race for him, being as professional as we can but definitely our minds, or my mind, is with him in this moment, praying for him.

Adrian.

Adrian SUTIL: So hard to say in words. Of course, very shocking moment for everyone, for myself. Nothing really to say about anything. Probably everyone has seen it. It's just... we have to pray right now. This is all we can do. We can hope that we get some better news. It's just that we are now here in Sochi, a grey cloud over us but try to be professional enough, more professional and focus on the race weekend again and also good to get rid a little bit of this mood but still it affects everyone. My thoughts are the same. Pray for the best and race for him.

Felipe.

Felipe MASSA: For me I think it was the worst race of my life. It's a really bad race, worse than the race of my accident – because I didn't remember. It was the worst race of my life. Yeah. It's so difficult to be everyday because I can just be thinking about him, thinking about Jules. It's a very difficult weekend for all of us. Maybe tomorrow it will get a little bit better because at least you are working, at least you have something to think about, some issue put inside your brain. Try to race and do the best we can for him, for his family. But anyway, it was the worse race of my life.

Daniil.

Daniil Kvyat: Obviously it is a shock for me as well. Wouldn't expect to hear quite negative news after the race finished. All I can wish now is that we can hear better news, positive news about Jules. I really wish him to recover, it's the only thing that matters. Nothing like this has happened for a long time and we all hope, here in Formula One that the health to Jules. I'm thinking of him very often, like all of us. We're all united to support him. I run out of words so I stop here.

Jenson.

Jenson BUTTON: I think, listening to everyone, I think we all echo the opinions of the guys sat here so far. It's a very horrible feeling knowing what one of your fellow drivers went through and is going through. I think the only thing to say, and the most important thing is that we wish him well and our thoughts are with him. I think we all feel the same in the Formula One world.

You're a council member on the GPDA and so are you Sebastian. What lessons can be learned, do you think?

Sebastian VETTEL: I think first of all you need to see that it was an extremely difficult race for all of us. I think I join on what the other drivers said, in terms of how difficult, it is probably the most difficult race to digest so far. But I think difficult conditions, leaving a very, very small margin for error. Obviously for Jules at that time it was too small. On top of that, very unlucky circumstances led to a catastrophe really. I think at this stage, for of all, all of our thoughts are will Jules, with his family, and we wish him all the strength that we can send. About the accident, I think it is very difficult. Obviously there is a lot of stuff going on now but surely if something happens there is always the chance to learn something for next time and avoid these things happening. Also, you need to understand that the cars we race, the speeds we travel, yeah, accidents can happen. But obviously, as I said, extremely unlucky circumstances led to much more than the usual type of crash that you see when you lose control of the car.

Q: Daniil, we move on to this weekend. I suspect a very proud moment for you. Tell us your feelings when you come into your first home grand prix and our first Russian Grand Prix.

DK: Quite mixed feelings as you see here the atmosphere and all our thoughts are still about Japan. So, I think it will be like this for a while. Another side of course, it's my home grand prix. I'm pleased to see what I see here. Big structures, big track and I think around ten years ago, when I was starting my career, we couldn't have even dreamed about this. And not this thing becoming reality. So, obviously it's a special moment for me and the first time racing in Russia. In the end it's our work and we carry on doing what we've been doing for such a long time.

Q: For the rest of you, can I just have your general impressions of the country, if you wish to, and the circuit as well.

AS: It was a positive surprise, or a positive experience when I got here. Flew over Moscow but already went in there without problem. They really welcomed us into the country. I haven't seen so much – straight into the hotel, the hotel is very big but incredible what they've built around there. The infrastructure is really good, the track looks very modern and interesting to drive. I haven't even walked the circuit yet, I will do it after. Of course there is not so much information about the circuit for me and for our team because we have no simulator – so it will be the first time for us, driving on Friday morning. Exciting to have a new circuit, a new country on the calendar. Hopefully it will be a nice weekend with a lot of fans coming and making a good atmosphere. So yeah, pretty good so far. Looking forward to it.

Felipe?

FM: I agree totally with Adrian. It was nice to be here, I think it is a nice circuit, the infrastructure is pretty good so yeah, I think what I've seen until now is pretty positive. I hope we can have a nice race for these guys, these fans. So yeah, tomorrow we'll have a better idea how is the track but it looks pretty OK, pretty interesting. Hope we can have a good weekend, good first weekend and first impression for all these Russian people and fans. Hope they enjoy the first race of Formula One here.

Sebastian, what are your thoughts on the major factors needed around the circuit. I assume you've been around the circuit.

SV: Yeah, I have. Also I've been here a couple of weeks ago for promotional activity with Infiniti. I had the opportunity to take a car around and have a look at the track. I think it's a difficult one to find the right compromise. Obviously you have a lot of corners but also you do have a lot of long straights. Especially the start-finish straight is very long. You definitely need some speed down the straights but overall it looks like an interesting track. A lot of 90° corners, especially I think two and three will be an interesting challenge. Generally obviously it's a unique feeling to drive around in an Olympic Park. So, obviously as has been touched on before, a bit of a shadow going into the weekend due to the events last weekend but for sure it is very exciting to have the first Russian Grand Prix and great to be part of that very first grand prix here.

Fernando?

FA: I share all the comments. I think it's always a nice feeling when you arrive into a new circuit because it's a new challenge. For everyone: for engineers, for drivers, for teams, etcetera. The other side, the feelings are there, especially for our team, which has been very close to Jules all the career, it's an especially tough weekend. We have to be professional, we have to be working in the best way, just to race for him because we need to show we are a strong team – but it's going to be tough.

Jenson, your feelings about the circuit. Presumably you've driven it on the simulator, have you been around and had a look at it?

JB: Yeah, I've done a few laps on the simulator. I haven't walked around circuit yet, I'm going to do that in a couple of hours. I think we all look forward to a new challenge and this is definitely a new challenge. I think the most important thing this weekend in terms of the grand prix is that we put on a good show. It always is. The first year of a new circuit, hopefully we'll have full grandstands and a good fight out on the circuit. So that's what we're hoping for.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Gentlemen, you're obviously all aware of the inherent risks of motor racing but partly that's why you love Formula One. Is there any part of you, going into this weekend, that makes you reconsider taking part in this sport after what happened on Sunday? That's for all drivers. Felipe, I can see that you're the most cut up about this. After your accident maybe you could start with this as well please?

FM: Well, for sure you think about it, but it doesn't mean that's the right thing to do. What I love to do is to race. What I love to do is to be competing. That's where I feel happiness. That's where I feel pleasure. We know that in what we're doing we have a risk in this sport, but I think it's what I like to do. It's where I really feel happy, it gives me motivations and give me some, yeah, happiness. Sometimes you think about it but then you're thinking more and you understand that this is my world, this is what I like to do.

Sebastian?

SV: I think Felipe expressed it very well. We all share a common passion for racing; we all share a passion for competing. Obviously we are all very fortunate to find ourselves in Formula One racing the best and quickest cars in the world, which give the best excitement and probably the best satisfaction. But there is always some risk involved, which is, I think, always a part, or a great part, of the feeling why you feel so alive. I think if you have to make the decision, I'm fairly confident for us you'd always prefer to go racing.

Fernando:

FA: Same.

Jenson? Daniil?

DK: I agree with all the comments before mentioned. In my case I just started my career as well. Every sport is risky. You never wish anyone to get hurt, but these things happen. I completely share all the comments of the other guys.

Adrian?

AS: Nothing to add.

Q: (Luis Fernando Ramos – Racing Magazine) A question to all drivers: just to clarify whether you are a GPDA member or not. But regardless of whether you are a member or not, how do you think the drivers can contribute to help F1 to learn the lessons of what happened last Sunday?

FM: Well, I'm not a member but I'm for sure trying to do everything I can trying to help on the safety because for me safety is the most important thing. I think this is not the right place to comment about any point, just comment about safety. Safety is what I care about.

Sebastian?

SV: Well I think it's very difficult right now to give you the golden answer. As I said there were a lot of circumstances that probably led him to that type of accident. For sure, though, there is always something you can learn. I think for now we need to first of all digest what happened and then make the right conclusions. I think it would be wrong only a couple of days after, with all the events going on, with all the happenings we've had since Sunday, to come out with something that hasn't been thought through.

Fernando?

FA: I don't really have anything to add. There is an investigation going on. We don't have all the details. We don't have all the information necessary to suggest any change. So we let the people work and whatever idea, whatever things come from the drivers' point of view we will share it.

And are you a member of the GPDA?

FA: Yes.

Jenson, your thoughts on this?

JB: I think everything's been said already. Obviously we work as hard as we can to help our... to help the GPDA and to help the safety of the drivers, as the FIA does as well. Obviously it will be talked about a lot over the next few weeks and months and we can always learn. There's always more to learn better ways to help our sport.

Adrian?

AS: Yes, very similar opinion about it. I'm not a member yet but that might change. We have a new director now and some good ideas. Whatever we can do, I think all the drivers, we're together and we have the same thoughts: to make things better, especially for safety. It's something you can never learn enough. Development goes always on and research has to go on. We are living in a very modern world and improvement is done every day. The most important thing is to learn out of mistakes and make it better.

Daniil?

DK: Yeah, I think of course in the next GPDA meetings we will have a talk about all that has happened. I think there can't be any rash decisions right now. They have to be progressive and calculated decisions to improve. But of course, like Sebastian mentioned, there was many different circumstances that are yet to be considered but we will be still talking about this for sure.

Q: (Haoran Zhou – F1 Express) A question to Adrian Sutil. Obviously being a witness you know, probably more than anyone else, what happened. I want to ask were you consulted, did the FIA ask you to consult your opinion or what you saw of the accident after the Japanese Grand Prix?

AS: Yes, just how much I could see. Of course I was standing there but I think the pictures and the video which was on the internet it was very clear what happened, so there's not really more I can say. I think we have to wait for the investigation there and there's nothing more I can right now to be honest.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sorry Adrian if I continue on this matter because I think that for you it's quite hard and painful but we can see of course the beginning of the accident. What happened before he went off? Maybe you can give some more details if you are watching him? And for Sebastian, changing the matter, we know you split from Red Bull and we would like to know when you can announce the new team and why you wait for the announcement please?

AS: I was standing there and of course I was not expecting anyone to go off and when I realised that there was a car coming it was in the gravel already. I just saw the last seconds. I don't know what happened before. I can't really say. I was just a witness until when the fatal crash really happened. But I haven't seen what happened before. That's it.

SV: No update really. I hope I will be able to make an announcement soon and once the announcement is out I think you are probably clever enough to draw the conclusion why I had to wait.

Q: (John Burns – New York Times) One of you has spoken about there being a shadow, obviously as a result of last weekend's accident. A few weeks ago Ari Vatanen raised another shadow over this race over events occurring 300 miles to the north and northwest of here. I wonder whether any of you would like to comment on the question of politics and sport. Is it realistic to draw a wall between the two and say they shall never intersect or do you as individuals think about this, worry about it, wrestle with it and come to the conclusion, as you seem to have done in every case, to race notwithstanding?

JB: I think you know it's a very difficult question for any of us sat here to give you an answer to. I think the correct people to speak to would be the governing body and if you have to, speak to our team principals but us as drivers I don't think it's the correct question for us.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Fernando, just to change tack completely to cycling. I believe the UCI have announced that your team won't be competing next year. Can you offer any explanation behind that? What's the situation going on with your team there?

FA: Well, I think two weeks ago we announced a partnership with Novo Investment from Qatar and they are in control of our next projects, which we are very excited [about]. For them it was not the right moment to create the team. We will have another, as I said, exciting project that will be announced maybe next week or maybe in 10 days' time and, yeah, follow their wishes and try to enjoy that part of cycling that I love so much.

Q: (Sylvia Arias – Parabras Argentina) Daniil, next year you are going to be in Red Bull. I would love to know your feeling about that. It's such a very important step forward for you.

DK: Obviously I've been told about it in Japan. I was very happy about it, very honoured. Joining Red Bull Racing next year means a lot. Obviously the name of the team says it all and we will do our best to fight for the highest position possible. So I think that's all.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) We are talking about closed cockpits; I would like to know your feelings about this option?

FA: I probably tend to agree to at least check and try or test the idea. I think we are in 2014, we have the technology, we have aeroplanes, we have had many other samples that they use in a successful way so why not think about it? All the biggest accidents in motor sport over the last couple of years have been head injuries so it's probably one part where we are not at the top of safety. Even in my case, in 2012 at Spa, I could probably have died there in corner one if it had been 10 cms closer to my head. If the technology is there and available, and there is the possibility, I would not exclude it, for sure.

SV: Sort of a mixed feelings to be honest. If you look at Formula One cars since the beginning of Formula One and open-wheeled racing, I think it's one of the things that are very special about Formula One. On the other hand, as Fernando touched on, there's a lot of reasons why we should look into closed cockpits for the future. As I said, at this stage, after what happened, I don't think it's right to... I don't really have an opinion to be honest.

FM: I totally agree with what Fernando said, so I think it would be interesting to try, it would be interesting to work on that possibility. Definitely, for my accident it would have been perfect. Maybe for Jules, I don't know. But I think maybe it could have been interesting for so many different types of accident, including the one I had, but I totally agree with Fernando. I think it could be an option and we will see when we could try something or see something to understand if it's positive or not, but I totally agree with him.

AS: I think definitely it would be worth a try to test it out. We don't know how it would be but I think these cars have been open for a long time in this category but maybe it has a future also with closing them. I think this is the category where things are tried to make it better and more modern and going in the right direction, so I think it's definitely worth a try and maybe it works. For sure, we have seen airplanes where it looks quite similar from the cockpit and there it's closed. If we can minimise a risk without losing anything, of course it's very interesting.

JB: It's a difficult one. As Seb said, there are positives obviously, in terms of the safety point of view but this is Formula One that's been open cockpit since the start of time so it's a very big change for the sport to make. Safety is something that, as I said, we can always improve on so I'm sure it will be looked at whether it is possible to change or not for the future.

DK: There are many sides to this decision if it will be taken. Like I said, I think now, when these kind of things happen, you have to take a little break and calculate everything, try everything and calculate what would be the best solution. Like everyone else said, why not but it has to be tried and has to be very well calculated.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Obviously race driving consists of managing risk to be the best of your ability, be it drivers' risks, sporting risk, mechanical and technical risk. Is there are such a thing as acceptable risk and where does that level lie? When would you decide something is unacceptable and when is it acceptable?

SV: I think our passports say that we are all old enough to make our own decisions in life and I think generally we all have a brain that we are allowed to use, so it's our conscious decision if we want to go racing or not. I think we expressed the love that we share for racing, for the thrill, managing the car on the limit etc. Obviously there's always the risk that something can go wrong. I think it lies in the nature of the sport, if you look at the speeds involved etc. I think we've come a long way in terms of safety if you look back and a lot of improvements have been made but I think if anyone is not happy, he's old enough to say no. Surely, I think we've been very fortunate that in our generation there have been crashes with limited outcome. Obviously last week reminded us all of how apparent the risk is and how quickly things can change but surely if you look at the type of accidents that we had in the last couple of years, how violent they looked and fortunately nearly nothing happened, shows that improvement has been made. Obviously that's a great feeling but you should never lose the respect, I think, for what you do.

FM: Well, I think over the last years, all these improvements that we had in Formula One was good, it was impressive. To be honest, we saw so many accidents when drivers just jumped from

the car and nothing happened which was pretty impressive. I think that's what we need to fight for. We need to fight to have everything the most safe way around, so what happened last weekend was not exactly like that – it was a tractor on the track – and we cannot do anything when it's like that. I think it's two different things. I think we have good working to make the car safer all the time and this is going in the very good direction but in the normal situation around the track.

AS: I think it's clear for everyone that racing can be dangerous but I'm here because I'm aware of it and I like it. I'm here because I want to race and I know and I'm aware of the danger but that doesn't mean that I just accept it. Of course, we all try to make it better and make it more safe because we don't want to see this happening frequently. We've done – GPDA, Formula One – have done a great job in safety over the last years so it has been improved unbelievably but we can always make it better but yeah, still I'm sitting here and I will race because this is my passion and I want to do it and as soon as I feel different and I don't feel like that any more, I will stay at home, this is for sure.

DK: I agree with Adrian. We are here, we are racing and we know that the risks are still high, as we had the confirmation, unfortunately. The speeds are very high, over 300kph but we don't want to race at 100kph because it's not racing any more so on any circuit you cannot exaggerate but we always want to have maximum safety and this is what the GPDA, for example, is doing. And I think we have seen that the improvement has been huge but these kind of things, unfortunately, remind us that there is always something that can be improved.

JB: I think enough has already been said on this matter.

Q: (Carlos Miguel – La Gaceta) Fernando, in the last races you have had some problems in the car. Are you expecting to finish on the podium in the last races of this year?

FA: Well, I think it's our wish. We have some races to go now and the car is picking up the pace. We are becoming more and more competitive in the last events. We lost some opportunities but we will try our best in the remaining races, especially, as I said, now I think the team is quite in shock with Jules and we are all worrying for him but it's time to be united and to deliver a good result and that will also show him great respect so let's try this weekend.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Fernando, this is the last Grand Prix with Mr Montezemolo as president. I would like to ask you your feeling about it. Everything is overshadowed by Jules but this is also the fact.

FA: I think that president Monzemolo has been very successful in his career and has helped Ferrari in a big way, on the track, outside, as an industrial power. He's done many things for Ferrari so huge respect for his career there. I have a very close and good relationship with him so I'm wishing him the best for the future.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) For everybody, Felipe said before that we have also to improve the environment around us. I think that more safety cars in circumstances like Sunday should be alright.

FA: As I said, there is an investigation going on at the moment. Once I was not on the track at that moment, so I cannot judge the conditions very precisely so I don't have an opinion.

SV: I think with hindsight I think it's always easy to say 'this could have been avoided, this should have been done.' I think there are definitely some lessons. I think everyone is obviously thinking about what we can improve and improve within a week's time. I think here we have a completely different circuit, completely different conditions so I think - as I said earlier and Felipe touched on - it was a very special accident with unique circumstances leading into a very bad outcome. But surely, if the answer is as easy as bring in the safety car then I don't think that's a big thing for people to do in the future. On the other hand, I don't believe the answer is as easy as that either.

Q: (Silvia Arias – Parabrisas) I would like to know if you've found the pit lane is wide enough here or do you think you're going to be very careful coming into the pits to change tyres during the race?

SV: It's quite narrow, especially the pit entry looks very narrow. I don't know, I think in the first place they had a lot of space to build the track so sometimes you wonder why some areas like the pit lane didn't get a bit bigger.

JB: It fits a car, so that's a start. We'll go from there.

FM: Looks a bit tight but we will see tomorrow.

Ends