



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

## Press Information

### 2013 Australian Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript 14.03.201

**DRIVERS – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes), Mark WEBBER (Red Bull Racing), Daniel RICCIARDO (Toro Rosso), Fernando ALONSO (Ferrari), Kimi RAIKKONEN (Lotus), Sebastian VETTEL (Red Bull Racing)**

#### PRESS CONFERENCE

**Gentlemen, welcome. Let's start with you Mark. There have been a couple of retirements from the sport, so you're the oldest man on the grid this year – don't worry, you don't look it just yet.**

**Home race to start the season. Pretty much everyone here apart from Kimi has a home race. Is it good to get one out of the way first of all, all the pressure and extra attention that goes with it?**

**Mark WEBBER:** I think it's just great to come to Australia at any stage let alone for a race, so we're all looking forward to finally getting racing. There's a lot of testing that goes on in Spain and we can all get down to what we all enjoy doing and that's racing the cars. So, yeah, all the teams, drivers come here with a little bit more anxiety let's say just because it's the first grand prix of the year, whether it's pit stops or whatever department you're in, it's a fresh challenge for the new year. For sure around round six, round seven everyone is more comfortable with their jobs but it's the same for everyone. It's a great event and looking forward to getting into the car.

**Daniel, I'm sure you're looking forward to getting into the car as well for what is your home grand prix. It's your second full season at Toro Rosso – extra pressure that goes with that? You against Jean-Eric Vergne. Is it a shootout between the pair of you? How do you see your season coming?**

**Daniel RICCIARDO:** Just hanging out for it to start, actually. Obviously I'll try and take the experience I learned from last year and bring it into this season; a bit of extra confidence and whatnot and then just try to get some better results and start to creep up the order a bit. That's really the plan. You always want to try to beat the team-mate. That's always there, but I'm definitely focused on myself and just do than usual, not doing any dramatic changes.

**I'm not sure there's anything that's pretty much usual for you Lewis. New team. Melbourne might be familiar but Mercedes still not quite the familiar team that McLaren would be. How much different is your life at the moment with your new outfit?**

**Lewis HAMILTON:** It's not that much different. It's put me in a better place. Just settling into the team pretty well. It's still a Formula One team and they still exist to win. The guys

are doing a fantastic job and I'm really excited about the season and excited to get back in the car.

**More excited after Barcelona? It went well that final weekend for you and for Nico.**

**LH:** Not particularly any more excited I think. You can't really take too much from the tests.

**With that in mind Kimi, let's reflect on yours and Lotus' chances for this season. A slight touch of unreliability in the tests but a lot of people are saying you, the team are genuine contenders for the title this year. Is that accurate?**

**Kimi RAIKKONEN:** It's difficult to say but we will see after maybe two or three races where we are. We had a few small issues and unfortunately the issues just took a long time to fix. That happens. I think we should be OK. There are always things that can go wrong but I think we are more or less, speedwise, similar to where we were last year when we started and like I said it's difficult to say exactly where we will be. We'll see a bit tomorrow.

**Do you believe, going into you second full season since your comeback, that you're a better driver this year – that the rustiness you had maybe at the start of last year is gone?**

**KR:** I don't think it's going to really change. I know the team so it should be a bit easier to start the year but there is no promise that this will give you better results. It's another year and we'll try to do as well as we can.

**For you Fernando, another year but a much better car than this time last year – 200 times better I think you said, the Ferrari in 2013. Is this your best chance to become a world champion at Ferrari?**

**Fernando ALONSO:** We'll see. I think it was not difficult to start better than last year because it was difficult to start any worse. We were a little bit too far behind and the winter has been much better than the last year, understanding the car and working with the car and getting the results we more or less expect. That will give us much more confidence and optimism to start the season, but who knows. I think it will be a very interesting championship, very challenging first part of the championship with Australia, Malaysia. Difficult circuits, difficult weather as well – changeable. So we need to start on the right foot and hopefully scoring some good points for the championship.

**And Sebastian, three consecutive titles. How much difficult is a fourth title in a row now that you've got those three in the bag or does it make no difference whatsoever?**

**Sebastian VETTEL:** I don't think it makes a difference. I think every year we start again from zero. I think everyone has the same chance. As we said, testing obviously this year was probably not as conclusive as previous years, so we arrive here not knowing what is going to happen. But I think it is very exciting so as every year, excited to start.

**Not knowing what's going to happen, does that make it even better for you – that the challenge could be tougher ahead?**

**SV:** I think it's going to be a long year. Obviously we're looking forward to this weekend and this is the first of many. But I think we've seen in the last couple of years, last year in particular, that it's a long season and every race is very important. So this is the place we start but then there are many other places coming.

**Nineteen races ahead and lots of questions to answer. Bob, I'm sure we've got a few hands raised among our media delegates here with some questions for the drivers.**

## QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

**(Livio Oricchio - O Estado de Sao Paulo)** To all drivers: during the winter tests tyre temperatures didn't go over 60 maximum Celsius and the temperatures here approach the temperatures indicated by Pirelli. Are you afraid that the handling of the car can be completely different to what you got in the winter tests?

**SV:** I think in winter testing we all suffered the same problem: the tyres didn't last. It was extremely difficult for us to do a lot of laps on the same set of tyres, to test certain things. We hope it gets better here. Otherwise it could be quite funny.

**FA:** Nothing to add. Let's hope it's different than the tests, with the temperature.

**The guys at the front, Daniel, probably have a touch more downforce on their car than the Toro Rosso. Do you feel the effect of the tyres that much extra in the midfield?**

**DR:** I don't know. We're probably not afraid of what the weekend is going to be. We're probably more excited. It was a little bit frustrating at times, so I think we're excited about what it's going to bring here, so I'm sure it's going to be better. Looking forward to it more than anything else. There are still some answers that need to be found. We're all in the same boat, so I think that's going to make it exciting.

**(Gabriel Polychronis– F1plus.com)** This one is for you Mark. Do you feel that the recent criticism from Helmut Marko on your performances acts as a motivator for you to prove yourself throughout the season.

**MW:** I've answered this question a few times in the last six weeks and as I said, he has his agenda and I'm not part of it, so that's fine. Everyone can have their opinions. I'm always pretty good for motivations.

**It doesn't make your motivation any less though?**

**MW:** Of course not.

**(Ian Parkes – PA)** Sebastian, after winning three titles in a row now, coming into this season, how do you approach it? Is your motivation any different to the past three seasons when you've gone on to win the title? And if it isn't, how do you build yourself up, keep yourself going, keep yourself focussed.

**SV:** Well if there is a secret I think it's not to think about what happened the last three years. I think the first title was very, very special. After that I don't think you have that pressure any more. You've proved to yourself more than to anyone else that you can do so. After that obviously we had two fantastic years again. Very different to each other. But as I said, you probably don't think about what happened last year or the last three years. We are here, we have zero points on our side at the moment, the same as everyone else. So everyone has the same opportunities. The cars didn't really change. Last year we saw it was very close so I don't expect it to be any different that last year. If anything maybe a little bit tighter. So it will be crucial to make the most out of every single race – but in terms of motivation... it was a long flight but I'm happy to be here now and very pleased to start again.

**(Trent Price – Richland F1)** Question for Lewis. Obviously we can't take a lot from testing but obviously Mercedes did quite well towards the end of the times. Are you pushing quite hard to get time out of the car or are you feeling comfortable with it? Are you feeling quite snug?

**LH:** I feel comfortable in the car. I feel we've definitely made some really good steps forward. We've still got a lot of work to do. Obviously, normally when you go to a new team it takes a while to get settled in but I'm still working as hard as I can to make sure that feels

as comfortable as possible. I think it just takes time and as time goes on I think I'll get even more and more comfortable in the team.

**What's been the one thing that you've appreciated more than anything since you've moved to Mercedes? What have the team done or allowed you to do that's made you feel more comfortable?**

**LH:** Just a little bit more time at home. Training and to spend with family and friends. It's been good.

**(Manuel Franco - Diario AS) Question for Fernando. Ferrari can win this race?**

**FA:** I think difficult to know. No-one knows who can win this race at this moment. We have to wait and see for answers to some questions that winter testing doesn't answer. I think there are top teams with a little bit of advantage. Maybe it's not the same as last year where we saw seven different winners in the seven first races. It was a little bit mixed on the grid. I think this year with the consistency in the rules I expect the five top teams to have a little advantage and not to have many, many surprises in the first races. But from these five top teams I think it's very difficult to see really after winter testing who has this extra two- or three-tenths that can make you win. At the moment I think it's very close and very difficult to choose one favourite.

**So, would you say ten drivers go into this race with a realistic chance of winning on Sunday?**

**FA:** I think so. I think Mercedes, McLaren, Lotus, Ferrari and Red Bull show up some potential in different days in testing and different parts of races last year. I think difficult to choose.

**(Carlos Miguel Gomez – La Gaceta) Question for Fernando. After Barcelona, we see in Barcelona you have the best time in the last sector. With these conditions could this track be very good for the Ferrari?**

**FA:** I don't know. I think winter test, as we've said many times, very difficult and dangerous to make any conclusions. I think in terms of sector times and things like that, a lot of different tyres for every team, a lot of different fuel loads etcetera and different moments of the race. We are happy with the job we have done in the winter. We more or less did the programme that we planned – even though we had some weather changeable on some days – and we arrived here with our hundred per cent of the potential at the moment in the car. We don't really miss anything, that was a problem before. So, hopefully it's enough to be competitive and this circuit in particular I like a lot. I have been always very comfortable here and with good performance, the same in Malaysia, these first two races can be a good opportunity for us to score some good points. But I don't know how quick we can be.

**(Richard Fowler – motorsportretro.com) Mark, it's the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the race here at Albert Park. What would it mean for you to win at home and join the likes of Jack Brabham and Alan Jones as a winner of the Australian Grand Prix?**

**MW:** Any grand prix victory is special. I'm lucky to have had that feeling a few times now, which is great: Monaco, the British Grand Prix, those are very prestigious races. This is for sure up there in the top three of events a driver wants to win: your home grand prix is for sure very special. It would be a sensation feeling to be able to do it. But as you say, all that, anniversaries and the nice, fuzzy stuff, is not really going to make it easier for me. I realise I've got to put together a clean weekend and pull it all together and make all of the right decisions. We're capable of it but we're also mindful that it's a very tricky weekend to execute – especially with it being the first event and things like that. But looking forward to it.

**(Kate Walker – Girl Racer) Question to any of you who want to answer it. We've heard a lot about the new tyre compounds that Pirelli have provided but the new tyres also have different weights, which has affected the front-rear balance of the car. To what extent has that affected your handling on track, downforce, things like that please?**

**KR:** I think everybody has similar issues with the tyres. All winter, conditions, they wore out very quickly but I thought they had better grip on one lap than last year but then they go off more quickly. But it's difficult to say with the conditions we've been running over the winter testing, so it might be a completely different story here. Balance-wise they are quite similar to last year.

**Lewis?**

**LH:** I don't really have much more to say about it. The tyres are a little bit different, it's not a big drama, everyone's in the same boat so it'll be interesting to see how long the supersoft tyre lasts, if there's a little more graining than there was last year. But again, everyone's got the same tyre. I haven't seen any discrepancies between each tyre.

**On the subject of supersofts, do you enjoy the challenge Seb, of having to go with a tyre that has never been used here before?**

**SV:** We didn't use it in winter testing either; we haven't used that tyre. I think generally, as Kimi said, it will be interesting to see whether the temperatures make a difference or not at all. We are keen to find out and then we'll know a little bit more.

**(Ian Parkes – PA) Fernando, you've agonisingly missed out on the title twice in the last three years. Do you carry the pain of those near-misses into this season? Does it serve as motivation for you to drive you on this season?**

**FA:** Well, I think I feel privileged to fight for the world championship two times in the last three years. Not many people have the opportunity to be on the podium and to enjoy the podium ceremony in Formula One and even less people have the opportunity to win races and very few people have the opportunity to fight for a world championship. So I feel lucky and privileged to have those opportunities. Sure, we lost two times in the last three years, in the last race and we want to have again the possibility once again to fight for the world championship, hopefully this year and hopefully this year change the final result. But this is just a normal thing for the sport and this is maybe some extra motivation for me and from the team, to really have one happy result at the end.

**Q: (Michael Wittershagen– Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) Question to Sebastian and Fernando: could you please tell us what you think of each other as a person and as a driver?**

**FA:** Well, I think as a driver, really not much to say: three times World Champion beating all the records in terms of wins and fastest laps and pole positions etc. 2011 was nearly a record championship and this is not only about the car or about the package. You need to perform, even when you have the car that is available. Seb has won everything perfectly in the past years and for that he is World Champion and he's a tough rival and contender for the next couple of years. As a person, we obviously don't spend much time together. We are of a different generation. We didn't race together in go-karts or anything like that. He's a normal – or looks like a normal guy – and nothing more so all good.

**SV:** Thank you very much. I think, as a driver, I don't have to introduce Fernando. I think he's one of the most respected and most accepted drivers in the world. I think in all circumstances he has the ability to be on the limit. I think he's a very intelligent driver and I think that's the reason why he was always fighting for the championship until the end, in many years of his career. Fortunately we had the upper hand in the last couple of years but surely he's trying his best to give everyone a hard time again this year, and as a person, as he said, we don't spend that much time together, hardly with any of the drivers.

It's probably what people think or expect from the outside but there's obviously not a lot of time during the weekend but in private – I don't drink coffee so I'm not inviting you for a coffee but I can invite you for a Red Bull if you want to talk.

**Q: At least you're on one each other's Christmas card list now for the future.**

**Q: (Alex Popov - Russian TV) There is strong opinion about the new qualifying, in Q2 especially, because there are fewer cars and the tyres are very soft, so maybe it's better to preserve the tyres than get into Q3? Do you agree?**

**MW:** In Barcelona we were still qualifying all together. Just start the race. The tyres at the back of the grid... don't worry about Q3, we don't worry about Q1 or Q2 either. You need the tyres to finish the race.

**Q: Can any of you see an advantage there in missing out on Q3, potentially in the first few races?**

**SV:** I don't think so. I think you always want to start from the front. There's the odd example here or there where people maybe had a bit of a benefit putting on that extra set at the end of the race but on average I think if you can chose, you go for the front (of the grid).

**Q: Same for you Daniel?**

**DR:** Yeah, I'd like to! I'd like to. Obviously if I was in the position to do that as well I would definitely go for starting at the front. Starting in the mid-pack and taking that risk to save tyres is obviously putting yourself in a bit more of a tight situation potentially on the first lap with more cars around. The thing is, if you're able to fight for the front row you go for it, that's the logical one for me.

**Q: (Gary Meenaghan – The National) Is there such a thing as an ideal size of field; we've lost a team, obviously, over the break? Are we now the ideal size, should it be higher, less?**

**MW:** I think that's a nice number; twenty is probably getting a bit low so between 26 and 20 is a nice little number. More than 26 is probably too much on some tracks – Monte Carlo, whatever – in qualifying. I think that's a good number, certainly in a nice window but that level of numbers – I think what's important is the level of the teams, that's the thing we've got to keep an eye on, keep the level of the teams at a high level in Formula One, not to have cars on the grid that are properly not at the level, so we just need to keep an eye on that in the future.

**Q: (Livio Oricchio - O Estado de Sao Paulo) Start with me, finish with me: Sebastian and Mark, the new test for the front wing and forbidden to use DRS on many parts of the circuit; how do these changes affect your team particularly?**

**MW:** Look, we've had a lot of different front wing regulations in the last few years. It's normal in Formula One that we have to adjust technically around new rule changes, sometimes within the season itself, not just at the start of the season: January, February. We obviously make the car fit within those regulations and we will have to adjust the car around the findings of how that front wing will form in those new regulations, so that's fine. In terms of the DRS, it's not a big thing for us. I think that we have been OK in qualifying in the past, also quite strong in races so the effect of the DRS, the delta of the DRS, all those type of things which is not something that we're having a huge eye on, we're not disappointed that the DRS is less in qualifying. For example, Sebastian and I are very happy; we pushed quite hard to have DRS dropped down in terms of volume on Saturday afternoon so we're quite relaxed with that one.

**SV:** I think most of the changes to the front wing came in trying to stop us so something that we maybe did better or that the others couldn't do and then there's just one more thing, so it's not a new situation.

Ends