



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

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DRIVERS – Valtteri BOTTAS (Williams), Daniel RICCIARDO (Toro Rosso), Esteban GUTIERREZ (Sauber), Sebastian VETTEL (Red Bull Racing), Fernando ALONSO (Ferrari), Sergio PEREZ (McLaren)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Sergio, sixth in Bahrain, was that a breakthrough result for you with McLaren?

Sergio PEREZ: Considering where we started from, I think it was pretty much the maximum we could get. We came very close at the end, [fighting] with Lewis [Hamilton] for fifth place. We did a good strategy, good race pace – better than expected – so it was definitely a very positive race, especially after all the tough start to the season we had.

And what's happened in terms of discussions between you and Jenson [Button] after the disagreements over your battle in Bahrain. Where do you stand going into this race?

SP: It's very clear between us, between the team. We had a very good chat, Jenson and myself, but also with Martin [Whitmarsh] and Sam [Michael]. We sat down after the race and, yeah, I think we were a bit too aggressive, both of us, between us, and we risked quite a lot to the team... to damage to the result of the weekend. Especially, we needed so much those points. We both apologized to the team and it was cleared. It was a nice chat to have.

Thanks very much. Esteban, Monisha Kaltenborn said after Bahrain 'he's struggling at the moment'. Can you put your finger on why and what positives have you drawn from your experiences so far?

Esteban GUTIERREZ: Well, generally it has not been the ideal start to the season. Especially for myself, I would have liked to have a more consistent four races. When you're competing you're taking risks. Especially at the beginning it's important to find the right equilibrium between being conservative and taking risks. I have made some mistakes and definitely it has not been very positive but I'm determined and focused to work, myself and also as a team. It [Bahrain] was not a great track for us and hopefully it will be better for Barcelona.

Obviously qualifying seems to be the particular problem, you're a few slots behind your team-mate on average this season. What are you experiencing now on Saturday afternoons?

EG: Of course on Saturday morning, in Bahrain for example, we decided to do a race simulation and this is not an ideal preparation for qualifying. We thought we could get some information for race performance. And of course also my driving, there are some

little bits I need to improve, be more confident in the corners with the car that I have and get the most of the car.

Fernando, you challenged for the win here last year and you've won twice on home soil. After all these years of racing in Spain, does the emotion that you feel help you, or is it something that you have to master first and keep under control in order to do well?

Fernando ALONSO: I think it motivates you to race at home and you give an extra 10 per cent on what you normally do, to take care of every detail of the weekend, starting from tomorrow's practice, qualifying, race. You try to do everything well because you know that a nice result here, a nice podium finish or whatever will make you happy, will make the team happy, make many people in the grandstand happy. So, it's a special weekend but after all those years I think you're OK with that extra motivation and it's not anymore a pressure or the emotions you maybe felt in the first year, that you really worry to do well here, for everybody that comes to support you. Now you've proved for many years that there's not a pressure or anything that will stop you doing well. After doing very good results at home, so now you want to keep doing like that to really make everyone enjoy Sunday afternoon.

From 22 Grand Prix here only two have been won from outside the front row, the stats say it all. Have Ferrari prioritised that in the approach to this weekend?

FA: Not really. I think this year we see how important are the races, the race pace. The tyres are a key factor, more than previous. Obviously it's good to start at the front and if you start on the first row you know that your chances are high and the podium, you can really touch with your hands if you start on the first row.

But I think we need to have a very, very normal weekend like we did in the first four races and try to find the right balance between qualifying and the race. Maybe the first really important qualifying will arrive in two weeks' time in Monaco, when we know that qualifying is extremely important. I think here is still more or less a normal circuit and you need to find a compromise.

Sebastian, championship leader with 77 points, three front-row starts, three podiums out of four starts, including obviously two wins, and yet one senses that you and the team have not been completely happy with the level of competitiveness so far?

Sebastian VETTEL: Disagree. I think if you look at the results that we got, we can be extremely happy in terms of how competitive we were. I think we can be equally as happy because we had a car that was good enough to finish on the podium and fight for victory, not in all four races, but yeah we won two out of four so it's not that bad and even the third place in Australia was very strong and the fourth place in China. Obviously we didn't have that many races yet but I think from a result point of view we can be happy but surely you're not looking at the raw result and you're looking at the way you achieved the result and here and there I think we had some room for improvements and that's what we are targeting. But I wouldn't say that we are unhappy with what we got so far.

Pirelli has obviously changed the harder compound tyre to something more like last years. As a team that was calling for changes, how do you feel about what's happened?

SV: Who did we call? I think there was more talk than action from our side – as in I think we said what happened to us as a team, what we felt happened to us as drivers, just like everybody else. But surely there's a lot of attention and then people try to make their own stories but I think you could for the whole grid that people were struggling with the tyres, it's not a secret, it's not just us. I think we also learned to deal with the tyres, with the situation. Sometimes you succeed a little bit more, sometimes less, but then again it's the

same for other people, so yeah, up to a certain point where you feel, as a driver, it's obviously different racing. It's the same for everyone but you know, I don't know, for example in the race in China where we struggled with tyres. I had the occasion that Fernando approaches from behind. I was on a different strategy to him and so on, so I was on different tyres. But there was no point fighting with him because in the end I only slow down my own race. So, I don't wave him past but I'm not really resisting and it's a different style of racing and I think that's what we, if anything, criticised in the past.

Q: Valtteri, you got your big break this year but I'm sure you didn't expect it to be quite the struggle it's been. What has held Williams back so far, would you say?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Yeah, it's not been a start we wanted – that's for sure – but I think we all the time understand more and more the problems we've had. It's just some of the paths in the development of the car we took in the winter proved to be a bit of a dead end and we understand it much better. We had a good aero test last week and I really feel we are on the right path now.

Q: And what about your own performances against your team-mate? It's 2-2 in qualifying, you both have a best result of 11th, does that satisfy you?

VB: I think from my side it's not been a bad start. It's still my first season racing F1 and there's a lot to learn. It's been quite a smooth start, of course there's always things you could do better and willing to improve a lot during the next few races and during the whole season.

Q: Daniel, a breakthrough result for you personally in China, qualifying and finishing seventh. Is that the limit though for Toro Rosso at the moment, or can you do more?

Daniel RICCIARDO: I'd like to be able to do more. I think seventh was the best we could have done in China. Obviously the week after wasn't anywhere near what we showed a week earlier in China but I think yeah, that's probably where we were at that time. We brought some updates this weekend – along with probably every other team – so we have to see now which direction it favours. Hopefully it can push us further up the front. We'll have to see but I think for us to just try to get some more top tens more consistently. It was great to have a one-off good result but we want to finish in the points more often. So, we'll see what we've got this weekend, really. We're all excited to see how much of a gain we make and hopefully the others haven't made any big gains.

Q: What has the Red Bull management said it expects from you – and do you and they feel you're on target at the moment?

DR: I was waiting for one of these questions! For them what they expect is, I think, what they've always expected from us juniors since I started in the junior team a few years ago now. Just to maximise our equipment, to show some signs of being a potential winner, a potential champion and just to make the most out of what we've got really. I definitely felt China, that was achieved, but doing it once isn't really going to stick for 19 races. It's got to happen more often. I think it's along those lines really, just to maximise it and get some good results like I did there. Want more now, that definitely... not only for them but for me, that's what I want.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Valtteri and Esteban, you're both rookie drivers; Valtteri you came with a number of Friday drives under your belt whereas Esteban you had GP2 experience. What have you both learned in the first four races which has been different from your previous roles last year, and how are you going to take that on to improve further over the course of the rest of the season?

EG: Well, basically one of the biggest differences from GP2 is the complexity of your work with the team. There's a lot more development, there's a lot more communication and you have to be more precise as a driver on that side. Also, from the atmosphere, there's media attention, there's more followers and everyone is looking more into detail and into everything so it's quite an interesting experience and something that is inclusive of being a Formula One driver.

VB: I think Formula One racing is something different to anything I've ever experienced before. The longest races I did before was F3 in thirty minutes or something and now it's one hour 30 minutes minimum, so it's a different style of driving, different style of adjusting the car's set-up and you really need to focus throughout the weekend to maximise the car both for qualifying and for the race to find a compromise. There's so much more other technical stuff; you can adjust the car and you need to be very focused on every single little detail if you want to improve your driving and make the car better. I've really learned a lot; I can't say just one thing but I'm sure I will be learning more and more all the time and at every race I feel I'm getting better and better.

Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) It's about the back straight, between turns nine and ten. It's quite short so can you really overtake into turn ten (with DRS)?

SV: It definitely helps. I think in the race it will be possible to overtake, not only on the straights, and not only on the two straights where we have DRS, especially when, similar to the last races, when we're in trouble with tyres etc, I think you will find more than one or two places on the track to pass. It can only help if you have DRS available there. But surely, if you look for one lap on fresh tyres it's not going to be easy because turn nine is quite fast, so it's difficult to follow, as usual.

FA: Same.

SP: Same.

Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) Sebastian, would you comment on the rumours of you and Mercedes? What's the story?

SV: I was surprised when I read it as well. I don't read that much, usually just the headlines. It's pretty funny.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) To the three in the front row, because they are the most experienced: what effect can it have on a team when it loses its technical director in the middle of the season and what do you expect this to do to Kimi Raikkonen's challenge for the championship?

SP: Well, I think they (his neighbours) are fighting for the championship, they should be the ones to answer this one. I think it depends on certain teams. It isn't the same in every team. In some other teams the technical director is more important than in the others. Obviously he's a very key person in that team, so I don't really know what effect it's going to have on Kimi's team to lose the technical director. But I don't think it's a big thing if they have very capable people who can do a good job.

FA: I don't know really.

SV: I heard it yesterday. I think there's always a reason and probably reasons that we don't know, so it's difficult for us to judge. I don't think it's our business. It can be negative, but it can also be positive. As I said, I don't know the background.

Q: (Toni Lopez – La Vanguardia) Fernando, one year ago I think you were ten points behind the leader. Now I think the gap is thirty but you look more confident, more optimistic. Can you explain your different feelings now?

FA: Well, last year we were one to one-point-five seconds behind the top cars. Whether we might have won the Malaysian race with luck this year but this year we have finished two races without problems. We finished second in Australia and we won in China so it's a very different feeling and a very different package that we have this year which brings us

optimism and some confidence that we can have a good championship. We need to deliver, we need to do some consistent results now and gain some consistent points for the next Sundays but we are more optimistic now that we have some points behind us, but the championship is long and there are many many examples, as we said many times last year - I think the most recent was Sebastian's recovery last year. He was 43 points behind us after the summer break and was leading at Austin in Texas, so in five or six races you can recover 45-50 points if you get some consistent results. Same with us in 2006 when I was 33 points in front of Michael, which means 75 or 80 points with the current points system, and he was leading the championship in Suzuka with two races to the end. Until we are 75 or 80 points behind, we should be optimistic, until that point.

Q: (Valenti Fradera – Il Nuovo Sportivo) To both Sebastian and Fernando: how do you think the new hard compound tyre will suit your car?

SV: I've no idea. We will see tomorrow. I think we know what to expect a little bit, given the information we received from Pirelli so after all, I don't expect a miracle. I think we will still have to work a lot around the tyre and make the tyre last so whether it helps us or not and whether this is the compound that we carry on using – talking about the hard tyre – I think we will know a little bit more after Sunday.

FA: Yeah, same, more or less. A learning Friday for us tomorrow, we will put that tyre on the car and try to have as much information tomorrow in practice, to analyse data and to have some good points, good information for the race and then after Sunday afternoon's race we will have more information on the hard tyre that we will use in the future and we will see. I don't think it will have a big impact on the car's performance. It's just up to the teams, up to each of us to make the most of the tyre and I think to get the benefit you need to work around them. We know how important the tyres are this year and we need to find the most information we can tomorrow.

Q: (Felix Gerner– RTL TV) Sebastian and Fernando, have you watched the champion's league games and who is your favourite for the final?

SV: I'm not going to start.

FA: I've watched (the games) and it was sad for the two Spanish teams – especially for Real which is my team – but they didn't play so well in Germany and in Madrid they played better but the gap was too much in the first game, unfortunately, and now in the final, who knows? I think it will be close. They've played in the national league and they were close so I'm expecting a close final as well.

SV: So, I'm Sebastian from Red Bull Racing. Yeah, I think it was obviously, from a German point of view, very successful. Quite surprised to have two German teams in the final now. I think, on paper, Bayern Munich should win, they have an extremely strong team this year but I cross my fingers for Dortmund. Let's see what happens in the final. Nevertheless, I think it will be decided on the day and not on paper so depending on how well they play on that day.

Q: (Jens Walther – ARD Radio) Fernando, with football and Formula One in mind, how would you describe the sports relationship between Spain and Germany?

FA: Good. I think we don't have too many games together. It was this semi-final this week that was Germany – Spain for two games but in some other sports we don't play much together, because the sports that are good for Spain like basketball or tennis, the Germans are not so good. The sports that the Germans are very good at on snow, in skiing, where there aren't Spaniards, so we don't play much and in Formula One, I think we are in the minority because there are always four or five Germans in Formula One and one team or two, I don't know how many German teams: Mercedes and... I think Mercedes only. I'm happy for Germans to keep winning in football.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire– AP) Sergio, you said it was important to have a talk with Jenson and with your management and you said it was a nice talk. Can you talk a bit more about what was said in that talk?

SP: Jenson and myself talked firstly to apologise to the team because we were quite aggressive, we were close to having an accident. The chat was mainly to clear the air, to say everything that we thought between us and to clear the relationship, because at the moment, especially, we need to be together to come out of the position that we are in where we are not quick enough at the moment, and we have to keep working very closely, Jenson and myself, and I think the chat that we had with Sam (Michael) and Martin (Whitmarsh) helped to keep the relationship strong and to keep the team together and get out of the difficult moment. The chat was mainly for that.

Q: If you had the same situation again, what would you do differently?

SP: The same, but risk less with your teammate. We were far too aggressive with each other, we lost time and I think that has to be a little bit different between us. Don't waste too much tyre, especially as this stage of the season where the tyre is so critical. We are wasting too much tyre if we fight that hard, so I think we have to be more flexible in the fight. We are thankful that we are in a team like McLaren which lets you fight as teammates, so in that respect we have to respect each other a bit more.

Q: (Livio Orrichio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) All teams brought components, new parts for this race. Do you think that we will now see a different picture than what we saw in the first four races this season?

DR: Yeah, normally once the European seasons starts, it's the start of the F1 calendar. It normally creates a bit of a picture, the top teams are normally established here so I think now, for a few races probably, you will see the top teams and they'll stay there for a bit of time. Then maybe around Silverstone, there'll be a second set of updates from a lot of teams, but normally what happens this weekend will draw a picture for the next couple of months, let's say. Hopefully we're in that picture, from my point of view, but I think that's more or less the situation and as it has been the last few years.

VB: I really hope that we can really fight for better positions that we did at the beginning of the season. I really hope places will change and it will be better for us but as for everyone else, it's just unknown. We will see how it goes. I'm sure we're moving forward step by step, but it's in a week or something so we're bringing updates to every race now.

SP: I think it's the same. It's important for us to keep improving. I think we have improved quite a lot since the first race, so I think we're going in the right direction. We don't expect a big gain here. I think when you are so far away from everybody in front you have to bridge the gap and to start closing the gap is a priority. I think this race will be very important for us to learn a lot more about the car as well.

FA: I don't think the picture at the front will change much this weekend.

SV: I don't think there will be a big surprise. I think ideally everybody makes a step forward and they're in the same boat.

Q: (Paulo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Fernando, do you feel that for the first time since driving for Ferrari that you come to this race as one of the favourites and ready to attack rather than being the underdog and trying to profit from the misfortunes of the others?

FA: Yes. Maybe yes, first time that we arrive with a competitive car but that doesn't mean that you will fight for top places, even if you do everything right and if you don't put together a good weekend. It's also true that we need to check how the car responds with some new parts that we brought here. Same with the other teams. Our competitors make the biggest step that they do and after that we see. As I said, in the first four races we felt competitive, we felt that we were able to fight for the top places if the race was without problems and what we will try here is to have a clean race with no problems Friday, Saturday, Sunday and if that will be enough to put us in contention for victory it will be nice.

If it's not possible, we will try to be as high as possible, but it's a weekend that we approach with a positive mentality and maybe not as a defensive mentality as my first three years with Ferraris.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports) Fernando, you worked very closely with James Allison when you were at Renault. He was deputy then technical director. How highly do you rate him? Is he the sort of man you would like to work with again and could you tempt him to come to Ferrari?

FA: I don't really have an opinion on that. He will choose what he prefers. He may choose to stay at home. I don't know. We just know the news from yesterday and we don't have any more news. For sure, I worked very closely with him and was World Champion with him two times. Then I came back to Renault in 2008/9; in 2009 he was already technical director and we were not so successful with that car, but we saw the Lotus car in the last two years and no secret that he's one of the top men here and we will see what future he has.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports) Would you like to work with him?

FA: I would like to work with all the technical directors. It would be nice to have all of them in our team and see how our competitors create their cars because this is impossible. We are working well and this year things are going much better so we are happy with what we have but it's always welcome, any extra help.

Ends