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Press Information

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DRIVERS – Esteban GUTIERREZ (Sauber), Valtteri BOTTAS (Williams), Giedo VAN DER GARDE (Caterham), Jules BIANCHI (Marussia), Kimi RAIKKONEN (Lotus), Max CHILTON (Marussia)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Kimi, great win for you and the team to start of with, in cold conditions. How do you and the team feel about being able to repeat that performance level in the heat of Malaysia?

Kimi RAIKKONEN: We don't know yet. Last year we were pretty good when it was hot and actually it was better for us, but obviously we haven't run in this kind of conditions and the winter has been very cold, so I have no idea. But if it's anything like it was last year we should be pretty OK, but we have to wait and see how it goes.

One notable detail from the Melbourne weekend is that you were over a second slower than the Red Bull in qualifying, but you turned it round to be over a second faster than them on your fastest race lap. What do you put that down to?

KR: I wouldn't say that the qualifying was a very normal situation with all the weather – it got delayed and all that stuff. But if it was normal dry conditions I'm pretty sure we are more close. We will wait and see when we get a normal qualifying. Then, I'm sure we are not a second behind, or 1.4 seconds or whatever it was.

Esteban, coming to you. Youngest driver in Formula One and the best-placed rookie in Australia in 13th. A tricky Sunday for the Sauber team with your team-mate not starting the race, but what did you take from the weekend?

Esteban GUTIERREZ: Well, for me the experience was very important. Being able to say that I finished my first Formula One race is already quite a good step. And from then on, taking the experience into account, I will try to improve on the points where I can improve following this second challenge here in Malaysia. It will be very different circumstances but I think it's going to be a very exciting one.

Can you talk about the pressure of expectation, given what Sergio Perez did here last year in a Sauber and what he went on to do in the rest of the year?

EG: It is obviously something that is there but I'm not going to think about it because it's different circumstances. I think the weather is varying a lot here and it's playing a big role in how the race is going. I'm going to try to do my best, going at my own pace and improve where I can improve, step by step.

Valtteri, you finished 14th in Melbourne, outqualified your team-mate [Pastor] Maldonado and finished the race. What did you take away from your debut?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Of course I learned a lot in my first grand prix. It was tough but it was nice to see that everything went without any bigger problems. Of course we would have liked to finish the race in a much higher position and everyone was expecting much more from us, including us. From my side I think it was not a bad first race but definitely we didn't finish where we wanted to.

As you say, the team is not where it wants to be. Why do you think the car is struggling?

VB: Well I'm not going to go into the details now but we understand now better what went wrong, because the car has potential. The performance is there and we just need to get it out really. And for this grand prix already we think we can fix some things. We will see tomorrow a little bit more where we are.

Jules, 11th-fastest race lap en route to a 15th-placed finish on your debut. It's a performance that's got you on a number of people's radars already. What did you think of it?

Jules BIANCHI: Well, honestly it has been a really nice weekend for me in Australia even if it was quite a late call for me because I didn't do all the pre-season testing. Anyway, I was really happy. I just tried to enjoy and see what we were able to do in the race. Obviously the race went pretty well. We had a good start, everything was good, and we did a good result. We know what we have to improve and we will try to do that for the next few races.

You were with Force India of course in February in testing and you only had on test with Marussia before Australia. What do you think is possible with this car this season?

JB: I think I was really surprised when I drove it for the first time. My expectation was a lot lower than that. I was really happy when I drove it. I think we can do good results. We know what we have to improve again, so we're just trying to do that, trying to improve the car and trying to improve myself as well, because I'm new in the team, new in Formula One. I want to show people what I am able to do, so I will try to do my best for all the other races.

Max Chilton, coming to you. Seventeenth in Melbourne for Marussia on your debut. Things have obviously happened pretty quickly for you, getting into Formula One at 21. How are you settling in?

Max CHILTON: I feel comfortable. I felt ready when the decision was made that I got the race seat. I believe in myself, that I've got a good chance. I think this year the Marussia car has got a good chance of moving its way up the field. I feel at home, the team are fantastic and I've now got a really good team-mate to work with and I can maybe learn from, and maybe he can learn from me, so it's a winning formula.

You obviously know this track; you raced here in GP2 and finished on the podium. What do you think of it?

MC: Yeah, it's a very challenging circuit, it's got some long, high-speed flowing corners but then you've got some technical stuff to get out of the corner onto a long straight, which is very important. The main thing with this circuit is the heat. It was a tough race last year, but I can tell that it doesn't feel as hot as last year, so I don't need to worry about that. We just need to focus on getting the most out of the car and beating our rivals.

Giedo, you out-qualified your team-mate and got an 18th-place finish in Melbourne. What did you take from your first experience of Formula One?

Giedo VAN DER GARDE: It was a tough race. Max hit me in the first stint, so the floor got damaged quite badly. Anyway, we managed to finish the race and it was a good experience for me. I learned a lot with the tyres. Now this is the next step and we'll see what we can do here.

Looks like you're starting out the year chasing Marussia. Do you see reasons in the pipeline to be positive?

GVDG: I think with here you never know what the weather is going to be. I think we looked quite strong, I have to say, so I hope for a bit of rain here. And then the next two [races] we know we still have the same car and in Barcelona we'll get a big upgrade, so let's see where we are then.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Trent Price – Richland F1) Question for Esteban: very impressive 30-lap stint on the mediums in the race, obviously you weren't able to compare data with Nico but did that come quite naturally because the Sauber's renowned for being quite easy on its tyres. Was that something you put down to the car or something that came naturally for you?

EG: Are you referring to the long stint?

Q: yes

EG: Yes, I think from that point of view, I think the tyres are playing a big role in the race and it's something that I really focussed a lot to try to find the best compromise into the speed and the long stint I could do. It was a very long stint, at the same time we found out we had a slight flat tyre through that stint, so it also was the balance was switching a little bit, especially at the last of the stint. So, I think it's just a matter of finding the right compromise of how quick we can be and also how long we want to keep the tyres. As we can see, Kimi did a very similar strategy and he was able to be a lot quicker, so there's something that definitely we can find and we will be looking into that.

Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) Question especially for Valtteri and Esteban. You have a very tough challenge inside your team because Pastor already won the race and Nico nearly won the race in Brazil. You prefer this situation or you prefer the situation with a little bit less level for your team-mate for the first year?

VB: I prefer it. Pastor is a very good reference. He is a quick driver, it's his third year at Williams now and definitely for me it's good to compare to him and good to see from him if I have some things to improve. Hopefully we will be close and hopefully I can keep up in the beginning of the season and I try to improve and then get better. Definitely a good reference and I prefer that.

EG: I think a little bit the same as Valtteri. I think it's good to have a good reference, especially knowing that Nico is a very quick and consistent driver and yes, it was not the ideal situation for him not to do the race in Melbourne but it would be nice to have that reference up until this race but now in this race let's hope for a good reference to get that reference and try to move on.

Q: (Ben Edwards – BBC) A two-part question for Max and for Kimi. Max, first of all, can you talk to us about the difficulties when you're being lapped by the leaders? What you've got to learn, what gets more difficult from that point of view? And Kimi, with five rookies out there, did you find any problems yourself when lapping the guys coming into Formula One? If you could just talk about that.

MC: Well, the team over the winter testing did give me some guidance of the best way to do it, and they did say it is an art and it will take you a few races. I definitely felt, at the start of the race in Melbourne, when obviously the blues started to come earlier because we

had to do a nose-change, I was getting the blue flags earlier than expected. Our races are planned to be as fast as you can to the blue flags and then your race slows down – and that came sooner than we thought. But, I could definitely tell after 20 laps, the blue flags, where to do it. And the time you can save – and it is a huge time-saver. Obviously you don't want to disrupt the leaders because their race is more important than ours but our race is still important, so you need to do the best for the team by not losing too much time. I think after the next few races I'll be fully comfortable and you just naturally know where to do it and lose the least amount of time possible.

KR: Last year for sure there was some cars and teams that were not very easy to get past when you were lapping them but at least in the first race it seems to be a bit better. So, I have no complaints on that. Of course it's some days difficult to let people past, to move off the way quick enough but for sure everybody's trying to do their best and if something goes wrong obviously they get penalised – so it was OK in the first race at least.

Q: (Ben Waterworth – Richard's F1) For Kimi, been ten years since your first victory here in Sepang ten years ago. Special place for you here in Sepang? And win be a perfect anniversary present for it?

KR: It's not really any special place. I mean, of course it was nice to win the first race but we really should have won the year before, so it's nice to come back here – I don't enjoy the heat and the humidity of the place but the circuit is nice so, we know how it's going to be more or less here. It usually gives a good race and that's the main thing. Hopefully we can have another good weekend and score good points.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, do you expect the hot weather helping you and the team to find more speed from the car?

VB: I hope so, because I think one of the problems was – a little bit – the tyre warm up. Getting the tyres to work properly but, y'know, it's quite unknown, and it's the same for everyone. No-one has run these tyres in these conditions. We will see tomorrow; we will experience the tyres – but I do really hope so.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports) We often get views from some of our viewers that there shouldn't be blue flags in Formula One and that everyone has a right to be racing out on the circuit and shouldn't have to move over and it's an art to overtake a back-marker or a front runner. I just want to know from a few of you, do you think there should be blue flags in Formula One? Kimi and the rest of the rookies...

JB: Well, obviously I think it's normal that we have to move the way out because they are fighting for the victory and we are lapped, so when we are lapped I think it's right to give the place to the leader. So, yeah, I think it's normal rules to have blue flags.

GVDG: I agree. I think you should let the leaders past, they're fighting for the win.

Q: Esteban, it must be strange going when you're going at the front. Obviously your car's a little faster than some of these other ones but when you get used to racing at the front, then you have to let cars through, that mental adjustment – I guess you hope it doesn't last too long in Formula One.

EG: Yeah, that's true! I hope I don't see much blue flags this season but I agree with Jules' and Giedo's comment. Really, I don't have much comment about it.

Q: How much do the older drivers and experienced front runners take a lead on this in drivers' briefings?

KR: There's not much talked about. Everybody knows what they have to do. They're not racing for the first time, they've been racing for a long time. Like I said, it's sometimes

easier to let people past than other times. Of course, you understand that they don't want to lose too much time but it's more important for them to move over because some days they can really make a difference as to who wins or who not. In the end, if you don't want to get blue flags you should be in the front, simple as that.

Q: (Michael Casey – Associated Press) Kimi, how does it feel to have a target on your back coming into the weekend?

KR: There's no target. We don't do anything different this weekend than we did in the previous race or last year. If people think that we are leaders, it makes no difference to our work, what we did or what we're going to do this weekend or any other weekend. Like I said, we try to do best and hopefully we can score some good points.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action) Jules, you had a very good race (in Australia) but you had so little testing; do you see yourself making some really big steps when you get some more track time?

JB: Obviously it would have been better for me to have more testing but my race was good and there's much more to come from my side, specially to set the car up well, because I don't know the car. I only did one and a half days before the race, so I think it's something I need to get used to and for sure I will have more performance after that. But I think I'm already at a good level, for sure. I trained a lot last year with Force India and the year before with Ferrari, so now I feel ready to race in Formula One, that's why I am here. I still need to improve but I'm already happy with that.

Q: And how much is the simulator helping you in this situation?

JB: Well, obviously I did a lot of simulator preparation before the race in Australia and it was really helpful, especially because I didn't know the track and the same for this track, so it's something really useful.

Q: (Abhishek Takle - Midday) Question for the rookies: when you step up to Formula One obviously the physical challenge is a lot tougher but specially for a race like Malaysia which is known to be hot. Is there any sort of special physical preparation that you will do in the run-up to such a race?

MC: Obviously the step up from the junior categories is mainly that the race lengths are... we're used to probably a race of an hour maximum. These can go on for a limit of two hours but usually around 40 minutes(longer) so that 40 minutes does make a difference and also the G-forces, but the powered steering makes it a lot easier. Physically, you just need to be more specific on what you're working for, it's not a big leap up, you just have to make it a lot more specific and focus on the areas where you need it. But for races like this, with the heat, there's not really certain training you can do... you can do heat chamber work, you can do a bit of that which will help but the main thing is making sure your body is always hydrated to its absolute maximum and that's key. If you're not hydrated then you will suffer pretty quickly.

GvdG: I think you try to come here as soon as possible to get used to the hot weather. You use a kind of different philosophy with food, you use a lot of salt, you drink a lot during the whole day. I think we drink up to five or six litres, so you pee quite a lot. I quite like the heat so let's see how I feel after the race.

Q: Valtteri, do you get all the secrets handed down from the Finns who have gone before you like Kimi and Mika Hakkinen?

VB: Well, of course, we have the saunas in Finland, so maybe that helps with the heat. I think it's just a hot race and that's the key. No special preparation. Of course try to be outside a lot to get used to it a little bit but in the end the fitter you are the easier time you're going to have in the car.

Q: (Gary Meenaghan – The National) Kimi, just wondering if you got a chance to celebrate the win last Sunday, or if you were on a flight going somewhere? What would you be up to?

KR: I came here directly on Sunday night. For sure, if you want to you can always... it's not about that. I had a flight booked here anyhow so I came here.

Q: What's your view on days when you win, because in sport you have so many days which perhaps don't go quite so well. When you actually win, is it very important to you to be a team, to celebrate with a team, to enjoy the good moments?

KR: No. Like I said, first of all they(the team) are always very busy packing up everything at these kind of races so they don't have so much time either. I had a flight in the evening, so we just had a quick briefing and then I had to go to the hotel to pick up my stuff and go. For sure they had some celebration. It's just one race and hopefully at the end of the year we can have a good celebration.

Q: (Velimir Veljko Jukic - Auto Fokus) We have a couple of rookies here and normally you have reached the first level to the biggest category, but probably there are some big secret wishes which you don't talk about. Would you maybe reveal your secret wish to this audience?

JB: I don't think there are many secrets in Formula One. You just need to work out a lot and be ready for that. I don't see any secrets.

GvdG: I think it's a dream come true (to drive in Formula One). You have worked all your life to get here and it's great to be here but to be honest, if you're in the back, some things are different: blue flags, the start is different again, the procedures with the steering wheel. There's a lot of stuff which is quite different to GP2 but I'm enjoying it. The team is letting me learn a lot and I'm making it step by step.

Q: Esteban, you've made it to Formula One but does the journey really begin here?

EG: I think that I try to take a very natural approach, try to see every race as one more race, as if it was back in Formula BMW in 2007... it doesn't really make a difference because that helps me to keep the focus on the most important things. Now, for me, the dream is not only to be in Formula One, the dream is to be successful in Formula One and I want to work my way step-by-step to try to achieve it.

Ends