



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2013 Australian Grand Prix Sunday Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS

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PODIUM INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Martin Brundle)

(Question inaudible)

Kimi RAIKKONEN: It's the first race, so you don't really know how it's going to go, how the tyres are going to be. I didn't really do any long runs in the winter. I knew that I had a good car, so I had a feeling that it was going to be a good race but you have to get through the first laps and then go from there.

And you did a 1:29.2, the fastest lap of the grand prix just before the end. Just having a bit of fun?

KR: No, I mean Fernando was catching me at some point, when I was taking it a bit more easy and there was some traffic, so I just wanted to make sure that if the rain comes or something happens we have a bit more gap. I was still taking it pretty easy. Like I said, the car has been very good all weekend and it was a pretty nice race, not so difficult.

Fernando, second place. How are you feeling about that?

Fernando ALONSO: Fantastic. Obviously it was fantastic race, with fighting all through the race. Big thanks to the fans all weekend. We felt sad yesterday when we postponed the qualifying until today, because they were in the grandstands with the rain, the windy conditions and at the end we didn't run. So today we had to put on a good show for everybody and I think we did it, because the race was action every lap. I personally enjoyed it. Obviously at the end it was a little bit sad not to be able to win the race, but Kimi was fantastic today, the Lotus car as well. We need to congratulate them for a fantastic race.

You made some pretty bold moves when you came out of the pits after your stops. You really had to push, with Adrian Sutil and generally you had to push hard for that.

FA: Yeah, it was not an easy race. At the beginning traffic with Sebastian and Felipe and then traffic with Sutil, some tricky moments. But at the end, as I said, extremely happy. We had a very difficult start to the season two years ago and last year as well and this year is very different. We feel much more optimistic. The car is responding well, we are competitive so we have a very interesting season ahead of us.

But isn't it very worrying that they could do two stops? I'm assuming you couldn't do a two-stop race.

FA: It is a worry, yes. Obviously Lotus did a very good job. Kimi was driving fantastically all through the race and he managed two stops, so we need to analyse what we can do for the next race. We have only four days to work on the car to prepare for the next race and I think he will again be a tough opponent.

Sebastian, only third today but the crowd are obviously very appreciative of what you did. But what happened to the Red Bull pace we were expecting?

Sebastian VETTEL: Well, I think first of all we can be happy with today. Obviously we wanted more. Clearly when you start from pole you want to win. I think we could see after a very good start, and a good first two or three laps, that the tyres were falling apart and we couldn't go as long as other people. So congratulations to Lotus and especially to Kimi, I think they did the best job today. An little bit of a surprise when I saw on the pitwall that I was lacking one position to count because I knew Fernando passed us at the stop but I didn't know where the other car was coming from but I think they had incredible pace. Same goes for Ferrari. I think we were third-quickest today and very happy to get third place.

Do you think it was just the conditions, the track temperatures or are you seriously worried about the pace of Lotus and Ferrari?

SV: No, I'm not worried. I have to admit sometimes that other people are faster. I think we can be very happy today. We had a great qualifying session this morning and this afternoon unfortunately didn't quite work the way we would have liked but it's a long season, a long way ahead of us, so good points to start. Surely we wanted a little bit more but there's no reason to be disappointed.

You didn't win the first race of 2010 or 2012 but you went on to win those championships, so I guess it's not the end of the world?

SV: Yeah, I think there are always statistics that can work for you or work against you but at this stage... it was very good fun today, tricky to manage the tyres, but I'm very happy to be on the podium here, it's always a nice grand prix so looking forward to next week.

One quick word with our winner Kimi Raikkonen: Kimi, you lead the world championship. You had two years away rallying, you came back and won a race last year did a great job but here you are leading the championship again. How does that feel?

KR: It feels good but it's only after one race. It doesn't really change our aim and our work for this year. Definitely we are happy with the win but there is an awful lot to still do to try to win the championship. We seemed to have a good car here and hopefully it works well in the next races also.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Kimi, did you believe from that seventh position the win was there for you today?

KR: I was pretty disappointed this morning after the qualifying. Obviously there was only one lap really on the dries and I took it a bit too easy and got a bit of a small mistake in one corner. It was more timing and getting it right than really the maximum speed from all the cars, so not the ideal starting place but it was still ten places better than last year, so not a disaster in that way. I knew that my car is quite good. It's been feeling good all weekend and when we did the longer run it felt good. We only destroy the front tyres so we knew if we get the front tyres lasting it should be fine. In a way I was pretty confident – but of course you have to get through the start and the first lap and it's the first race so you never know what's going to happen with the conditions and the circuit after the rain and with tyres, so there's a lot of question marks. I felt I had a good car and it turned out to be pretty good.

Q: Alan Permane said to you, on the subject of tyres in parc ferme, “we got it absolutely right today.” Was that just one of the ingredients where everything seemed to fall into place for you?

KR: Yeah, I mean our plan was to do two-stop and it's always difficult, especially the first races, to really know when to stop, and not doing it too early and not too late. We got it, like he said, exactly right. The team worked very well and we had a good plan, and we follow the plan and it work out perfectly for us. I could save the tyres and I could go fast if I needed and I could really drive very easily. One of the easiest races I've done to win the race. Hopefully we can have many more of this kind of races.

Q: Fernando, turning to you, you had to stop one more time, was there ever a chance that the Ferrari could run longer? Was it the way that the car wore out the tyres that cost you victory today?

FA: I think it's difficult to know if we could do two stops today. You need to commit, more or less, to one strategy before the start of the race because you race differently. Obviously we were attacking, we tried to pass Sebastian in the first part of the race, Felipe and me. We could not do it in the stint. In the second stint we were again also behind Sutil at that stage of the race. I think we felt all these things against... maybe you can go a little bit longer in the stints but we have to stop, try to overtake these people that we felt they were slower than us in the race and if you commit to that, obviously there is not a way to find a two-stop so, I don't know, the race without traffic... could be.

Q: Your team-mate Felipe Massa got the better start, how surprised were you to see him get off the line so quickly and how much of an effect did that have on the early part of your race?

FA: No, well, I had a much better start than Felipe and a much better start than Hamilton especially but they close each other in the middle and I have to lift off. If not, with a longer straight I think I could arrive second easily in the first corner but it was a little bit problem there and then Nico also was very aggressive on the first corner, so it was not easy start and obviously in the first race no-one wants to take an extra risk. But yeah, that was not a help in the first part of the race and then some traffic all through the race. First with Sebastian and Felipe and then with Sutil, Hamilton, Rosberg, Sutil again and two people, I think one Caterham and one Williams that, obviously it is a first race for them but it seems they were not very concentrated today.

Q: Sebastian, Adrian Sutil's name has been mentioned a couple of times. How big a thorn in your side was the sight of that Force India out in front?

SV: Well I think in the end you have enough laps in the race to even things out. Surely it didn't help at that stage but, y'know, it's pretty simple: if we had the pace we should have passed him. We didn't. I was quite a bit quicker when I arrived at the back of him but then couldn't pass him. I think running in traffic it has quite a negative effect on tyres. The same for the people behind me so I wasn't that afraid there was a lot of pressure from behind because I knew that they will be in the same problem that I was with the car in front and, yeah, at some stage even he pulled a little bit away. So, as I said, I don't think, considering all the laps in the race, it made a massively difference. We jumped him after the stop. Yeah, it was quite a good overtaking into turn three, I think. And it was important, I think, to get past. Obviously Fernando, I think, stopped a lap earlier and was on the fresh tyres so he could use the momentum to get past the group, which worked well for him. After that though, we could see that he was a little bit too quick for us today and in the last two stints he was pulling away. I have to admit I was quite surprised when I was still missing one position in my calculations because all the cars that I saw made sense but I never saw Kimi in the race but he ended up way ahead of us and then I saw him on TV, and then saw that Fernando was then second and Kimi was leading. Overall, as I said before, very happy with third place. I think surely when you start from pole, you want to win but I think we can be happy with the pace all weekend. The car left a very good impression. The whole team seemed to operate very calmly and considering it was the first race of the season we seemed to just continue where we stopped last year. So yeah, I think it was a good day for us. Obviously there's a bit of homework to do, regarding the tyres. I think two-stop was out of our range today, so we'll see where we are next week.

Q: But did it surprise you that starting from pole the pace wasn't there to go on and win the race?

SV: Well I think the pace was there. The naked pace. Qualifying was pretty good for us. I think we had quite a good run, and then also the first two laps of the race were pretty good and also the first two laps on each set of tyres felt pretty good – but yeah, obviously after that we couldn't keep it up and surely the times set in the front, from Fernando but Kimi especially, were quite impressive considering the amount of laps on the tyres. So, we couldn't do that and that's why, I think we lost out a little bit today. But, as I said, it's a very tough, very long grand prix and very nice to be on the podium at the end. We have quite a good record here so I'm happy that we had another podium finish today.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Leonid Novozhilov - F1Life) Kimi, do you give a chance to your opponents in Malaysia?

KR: It's a different place, it's going to be much hotter there so it's very difficult to say how the cars will feel, who will be fastest after having just one race. I think we have to do two or three races before we really know who is where and what's going to happen. It's probably going to rain again in Malaysia at some point but it will be a different circuit, different conditions. Our car worked well here at least and usually – at least last year – in hot conditions it's been good for us so hopefully it will turn out to be a good weekend next week.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Kimi, I know how much you love winning. When it comes easily like this, in the first race, does it mean even more to you?

KR: A win's a win, it doesn't really matter how you get it. Of course I'm happy that we didn't really have to go full speed all the time so it's kind of a good sign, a good race for us, but as I said, it might be a completely different story in the next race, so there's nothing to jump up and be so extra happy about, because it's a long season and in the end we want to be on the top for all the races and it's going to be a hard season for that. As I said, everything worked well, we had no issues with the car all weekend, the car's been good, the team has been working well. After the winter test, when I probably did the least laps of everybody in the winter, we didn't have a very special winter. As I said before, we didn't have a very special winter the previous year and not this winter, but the car has always been good in the race so so far so good and hopefully it goes like this.

Q: (Manuel Franco – Diairo AS) Fernando, what's been the biggest surprise for you today, Red Bull, Ferrari or Lotus?

FA: I think none of them, to be honest. At Ferrari, we had a good winter and the car is more or less as we expected. Arriving here and fighting for the podium was the aim of the team and the goal of this winter, to reduce the gap and to arrive at the start of the season with a competitive package. I think the goal was achieved. In the winter the car felt good and the understanding of the car was good so being on the podium here is some kind of job done, let's say. Lotus, we saw in winter they were very quick and we saw this weekend they were very quick and very consistent, so they had a fantastic weekend, they deserved victory, and then Red Bull is the quickest car at the moment, first and second in qualifying, first and second in practice, nearly, and then in the race they saw a little bit of degradation but that doesn't mean that they are not the fastest.

Q: (Christopher Joseph - The Vancouver Sun) Fernando, what did you learn about the car today in the race that you didn't know after testing?

FA: You always learn some things for sure but I will talk with the engineers now in the debrief about the competition. When you run close to other cars in the first race, you always discover some weak points of the car and some strong points and today was a lot of fights, a lot of traffic, a lot of action, let's say, in the race and it was pretty clear for us some of the strong points of the car and some of the weak points that obviously we will keep between us.

Q: (Don Kennedy – Hawkes Bay Today) Kimi, that seemed to be a very popular win judging by the crowd reaction out there. Can we perhaps expect a re-release of the 'I know what I'm doing' t-shirts? They're pretty popular, I gather. They only had a hundred released and they sold out. Can we have a few more?

KR: No. That was last year and nothing to do with this year or this win. It was just people asked for them and we made them but now it's not going to happen, not from me at least, maybe somebody else. There's nothing planned. It's happened before many times, as I said, but this time it came on TV so I'm sure some odd things will come through even this year. Maybe it gets on TV, maybe not.

Q: (Trent Price - Richland F1) Sebastian, on the first lap you were able to establish quite a margin at the start; do you think that strategies like Adrian's will actually affect your own strategies mid-race or do you really have to concentrate on your own, what you've already planned out before the race?

SV: Well, you mentioned two things. On the first stint I was very happy initially to get a good start, defend the lead, then I think I was able to pull away but after two laps, I felt that I could be in trouble. The tyres started to go away from me and as we could see, Ferrari, Felipe and Fernando were catching up and then in the stint after that, we were running into the back of Adrian, but as I said before, surely it didn't help, especially losing the position to Fernando, but then I think you should look at the whole race. They left a strong impression but I think it should have been very difficult to keep him behind all the race. For sure, in that moment, it was that one particular lap where he decided to pit a lap earlier and jumped the group. So you can argue that for sure, at that time, the traffic didn't help, especially because as I mentioned earlier, in traffic, you start to slide around even more and then lose more of the tyres, so we struggled with that today but again, I'm not blaming anything or anyone because there's plenty of laps in the race where you can make it up again. P3 I think was the best we could get today.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Sebastian, did you have any indication during the winter tests, or even Friday here, that you could face this kind of problem with your tyres during the race?

SV: Well, I think in winter testing everybody had trouble to make the tyres last. It seemed to be very inconsistent in Barcelona, very dependent on the day you were running, depending on the conditions. I think we ended up today with similar conditions but it's a completely different track. I think the amount of laps covered today were not even out of sight, they were out of thought I think in Barcelona for everyone. I think there has been a certain trend; if you look at Lotus last year, looking after the tyres, if you remember, a couple of key races such as Montreal, where they seemed to be the only team to make a one stop possible, whereas I think Fernando and myself struggled and had to pit again. It was quite a messy race at the end but I think you always learn along the way. We had a plan today before the race which I think was different to Kimi's and probably very similar to Fernando's or Ferrari's. Adding up with our tyre wear, I think that's where we finished today.

Q: (Kate Walker – Girl Racer) Another tyre question for you, Sebastian: over the last few years your car has been known for its downforce, it's been a really good advantage for you. Do you think that might actually be an Achilles heel this year, that you're wearing out your tyres more quickly than the competition?

SV: Well, it depends, I think. At the end of the day, surely there were times when we had plenty of downforce compared to other people, but I think these times are over, not just this year but way before that. I think we sometimes have the ability to compare a little bit to other people and the magic days when we were covering a lot more speed in high speed corners, I don't think they are happening any more. I think we are still very competitive but I think there's a lot more to it than just the raw downforce level. You could argue that with more downforce you go faster, you're asking more of the tyres, all of those things, but I think overall there's a certain trend where some cars seem to work pretty well in some conditions. As Kimi touched on today, he was struggling with front tyres; I think for us it was more evened out. We had both axles running away from us. I'm not sure about the Ferraris but looking at their tyres during running, it looked pretty similar to us, so especially at the end of the stints. Then again, every day can be a bit different. I think you need to be very careful to find a real trend but I think there have been a lot of races where we have been looking after the tyres pretty well and they will come again. For sure, today we were a little bit behind but next week is another race and completely different conditions, as Kimi said, so we will see what happens there.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti - Corriere della Sera) Kimi, can you compare the feeling that you have now with the one you had in 2007 when you won with Ferrari?

KR: For sure a win is always a win so in that way we have a good feeling, the best start that you can have in the first race of the season, but of course many things have happened since then. Still, I won here and it's nice to be winning the first race again. But we started in seventh place and had to fight through the positions to win in the first place and I led more or less all the race. Different years but a similar feeling because obviously we won the first race and leading the points.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Fernando, the question was already asked to Sebastian but I think it was a little bit inconclusive. We saw this weekend two completely disciplines: in practice Red Bull was dominating with a big pace difference, then all of a sudden, in the race, we have to say that the Lotus and the Ferrari were faster, whether in traffic or on an open track. How do you explain that?

FA: I don't have an explanation to be honest. It's not new. We saw in the last three years that Red Bull are untouchable in qualifying and in the race everything is much closer. And we saw McLaren sometimes winning the race and sometimes us. Lotus, I remember last year, in Hungary I think, in Bahrain, they finished on the podium and in qualifying they were not as quick as the Red Bulls so we need to find some extra pace in qualifying because if not, they will always start on the front row.

Q: (Erkki Mustakari – Finnish News Agency) Kimi, through the years we have seen that whoever can develop the car best through the season has the best fun towards the end of the year. Do you think Lotus has enough resources to keep up the work because there are not many ways you can go from here because you started by winning?

KR: Yeah there was a big question mark last year in our team whether we can keep up with the bigger teams. Of course it's not going to be easy for us. I'm sure we have the people, all the tools to make it. The money is a big part of the thing. For sure we don't have the same budget as Ferrari or Red Bull or Mercedes but we could show last year that... we did pretty well on the money and the things we have. I have no doubt we have the people and the tools but of course if we get more money it will help and it will give us a better chance and more fair play against the bigger teams. Like I said, we have good plans, and if we can follow it up it might be good, it might not. It's a long season. If you do things right it will go nicely but one thing can change the whole year. You do a few things a little bit wrong it can turn around and go downhill after that. So we just have to do our normal things, like we did last year and put the good effort into new parts and if we're happy we keep them and if not we have to look more closely. But like I said, so far it has been good, so there is no reason why we can't keep it up.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Fernando, the same three guys were on the podium in Abu Dhabi in the same order. From your point of view were there any similarities in your fight against Kimi in this race compared to Abu Dhabi.

FA: I don't remember too well but I don't think so. It was a very different race. I think we were closer to victory in Abu Dhabi or closer than what we were here today. We didn't have the pace to fight with Kimi today. He was too fast for us and he did a fantastic job. I think in Abu Dhabi it was different with the safety car. I think with 15 or 20 laps to the end of the race we really had the opportunity there to fight for victory and today they were too fast.

Q: (Cristobal Rosaleny – Car and Driver) A question for Fernando. Could you please describe the decision process about the second stop because it was the main point of your race and Felipe is not so happy with that. It was two or three laps later.

FA: There is always the flexibility to anticipate the stop, delay the stop. There are some kind of laps that you programme before the race to do the stops as you predict more or less with the simulations etc. But there is always a margin of three or four laps shorter or longer depending on how the race goes. How the race goes is the tyre degradation that you are facing through that particular race or the traffic you are facing through that race. In my case we felt we were a lot faster than the cars in front. We stopped in lap 20 or 21. We felt we had more pace for 18 or 19 laps so it was the right time to start. It was too early then maybe that compromised the full potential of the three stops. For that we could not maybe fight with Kimi because it was too early also for three stops, I think lap 21. It was enough to jump three place though, Sebastian, Felipe and Sutil. So it was a very good decision at the time but what we didn't know at the time was the pace of the Lotus. So they did a better job than us and maybe we did a better job than the others in the front.

Q: (Phil Branagan – Motorsport News Australia) A question for Sebastian, a question about tyres. I don't know if you've seen the weather forecast for Malaysia next weekend but it's rain Friday, Saturday, Sunday. Given the tyre wear of your car in the dry this weekend. Are you thinking of a conservative game plan for this weekend or is it business as usual?

SV: Let me answer with a question back. Have you ever been to Malaysia? It rains every day! It doesn't really make sense to look at the forecast. It's one of those places where there's always rain at some point in the day. Yeah, I think it's a completely different place. I think last year we cannot take as a reference because we had different issues with the car. I think starting with the season this year the car seems much more balance and I'm much happier, in a much happier place. So, looking forward to next week. It will a lot hotter, naturally there is a risk of rain, thunderstorms. We've got rain tyres and intermediates, so we should be fine but in terms of approach there's not too much difference. I don't think you can take this race as a reference because the circuit is too different and as I said, the conditions will be different plus the tyres we use are different again.

Ends