



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2013 Chinese Grand Prix **Thursday Press Conference Transcript** **11.04.2013**

DRIVERS – Mark WEBBER (Red Bull Racing), Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes), Sergio PEREZ (McLaren), Nico HULKENBERG (Sauber), Romain GROSJEAN (Lotus), Adrian SUTIL (Force India)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Mark, I'm afraid we're coming to you first. Very smart new haircut, fairly drastic, but I guess that's the summer haircut is it?

Mark WEBBER: Well, I went to the hairdresser's and he wanted to talk a lot and I said... I could see that I wanted to get in and out quite quick, so I said just shave it off. When he was half way through before I thought shit, that's a bit short now... but anyway it doesn't matter. It's practical, all good and yeah like you saw a few months too early but back to the old school haircuts. I used to get these when I was younger. Apparently I look younger now too so that's a good sign.

When we last saw you, you left with quite a few questions being asked within yourself and also of the team as well. Are you quite happy with the way things are now within the team and in your own head?

MW: I'm fine. I was always going to Australia after that race. Obviously it was mentioned after the race in the press conference and people put two and three together and get more information I suppose. It was a little bit of a break for all of us – three weeks, it was Easter as well – so good to go down there for a bit of relaxation after the back of winter testing and the first few races. But you get pretty anxious pretty quickly. I'm really looking forward to getting back in the car here and getting on with the racing again. This track always provides good racing actually. We've seen a few (good races) over the last few seasons here, apart from Nico last year obviously when he was very strong off the front, but generally we've had some good grands prix here. Looking forward to getting back in the car. Procedurally, the team, everything is fine. Obviously it was a bit of an interesting weekend in Malaysia but, yeah, looking forward to getting racing here.

Let's move on to this race. How good is the car because obviously you had excellent result, a 1-2, in Malaysia, and also good in Australia? So, how good is the car and what are the chances here?

MW: Yeah, I think we proved the car is pretty competitive at the first two races, not dominating by any means – no one is doing that yet. We know we've got work to do. As you say, Melbourne was a pretty competitive outing but the long and short of it is we didn't have a car good enough to win there but in Malaysia we did – two different situations in terms of track layouts and temperatures and all sorts of things. Here, probably a little bit more back towards the Melbourne window let's say. So let's see how the track and the

cars, the temperatures, how everything evolves around that great word – the tyres. So that's going to be important again this weekend. We've put a lot of effort in, the guys have been working hard and I've been doing a lot of work in the simulator, so ready to go.

Nico you left Malaysia a little frustrated as well. Do you understand the reasons for what happened there and are you happy with them?

Nico ROSBERG: Yeah, we've definitely discussed it and it's all sorted for the future, which is important, so yes.

Well, you had a fantastic race here last year – your first ever pole and your first ever win as well. Testing's been good, in the two races so far you've been competitive, so what chances here?

NR: Yeah really looking forward to this weekend. Massively motivated because I led the race here the last years and finally winning it last year. So this track works really well for me, for the car and I'm convinced I can do a really good result here.

You know what you did right last year and that went on to win you the race, so I guess the thing to do is choose the same set of regulations, the same set-up as last year?

NR: Unfortunately, it's not quite that easy. Things evolve so quickly – the different tyres we have this year bring us into a whole new situation. So you can't really compare, you need to take it as it comes and adapt to what you have this weekend. And so, that will be crucial, working through Friday and Saturday morning to try to optimise everything in order to have a great weekend.

Romain, you won your first points here last year with sixth place. What are your feelings after the first two races of this season and looking ahead to this race as well. How do you see the current Lotus?

Romain GROSJEAN: It's difficult to say before the weekend. We've seen that Kimi won in Australia, which was good for the team. It means that the car was able to do it. Then in Malaysia we had a good race from the point where it was dry. We know that when it's wet it's not our biggest strength. But here it seems to be dry for the whole weekend, which is a good point. We have a few updates on the car, plus on my side the new exhaust that Kimi ran in KL. So it's going to be good and looking forward to it. And as you said, it's good memories here, as I scored my first every point in F1 last year and hopefully some more this year.

You've mentioned that the car is very sensitive and sometimes it gives you what you want and sometimes it doesn't. Are you getting on top of that?

RG: It's difficult when you're not in the car to know. I think we have a few ideas of what we need to make sure is right and what can not get right and from there we have a more deep look into it and double check a few things. The tyres don't make it easier, as they are very, very sensitive to the performance of the car, sometimes a bit too much. But on the other hand it's the same for everybody, so we do our best. Hopefully updates help us to get on top of it and from there do every good session and see where we are Sunday evening.

Is that the main concentration at the moment?

RG: Yeah. To do the best you can in every single moment of the weekend, starting in Free Practice 1 and finishing after the 55th or 56th lap of the race. You know then you can see where you are. We need to put everything right – tyre window, set-ups, everything together, and see where we finish.

Q: Adrian, you have made an absolutely dream comeback to Formula One. How difficult has it been?

Adrian Sutil: No, not too difficult. I was just driving as fast as I could. I was happy to be back in the car and it worked very well. The car, for my opinion, is very good. It's the best car I've driven. Very neutral balance, quite good on the tyres and the race pace is very competitive. It was just a good start in Melbourne, disappointing in Malaysia because the pace was very, very good again but in qualifying caught out a little bit again with the rain and in the race, well, we saw the problems with the pit stops. But we solved those and we're confident. I'm confident and go on for the next mission here in China.

Q: The team does seem to have hit the ground running, what do you think is possible with that car?

AS: It's everything possible. It's in my hands, I think, so I have targets and try to do my best to reach those. Of course we want to be absolutely on the top, that's why we're here and we want to make that happening. But it's a hard way. We showed it's possible here and there to make a good result. I think in Australia that was a good start, to lead a race with this car. It's never easy. Nico did it last year; next race was Australia so two times in a row a Force India led quite a lot of laps in the race. It's just a sign that with this car there's definitely much more possible.

Q: Podiums?

AS: Podium is my goal, yes.

Q: Nico, you've changed teams from Force India to Sauber but also you have a new inexperienced team-mate as well. How difficult has it been for you moving to a new team and not really having somebody who's been there for a while?

Nico HÜLKENBERG: Well, I'm not too sure. In every team every driver looks and works for himself. Both drivers obviously work for the team but having Esteban there and he's a rookie, not long ago I was a rookie, so it's not a big penalty or big deal. I don't think it compromises my performance or the team's performance to be honest.

Q: What have been the positive points of joining Sauber? What's different, for example, to your previous team?

NH: I can speak my mother language a lot! It's a new situation: you're missing quite a few words sometimes, you know, technical words in English but otherwise the teams all work in a very similar way.

Q: Sergio, you obviously made a little bit of progress from Australia to Malaysia. Does that give you a little bit of confidence that you're going to make more to here as well?

Sergio PÉREZ: Yeah, we are positive. We expect to do progress every single race. I think we can make here make a little bit of progress but the most important is that we can learn a lot this week about the car which will help us for the big update that we are having for Europe. Once we go back to Europe.

Q: Now, obviously there was a lot of pressure on you right from the start of the season, a lot of interesting in you moving to McLaren. Does the fact you've had the problems with the car slightly relieve that pressure off you?

SP: I think the pressure is always there. It doesn't matter in which team you are, you have to deliver results. I want to deliver, I want to take the maximum out of the car and I know that the car will come back and we will be competitive quite soon, so I am confident in that respect. About the pressure, there will be always pressure when you drive for McLaren. Even if you are at the back of the grid you have the pressure to deliver and to try to make the most out of the car that you have.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Bianca Leppert - Auto, Motor und Sport) Nico Rosberg, did you have the thought in any moment at the end of the race in Malaysia to ignore Ross's words and overtake?

Nico ROSBERG: At the end of the race, I didn't have that thought, no. I had decided well before to fully respect the instructions that Ross had given me.

Q: (Kate Walker – Girl Racer) Nico, as a follow-up to that question, if you find yourself in a similar situation at this race or any future races are you going to obey team orders, or are you going to rebel and fight for the win?

NR: The difficulty was that we hadn't really discussed them beforehand, y'know? And so that was the mistake that we did. So, important going forward is that everything is discussed and then whichever way it goes, if I'm in front and Lewis is behind then he will respect it and vice versa. Then it's OK. As long as one is prepared for it and it's discussed well and understood, that's the important thing and that's the main mistake we did as a team.

Q: (Qian Jun Pro Car) Mark, you are one of four drivers who have attended every one of the ten Chinese Grands Prix. Compared to the first Grand Prix in 2004, can you feel the difference? The atmosphere, races and yourself?

MW: I don't think the race has changed a huge amount, I think we've seen a few more spectators coming over the years. The track itself has always been well-maintained, looked after. It's a good track for racing, as we say. It has been for quite a few years now. It's a challenging circuit, it has quite a few different combinations that you've got to get right – obviously with a long straight, things like that. It's a big surprise that we've been coming here for ten years, to be honest, it goes very quickly, as usual. It feels like about five but anyway if it's ten years, it's ten years but it really doesn't feel like a huge amount has changed. It was a very good event from the first year and it's still quite a good event now - obviously apart from the crowds getting better, which is good.

Q: Worth pointing out, Mark, that you've finished all nine of them as well.

MW: Hmm, OK, keep going, touch wood and finish the tenth one.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Mark, can you describe to us how was the period after your experience in the last race, and what do you think about what Sebastian said yesterday in the Infiniti press conference, the interview that he did for Infiniti?

MW: The second part of your question... I don't know, I don't know what Sebastian said in the press conference at Infiniti. The other part is yeah... the last part of the Grand Prix is... it's normal that there's a lot of emotions going through you because we put a lot of effort in, everybody does, there's never any guarantees for any Grand Prix victories so if the race is going quite well... still had a good result, obviously, but not the result that I would have liked but in the end, we know what happened. But Malaysia is not just one event in this scenario. We know we've had many scenarios in the past, so there's a lot of things which then come into your mind – positive, negative, whatever – how you can make things better in the future, so for me... yeah, and you've still got to drive the car, that's my job, so I still got the car home, good result and yeah, looking forward to this race. I think it's normal for a driver to have a lot of emotions in the car generally. You've got to try and get the emotions down, but it's part of our job, whether you're leading Monte Carlo and finishing the race there with different emotions and different disappointments, ups and downs, it's completely normal that in the cockpit we have emotions in the cockpit.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Mark, when I asked you in Malaysia about your future with the team, bearing in mind what you've just spoken about... the emotions

going through your head, you said over those closing laps you thought about many many things. I was wondering what you thought about during these past two weeks, what you thought your future might be now; if Red Bull offered you a new contract, would you accept it going forward?

MW: Well, first of all, I'm definitely keen to finish the season off. Obviously a lot of people were even questioning that one which was certainly not something that was in my mind. I'm definitely keen to race this year and put together a very strong campaign and challenge for more wins, and you do enough of that and some more things can happen. So that's the first goal. The next part is yeah, year by year, that's how it's always been for me, so come the summer, I will talk to Dietrich (Mateschitz, Red Bull boss) and then go from there. If I'm driving well, performances are good, then we'll make some decisions in the future but at the moment, it's the second or third race and I've never ever made decisions on my career at this point in the season and don't see... obviously it's a bit of a topic at the moment for different reasons, but I don't see why I should make any decisions at the moment for the future.

Q: (Trent Price – Richland F1) Question for Nico Hulkenberg: at the end of Sepang, you said on the radio that you had quite a long list of things on which to improve with the Sauber. Three weeks have gone by; have you come up with any solutions since then?

NH: Yeah, well, sure both the team and I aren't very happy with the recent performance of the car. We know we have to improve and we understand the issue, we know... we've identified it but fixing it is now the challenge and it's up to us. We have some new parts here, some developments which hopefully are going to put us in the right direction but we have work in front of us for sure, yeah. But in the three weeks we have made some progress, for sure.

Q: (Abhishek Takle – Midday) Adrian, obviously you know the car looked very strong in the dry in Australia and Malaysia. Is it the way you are using your tyres? What do you put that down to? And secondly, how important do you think it is right now to maximise the potential of the car, given that you might at some point have to switch your focus to 2014?

AS: Well, we've only done two races so we are focused on now. We can improve the car of course; as always, there's space to improve, I think, even when you're absolutely at the front. You have to work on, so at the moment the car feels good but here and there we are always bringing some updates to this circuit, to just get more downforce on the car. It's always the same things that you're looking at. Why are we competitive at the moment? Probably it's a combination, it's a package with the tyres. I just didn't have as many problems as some others have with these tyres, that's probably our advantage, so working on the car – every race we are working on it, to maximise the package which is normal in this sport, it's a performance sport, everyone tries that at every race. Now we've just had two races so of course we will concentrate on this car for a long time. I don't know when we decide to concentrate on the 2014 car. I think it depends on our general performance. If we're really good in the championship we have to push on until the last race. If not, then maybe it's more clever to concentrate on next year's car but it's too early to say; focus now on the next few races.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Mark, apparently Mr Mateschitz has said that he doesn't want to hear anything any more about team orders. Knowing that beforehand, does it make life in the cockpit easier or more difficult?

MW: Probably easier, yep.

Q: (Tony Dodgins – Motorsport News) Mark, looking back at that last race, just before the last pit stop, I think you were leading the race by about four and a half

seconds if I'm right, and yet Seb had the first stop and that obviously created the situation. Are you free to call your own last stops, was it a team decision and did that surprise you? How did that arise?

MW: Yeah, it was a little bit of a surprise. I think that the gaps were quite awkward, they were trying to manage the gap to Lewis as well which was three seconds. I think Lewis had pitted the previous lap, I'm not exactly sure, but Sebastian was exposed again to going behind Lewis which the team were obviously keen not to have that scenario happen. Four seconds is quite a decent lead but I was already in trouble at the back part of that lap, a little bit with the tyres. Sebastian then obviously had some fresh tyres ready to go and the out lap was strong and my in lap was quick as I could go with what I had so as I said, it dropped him straight back into a tighter situation than had probably been envisaged. Yeah, I asked for that lap, I wanted that lap but I couldn't have that lap so because of the situation I think if I asked for that lap and got it and Lewis was not there I would have got that lap. So I think it was just a frustrating margin as I think between the three of us it was making it quite tricky in terms of managing that last stop window. But a good question mate, anyway.

Q: (Ben Edwards – BBC) Just to follow up on that one Mark, the decision to change onto slicks in the early part of that race, was that purely your decision as to when to go onto slicks? Was the team involved in that decision at all?

MW: Yeah, I was not keen, I was a little bit surprised when Seb went. The first sector was late in terms of moisture compared to the rest of the circuit. I was definitely keen on the next lap, that they could work and I think we then got some information that it wasn't quite right. I think lap seven was super conservative but we could, also you could come out in traffic if you pitted like Seb did. And also Nico was quite late and this helps with your slick management of the race as well, so if you're not losing too much and there's a bit of a... so there are so many scenarios that you've got to look at to say OK, yeah, you've got the crossover right but you've got more range to do in the race on your dry tyres, so you've got to try and factor a lot of that in which is not easy when you're in the car, obviously, to try and think of all that. I was surprised the slicks didn't work as well in the first sector as I probably thought they would. Lap seven was OK, yeah.

Q: (Alan Baldwin – Reuters) Adrian, last time you were in China you left in – shall we say – unfortunate circumstances. How do you feel about coming back here and did you have any worries about them letting you in?

AS: No worries, no emotions. The past, for me, is done and I'm concentrating on my future.

Q: (Jonathan Legard – BBC Radio Five Live) Mark, how much have you resolved everything in your own mind over what happened at the last race and how to go forward and I suppose linked in there, is the haircut part of the new mean look?

MW: No, definitely not mate, the haircut's not... it was a little bit of a screw up. Once he'd started he was on his way. Haircut is not part of the new look or new feel. Going forward, mate, I think we know everything that happened; obviously in Malaysia there was plenty of interest from everyone, other teams, media etc, but for me myself mate, it's not an unusual situation and I'm looking forward to racing here this weekend and getting on with it. When you're at the front in Formula One there's always stuff going down so it just depends on how much is going down that you've got to manage. In the end, for me, I'm looking forward to driving the car here, putting in first gear and driving out of the garage and getting down there to feel what the car's like on the circuit. That's what I'm looking forward to, mate.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Mark, coming back to the previous questions about what was said yesterday. Vettel said yesterday 'I can't apologise for winning because I am paid for that' so I would like to have your reply about these

words and if you've already talked about it, I would like to know if before the podium or afterwards at some moment, you thought 'OK, I want to stop now with this team, I want to leave Formula One to do something very surprising for everybody?'

MW: No. I think the rawest emotion for me was probably the first few laps after we had the race on track. After the podium and on the podium and around there I wasn't thinking about anything... reacting in a harsh way mentally for myself to think about 'now I will think about doing something different.' I wasn't thinking like that at all. And Seb's comments? If that's what he thinks then that's what he thinks, that's his position on what happened in Malaysia...

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Question for Nico Rosberg: I was wondering if, coming away from Malaysia, you were confident in your own mind that there was genuine equality within Mercedes, there was no number one, number two, because it has been suggested now after what happened in Malaysia that Lewis perhaps has number one status?

NR: Very confident, yup. No number one, no number two. Extremely confident. Plus you can also add to that yourself in a few weeks time or months time a question.

Ends