



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2014 Italian Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript 04.09.2014

DRIVERS – Kevin MAGNUSSEN (McLaren), Max CHILTON (Marussia), Valtteri BOTTAS (Williams), Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes), Fernando ALONSO (Ferrari), Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Fernando, can we start with you? Twice a winner here obviously, on the podium here in Monza for the past four years, but the podium count is down a little bit this year, just the two so far. Do you see signs, though, of encouragement from the performance in Spa?

Fernando ALONSO: Well, definitely I think it's one of the most important races for us in the year, here in front of our tifosi, and we would like to give them some good results on Sunday. I've been extremely lucky to have been on the podium in the last four years and hopefully I can repeat that good feeling. It's going to be difficult. On paper it should be one of the toughest for us. But as you said, I think we saw some signs of being a little bit more competitive in Hungary and we were nearly on the podium in Spa as well with Kimi, so hopefully we can have that opportunity and as I said, being on this podium is something special.

You had quite a battle with Kevin (at Spa) and obviously he was penalised afterwards and we'll hear from him in a moment, but can you describe the battle from your perspective?

FA: Obviously, you know, we try always to fight and overtake. More than 30 laps behind Kevin in Spa and it was not easy to overtake. I had one chance with some cars in front of us and I took that opportunity and at the end I went a little bit on the grass. The race direction decided to penalise him at the end. We gained that position; we lost a couple more because of that fight but when you are fighting for sixth or seventh at the end of the race it's not a big deal.

Kevin, obviously you were hit with a penalty after that. Give us your perspective in the battle with Fernando.

Kevin MAGNUSSEN: Well, obviously I did my best to fight for sixth position. For us that was a really good result or would have been – sixth. In the end I went over the line and got a penalty. I guess that's just something you learn from as well, it's all good experience and I can always say I did my best. I enjoyed it as well. Hopefully, we can have another good strong race here.

Without that penalty you would have had a sixth points finish in seven races. Are you getting any signs of encouragement from the team that this is the kind of form that will keep you in this seat next year?

KM: We're fighting very closely with Force India. Williams is a step forward compared to us, but we're fighting for position in the Constructors' Championship and every point is very important at the moment, so keeping consistency up is very important at the moment.

Well, obviously another duel that had everyone talking in Spa was the Mercedes battle at the start of the race. Nico, we've all seen the statement from the team and other things you've said since, but what persuaded you that you had something to apologise for because when we spoke after the race in Spa you weren't sure?

Nico ROSBERG: Just with time. I took the week to think about it and had a look at it and discussed with the team on Friday and I just in the end decided that it was me who should take responsibility for it.

So, Lewis, in your mind, is it a racing incident? Is that how would put it in your mind now?

Lewis HAMILTON: There was nothing in my mind. I think this is the first time that we've been in the room for a long time that there have been so many people here. For me, I'm really excited about moving forward, I feel energetic, I had a good couple of days break last week, so excited to be here, this is one of my favourite circuits so I hope that we can have a good weekend.

And how do you move forward? Have you found a baseline, if you like, of trust and understanding to encourage you to believe that you guys can work together from here?

LH: I knew you were going to say that! I think I already said everything in the press release. Trust is a big word and it's not something I would particularly apply to racing on the track. Naturally, me and Nico have been racing for a long time and I think we have set a good foundation a long, long time ago so that's what we work from.

Nico, coming back to you, this duel is often compared to great duels from the past history of our sport. Are you becoming aware that the two of you are making history this year and do you feel the responsibility of that?

NR: Yes, definitely, yes. And in Spa, definitely I was not proud of the way it went because in general I really want to contribute to 'my sport' in inverted commas, you know, because I want it to be the most entertaining sport in the world and if I'm able to contribute to that in many ways throughout the season then I'm very happy about that and I'm sure in many we have and that's great.

And Lewis, just a word from you on that: do you feel the hand of history on your shoulder? Are you aware of the responsibility?

LH: I don't think I have a responsibility towards history. I mean, history is created every day. I just love racing and I'm proud to be amongst all the drivers here and I'm just trying to enjoy every single day as it comes, you know. Everything becomes history eventually and I personally don't put us in the same ranking as the greats back in the day.

Thanks for that. Valtteri, coming to you. Another podium in Spa, the fourth for you now this year. You've generally been the fastest man throughout this season through the speed traps at a lot of places we've visited, so is Monza a potential fifth podium for you?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Well that should be the target. We don't see any reason why it would be not possible, so we're aiming for that. We know it's a good place for us, one of the good ones. We do have good straight-line speed and a special package for here, as I'm sure everyone does. I'm really looking forward to this one and I really think Sunday will be good fun.

Williams wasn't too far off a win in Austria or Canada. What will it take to get that final push to get you over the line?

VB: I think by pure pace, it is going to be really, really difficult. Mercedes is... any track they are going to be the strongest at the moment. Even Red Bull was surprisingly quick in Spa, so it's never going to be easy but we are aiming for that and we still need to work on all areas of the car. We already have a good straight-line speed but all areas including, especially the corners, getting more

grip into the car is the main thing really. We're working on that. It's still a long season to go, so let's see.

Max, you were obviously on pole here in your GP2 days. Is this one of your favourite tracks?

Max CHILTON: Yeah, I think it's everyone's favourite or one the favourites of the year. I was on pole here in Formula 3 and GP2. I'm not saying I'm going to be doing that this weekend but I will give it my best shot and will try to extract the most from the car and I just enjoy being here. You only have to do the track walk this morning to see the old banking and it just gives you a good feeling for the weekend.

Can you shed some light on where you and your backers are now with Marussia after what took place in Spa? You said at the time that it was not what everyone thinks it was. So, is it resolved for you now for the rest of this year and what about 2015?

MC: Yeah well there was never really an issue in the first place. It was a busy weekend, I'm not going to lie, but it was a commercial decision that was overturned by senior management over the course of Thursday evening. So, my weekend didn't really change. I was always out of the car for practice one for Alex, our reserve driver, and so it was nice to be back in the car for free practice two, because Spa is my favourite circuit so we ended up having a good race and a good weekend.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) To Lewis and Nico. In a TV interview earlier this week that Fernando did, he remarked that both sides of the garage would now be divided – engineers, mechanics, people that know you well would favour one or the other. Do you sense that within the team that you are now a garage divided?

LH: I don't know if that's the case. We have a very professional team and yeah I mean they just want to win. So they'll be working as hard as they can. Also the guys working in the garage work collectively for the pit stops. That thought doesn't even cross my mind. I think the guys will be working flat out this weekend. They know we have the chance to have one-twos and to win the championship for both the Drivers and the Constructors and I think they will giving it their all.

NR: I general, there has been throughout the whole season a healthy rivalry, within the team also. That is why we are where we are, you know. We have the best car out there, we have the best team at the moment. That's because we work well together as a team and if you don't work well together as a team you can't dominate the sport as we are at the moment so I think that's the best proof of that.

Fernando you were mentioned there as being quoted. Do you want to qualify your comments or add anything?

FA: No, whatever I say I will always be misinterpreted and always any comment you say after two or three days will be a big thing. I didn't say exactly that but I cannot change the world.

You don't want to clarify what you meant.

FA: It's OK.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Question to Fernando, could you speak about your early days with Minardi and how difficult was it to begin your Formula One career at the back of the grid and not scoring points and not being visible.

FA: It was tough but it was worse at the end of the year, first year in Renault as test driver. As far as... you are driving, you are on the grid. OK, you are not able to deliver the result that you would like and to fight for the top positions but at least you are racing – which is what you have done for

many years in go-karts and different categories. And then, OK, this is Formula One – but you are racing. When you are watching races on the television in the garage, that was very tough.

Q: (Péter Farkas – Autó-Motor) Lewis, do you now accept that it was simply a racing incident from Nico's part, and Nico, do you think that, in fact now you will be at a small disadvantage because you will have to be extra careful not to have an accident in close combat?

LH: Well, again, I know it's something you all want to talk about but after the race it was important to really try and move forwards and that's really what I'm focussing on. What's happened in the past is in the past and it is what it is. I'm excited to get back in the car. I have seven races, there's still a lot of points available and so that's my focus.

Nico?

NR: It's been very clear from the beginning that we must not have contact between us teammates. And so from that point of view the approach doesn't change now for the future. It's been the same.

Q: (Barna Zsoldos – Nemzeti Sport) Nico, as the tension in the Championship battle is getting bigger and bigger, have you prepared yourself psychologically for a very vicious media attack? What we saw in the past two weeks was basically some kind of witch-hunting already against you from certain journalists.

NR: I respect the opinions and then for me I really try and focus on driving my race car fast, working together with the team, getting the best out of the situation and also, importantly, enjoying the moment. I'm very, very lucky to have such a car. It's very seldom in F1. I go to every race now and know that I can get pole and I can win the race with the car that I have. The team is doing an unbelievable job, also with the development. Keeping it up, y'know? Pushing further and further and further. The other guys are not getting closer really, y'know? So, that's great and I want... my focus is on that: in the moment; make the most of it.

Q: (Ralf Bach – Sport-Bild) Lewis, a question for you, we learnt from last Friday that Nico gets punished by the team for the incident in Spa. What I want to know is: did you get punished by the team for not accepting the team order in Hungary as well or not?

LH: Um... well, I don't know really. We all get punished for all the incidents that we... we have meetings always. We always get a big slap on the wrist. But as I said I'm moving forward. In actual fact in the first... in Hungary I didn't say 'no' to the situation. I said that "if he gets close then I'll let him by," so I wouldn't hold him up. And afterwards I sat with Toto and Paddy and they said "you made the right choice." As human beings, we have the right to question things that are said to us – orders – just to make sure that it is the right one. And it turns out that that one wasn't the right one and the team said that to me in the meeting.

But it was a team order during the race...

LH: It was, but Nico didn't get close enough to go by...

Q: (Vladimir Rogovets – SB Belarus Segodnya) My question for Fernando. You had already seven years ago the negative experience in partnership with Lewis but today I see you are friends – it's very good. I think same compete between Nico and Lewis. My question: can you be the ambassador for peace between Lewis and Nico?

FA: Good! Ah, no I'm definitely not an ambassador for peace but yeah, I think 2007, I think it didn't work as we wanted. But, as I've said many times, it never was a problem with Lewis. We had a very professional relationship, very competitive people inside the team and that was quite normal. It didn't work because the team... I was not happy with some of the philosophies, and some of the team management at that point and I had more possibilities to go in different teams the year after

and we decided to move forward from there. But I never had a problem with Lewis and it's not a surprise today that we still have a good relationship and I'm sure these guys will move forward. As Nico said, they have a clear target, which is winning the world championship, both of them. They are in a privileged position, which is to fight for that goal. From the outside we will try to enjoy as maximum this beautiful battle. The sport is made of these kind of things. They have a good problem: fight for the world championship.

Q: (Andrea Cremonese, La Gazzetta dello Sport) Question for Nico and one for Lewis. For Nico, how has the booing on the podium affected you in Spa? If you think about that and are you afraid it can happen again? And for Lewis, what does it mean that you freeze the discussion for the future contract with Mercedes? Are you thinking something like Fernando's strategy in 2007?

NR: It was definitely not a nice feeling to hear boos towards me. And I understand, because they travel a long way, some of them, to watch a great, exciting race; a big battle between Lewis and I, and they didn't get that. I understand that and I accept that.

Lewis?

LH: Well, I haven't said that I was freezing anything. We're constantly talking with the team – but I think at the moment the priority is to win the championship. I still have a contract for a whole 'nother year on top of this one, so there is no rush. But I do want to say that I see my future with Mercedes. I'm really happy there, so...

Q: (Luis Fernando Ramos – Racing Magazine) A question to Lewis. You fought for the 2007 title with Fernando as an opponent in the team, and now with Nico in the team. Which of the two offered you a fairer fight on and off the track?

LH: That's not really a particularly good question. When you're fighting with your team-mate, as Fernando said, you're fierce competitors but outside it's really important to remain respectful and, I think I've had the pleasure of working with quite a few different drivers and every single one of them has been hard to race against, in a different way, a different manner. I think generally, the majority of the time, we've not really had many problems. And that's what I hope for moving forwards.

Q: (Byron Young – Daily Mirror) Nico, could I just ask why you apologised? Was it because your team bosses made you or was it a heartfelt thing?

NR: They can't make me apologise. It definitely was a decision that came from me after hearing people's opinions and after having looked at it myself again. I felt that it was my responsibility.

What changed?

NR: Time. And hearing other people's opinions.

Q: (Rosie Bailey – F1 Plus) Question to all of you: what do you think about the changes to the run-off area at Parabolica and how will it affect the way you approach that corner now? Will you take more risks because there's tarmac instead of gravel?

KM: I do think we will take more risk... well, you're not really taking more risk because it's more safe and you can just go off the track and come back again and generally I'm not a big fan of that. I think it adds to the experience of driving at circuits if there is a little bit of a bigger consequence of going off the circuit. I'm not saying we should compromise safety but in my opinion, I don't think we're making the track more unsafe by having gravel there, but it's still an awesome circuit – I'm sure – and I'm still going to really enjoying driving here, I know that for sure. But yeah, I haven't driven it yet so we will see how it is.

VB: Yeah, I agree quite a lot with Kevin. I really think last year it was maybe a bit more challenging in a way because on the exit we were always going with the outside wheels just on the white line and you knew that if you went a couple of centimetres too wide that that would be it, you would go off, but now it doesn't matter if you go a bit over the white line, you just need to keep at least two wheels on the track and that's it. It's still a good track. It's just that one corner is less exciting.

MC: Yeah, I'm not a huge fan of it. I think it's maybe allowed us to go for slightly more risky overtakes but I don't see why they needed to extend it so far around. As Valtteri said, it was a bit of spice, the old circuit, where we used to run up against the white line and if you went slightly too far you would hit the gravel and you knew it was over. Now, to me, it looks like we can get away with it so I'm not a big fan of it but that's the way it is.

LH: They've pretty much said everything. I think the FIA are very very conscious of safety and I think that's nothing to shy away from, I think that's a very very important issue but I'm old school, so I like the old circuits, back in the nineties when there was no tarmac run-off areas, where it was grass, because even last year, here, when you went round that corner, you didn't, as I said, you know... and I experienced it last year, I went wide through a mistake and you pay for the mistake. But what is really important is that of course if you do have an incident the tarmac does slow the car down better, so that is a good move but you can't win, both sides.

FA: I think they've said everything. Nothing to add.

NR: It was one of the more risky corners that we still had in our calendar so it definitely makes things a lot safer and that is the right direction to go in.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Universo On-line) Nico, in a battle for the world title between two drivers, how important is the psychological war?

NR: Of course in sport it plays a part of it. Your performance is linked to many things and your mental state of mind is always important in sport.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports F1) Fernando, back to the Parabolica again; the FIA said it was the drivers that wanted to see a safer corner so how many drivers were consulted and who were the drivers who actually wanted that tarmac run-off area put there because the back row, I think, would have left it as it is? Lewis you spoke very well about the safety, but Fernando, who were the drivers who said we want this changed?

FA: I don't know, I don't know.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports F1) Did the GPDA not discuss this?

FA: As far as I know, I don't think so. There have been some discussions in the past for the entry, probably in case you have a brake failure or something to have the possibility to not go straight, just into the gravel and hit the tyres but probably from mid- to exit of the corner, that was probably a surprise for us also. Which it still is I think. Artificial grass on mid- to exit which before probably we said that we can put two wheels out of the track and two inside and don't pay a big price but I don't agree. I think if you put two wheels now, you will go on that artificial grass and you have to back off because you have a snap on the car and you need to back off, so you still need to be a few centimetres from that artificial grass now to do a perfect corner.

Q: (Sarah Holt – CNN) Just one more question on Spa, if I could ask Fernando and the two Mercedes drivers as well: in a situation that we saw happen last time out in Belgium, when there's a mistake by one driver and it effectively puts another driver out of the race and then the first driver makes an 18 point gain over the second driver in a hotly contested title race, should the FIA investigate the incident a bit more closely than they did in Spa?

FA: I don't know why I need to answer so many questions on Spa! No, I would like to answer, you know, to be honest, because I have no clear input on that. It's FIA rules and they get us to race in a fair way and to respect the rules and they always try to do that and if in Spa they didn't decide to

go any further, they thought that it was OK like this but as I said, I was not in that incident, I was not involved. I saw it the week after but I have no clear opinion.

Q: Nico, were you asked to clarify your comments or anything?

NR: No. Just we need to trust the FIA to make the right calls, that's our position as drivers.

LH: I think the FIA have a really tough job, particularly over the last couple of years they've done an exceptional job, I think, on the majority of the calls. I think their problem is always that the rules... the scenario is always different, so the same rule doesn't always apply exactly. Sometimes perhaps it's difficult to say which rule applies to what situation but I think there's a very good question, to be honest, because how do we move forward from that? Does that mean that we can all now say OK, we can race a lot closer and if the guy in front comes off and is out of the race, nothing's going to happen so then we will be more relaxed towards it or does that mean if it happens again there will be a penalty? I think we're always asking to be able to race. It's very hard out there to manoeuvre a car at those high speeds without sometimes having contact but there's a fine line. But I think it's a really good question, I don't know the full answer to it really.

Q: (Ralf Bach – Sport Bild) Nico, is it right that Niki Lauda talked to you in the week after the Spa race and apologised for the interviews he gave directly after the race at Spa?

NR: Yes, it's true, yes, and that was a nice gesture of his which I have accepted, fully accepted of course, and also there, it's a thing of the past.

Ends