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Press Information

2013 Monaco Grand Prix Wednesday Press Conference Transcript 22.05.2013

DRIVERS – Jenson BUTTON (McLaren), Adrian SUTIL (Force India), Jules BIANCHI (Marussia), Nico HULKENBERG (Sauber), Romain GROSJEAN (Lotus), Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

PRESS CONFERENCE

A question to you all. Round six of a 19-race season coming up, the same points are up for grabs as any other grand prix. It's just another race... or is it? Is Monaco the greatest race of them all?

Jenson BUTTON: Good afternoon. Is it the greatest of them all? I don't know really. I think they're all pretty special in their own right. Some of them have more history than others and Monaco is definitely one of them. A lot of us also live here, so it's a very special race. But I think if you've had the opportunity to fight for a win and actually cross the finish line first, it's a very special race, yeah. You feel as though you celebrate that win, obviously with your team, but also with everyone watching here, because it's such a confined space. It's a very special place to win. But there are so many other races that mean a lot to us and certain races that mean more to us as individuals than Formula One as a whole.

What about you Adrian – greatest race, or will it be when you finally get a good points-scoring finish?

Adrian SUTIL: It could be, yes, definitely. But I feel this as a normal race. Like every other race really. You try to the best possible. In a way it's a bit different because you know from the past and from experience that there are more possibilities out there. It's a very tricky circuit, unforgiving and easy to make mistakes, [see a] safety car. The risk is high here and that opens up some situations for you... it can work well for you or the other way. Having that in mind gives a nice race, a nice weekend. Starting last or starting at the front doesn't mean you will win the race. It's all up [for grabs]. You need to be on the point and just stay focused for the whole race, until the race is finished.

What about you Jules? You've raced here before, not in F1 of course but it's like your home race. How up for it are you?

Jules BIANCHI: Yeah, of course I'm really excited to be in the car tomorrow. I think this race is special for me because I was born in Nice, which is not really far from here. It's like a home race, as you said. I can't wait to be in the car even if I know it is a tricky track. It's not easy to be quick here. But anyway I had some good records in the junior categories so let's see what we will do.

Nico?

Nico HULKENBERG: Like Adrian said, the approach is the same to every other grand prix. It's definitely special. I've never won here. I've been on the podium in GP2 and that

was certainly. Even in F1 to achieve a podium here or even a win would be special and I think it stands out a bit more than a normal grand prix let's say.

Romain, another man for whom Monaco Grand is also a home race.

Romain GROSJEAN: Yeah sort of. Monaco is not France but basically it's not far. A special race, with a special podium as well at the finish, when you get to meet the Prince, which is nice. There's 25 points, as every other grand, but I think Monaco is a special one to me.

Lewis, how special is this place?

Lewis HAMILTON: Good afternoon everyone. Yeah, Monaco is spectacular. As Jenson said, a lot of us live here. I don't feel like it's like any other race. Winning here is unique and special, in its own way. When you do win here, when you finally get that, you have the most incredible feeling. Every time you come here that's what you're chasing for every year.

Jenson, before we came to Monaco, news that Honda are returning to Formula One as engine suppliers to McLaren in 2015. What was your reaction to that news?

JBu: I thought it was good news. I think for us as a team it's good news for the future but I also think for the sport as a whole it's fantastic news. Having another engine manufacturer in the sport is good. We have three very strong... four, sorry, four very strong engine manufacturers in the sport and I think with the new regulations it's going to bring in other manufacturers and Honda being the first to announce that is great and hopefully there will be more.

Was it good news for you personally? You had quite a long association with Honda before?

JBu: I've got a lot of connections to Japan and Honda is one of them. I spent a lot of time working with them in the old days... it seems like a long time ago now, but a lot of very positive moments and I look forward to that in the future. But it's a long way down the road still so we've got to focus on what we're doing now at the moment, with Mercedes and in 2015 it will change.

This season, Adrian Sutil, started really well for you in Australia. Since then things haven't gone quite your way. Do you think you're suffering a huge amount of bad luck at the moment?

AS: There's no good luck and no bad luck for me. It's just certain things happen and then you have to get behind it and see where the problem is. Many problems we had... small, but they turned out to be absolutely important for the race. A little wheel nut in Barcelona, which was a problem and it caused a pit stop which was almost a minute long and the race was over – no question. It was very impressive how quick the car was again. The race speed was very good, and the pace. So, it's good to know the car is fast; the package is fast. It's like the little piece of the puzzle we need to put together. The most important thing: the problem we had, we solved it. It was a different problem to Malaysia. It's just a question of time that I will have my results. I will not give up. I will fight hard for it and try to also be clever and make a good result soon.

Q: Jules, a lot of people are talking about you and paying you quite a few compliments given your start to Formula One. How would you assess the opening five races of your Formula One career?

JBu: Well obviously it's been a really positive start for me – and for the team as well. Trying to do the best result that we can. We know it's difficult, we have to be realistic – we won't score... well, it will be difficult to score points for us. So, just trying to do our best, trying to push as hard as possible and yeah, the first five races has been really nice. Some

improvement on the car, some improvement with myself, so I'm really confident for the next fourteen races.

Q: It's been a good battle between Caterham and Marussia. The last couple of races Caterham seem to have had the upper hand. Will that change this weekend?

JB: I'll try my best to do it, yeah for sure. Caterham are a bit in front but we saw in Barcelona that we were a bit quicker in the race pace – so that's positive for this race. Anyway it's a bit special so we will see tomorrow – but anyway we will have a good fight with them.

Q: Nico – if one word were to sum up your season so far 'frustrating' might be right up there. Has it been a huge frustration for you since you moved to Sauber?

NH: Well, frustrating is maybe not the right word but it hasn't been super-satisfying for sure. We're not delivering the results we want to and the results we thought we could deliver. We're just a bit too slow, it's as simple as that and we're not competitive enough. At the moment the whole team is pushing and everybody in the factory at Hinwil is trying his best to make the car quicker and solve the issues. And that's where all the focus is, to be honest now. We have to improve this car and then I'm sure we can fight for points more often.

Q: Is it fair to say you would have expected more than the five points from the first five races with the team?

NH: Yes, that's fair to say.

Q: Romain, qualifying: always important here in Monaco. This year your average grid position 8.4. If you qualify there that puts you in the thick of things again. How much of your focus and preparation this weekend is on qualifying – not just the race?

RG: I think here more than everywhere else qualifying is important. It's not a secret that overtaking in Monaco is hard – unless there is a little bit more degradation than we had last year and you can try a different strategy. But yeah, we will work on it. We started quite slowly this season and we recovered pretty well from Bahrain onwards and that's what is important to know. And yes, we can definitely improve that which is not as good as we would like.

Q: Can you be more aggressive personally, do you feel, going into the qualifying on Saturday?

RG: I don't think it's a question of 'aggressivity'. It's just the relation between the car and yourself. It's very tight this year. The tyres have changed a little bit, you need to understand them fully and from there I'll push.

Q: Lewis, talking of tyres, both you and your team-mate Nico Rosberg have suffered similar problems – but not at the same time in the last couple of races. Is it a puzzle? Whereas in Bahrain you had a better race than Nico, in Barcelona he had a better race than you. Is the problem easily solved?

LH: It's definitely not easily solved. It's something we're working on internally. Just working as hard as we can to assess and understand where we went wrong: tyre pressures, temperatures and all of those kind of things. I don't think it's going to be as bad – hopefully – moving forward. It's definitely something we're trying to improve on. So hopefully we won't have as many bad races as we did the last one.

Q: Given what's happened in the last couple of races, some people say this is your best chance of a race victory. Do you share that view?

LH: Not particularly. Not particularly. I think it's a good... we have a good opportunity this weekend but you never know what the others are capable of. Last year they were quite competitive, Mercedes was quite competitive here. Obviously our car is better this year so we should still be competitive this year. But the Ferraris and the Lotuses and the Red Bulls are massively competitive as well. So, we just have to wait and see.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Question for Lewis, obviously you had a very difficult weekend in Barcelona and we assume you will have gone back to the factory, studied all manner of data and drawn some conclusions. While you can't necessarily tell us about those conclusions are you expecting an improved performance for the weekend? Do you think you've got a good level from which to build after, you know, what was quite a challenging weekend?

LH: I definitely do. I think a huge amount of work has gone into understanding where we went wrong. As I said, the guys have really kickstarted a lot of different discussions. Obviously it's a real science trying to understand these tyres. Everyone's trying to understand them but I really feel this weekend will be a better weekend for us compared to the last. And moving on from here I think we'll just continue to learn and improve.

Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) Question to all the drivers except Lewis – because Lewis just tweeted a photo of new helmet especially for Monaco. Do you do something for this race specially? And for Lewis, another question, if you can comment about Paddy Lowe who will follow you from Woking to Brackley.

Helmets first, Jenson?

JBu: No more special than normal, no.

Romain?

RG: That means you don't follow me on Twitter! I tweeted it yesterday. Blue, white and red.

Adrian?

AS: The only change I have on the helmet is a Uruguayan flag. Since many years I wanted to do it and now it's on – because my father is from Uruguay but I will keep it on for the whole season and from now on for the rest of my career. It's not special – not specially Monaco.

Jules?

JBi: Yeah, I have a special helmet for Monaco – but you will see it tomorrow.

Nico?

NH: No. No special – just the basic helmet.

Q: () What does Paddy Lowe bring to Mercedes?

LH: We'll see, time will tell but obviously Paddy's... I've had great experience of Paddy over the last five or six years. He's obviously a great person and massively intelligent and will be a great asset for the team, so I'm really looking forward to working with him. We look forward to it.

Q: (Livio Orrichio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Lewis, in 2002 David Coulthard started in pole position, he didn't have the fastest car in race conditions and he won the race. Michael Schumacher was behind him with a car which was much faster but he didn't get to overtake him. Do you think this is the reality this year, that you can repeat what Coulthard did?

LH: I think that if you were just watching last year, it's very difficult to overtake. I think Mark won it last year and just controlled it from the front, even though he had a very competitive car, so yeah, overtaking is very very difficult here as I proved a couple of years ago. So if you're able to get out in front, it's more than likely if you're able to manage your tyres that you can stay there. Definitely.

Q: On the subject of overtaking here, is it all about patience, Adrian? Do you just have to hope the moment comes but you've really got wait for it?

AS: Yes, well, overtaking is difficult but I don't see qualifying being an important thing for the race. Just looking at all the last races, there have been several drivers starting from the back or in midfield and they were on the podium. I think Lotus have been a good example. You need to have the right strategy. Mercedes? Yeah, they've struggled. They were one and two in Barcelona and had big problems in the race. It just shows that the tyres are so difficult in the race and it's a very different thing - qualifying and race - but I'm here to race and the points are given in the race. Qualifying... it doesn't really matter where you are, you have to stay focused really.

Q: (Jens Walthers – German Radio) Lewis, how would you describe your relationship with your teammate, Nico Rosberg? Are you teammates, colleagues, friends, neighbours?

LH: Well, we're neighbours, next door neighbours but we're teammates too. We work hard together to try and push this team forward. Obviously we have a lot of history together from being teammates and friends since 1997, so we've known each other for a long long time so naturally we have a friendship but of course ultimately we are fierce competitors.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Jenson, when the Honda deal was announced, it naturally raised the question as to whether you might still be around in 2015, but Jonathan Neale (McLaren managing director) said you have a job for life. Can I ask how that makes you feel first of all, and secondly, when he says for life, how many more years do you think you might have left as a racing driver?

JBu: Did he say a job for life or a job as a racing driver for life?

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Job for life.

JBu: Ah, OK. I don't know what that means then. I don't know. I don't want to think about the future too much at the moment. I think that yeah, you've got to live for the moment and I don't think that trying to agree a lengthy deal for the future is something that is interesting at the moment for me. I'm 13 years in the sport, I want to have freedom and that feeling that if it doesn't feel right any more: stop. But I definitely don't feel that yet. It feels that it is going to be a long way down the road. For me, that freedom is important in the future.

Q: (Paulo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Lewis, do you think that if the Pirellis do change slightly that it will help Mercedes in the rest of the championship?

LH: I definitely hope so, it can't be any worse for us, that's for sure. I think that if they do make some changes they will help everyone really and will definitely change the way the races will go, compared to how they have gone.

Q: Nico, Romain, do you welcome a few tweaks to the tyres, a few changes?

NH: I'm not sure what happens now. Obviously Pirelli provides the tyres and I understand that there are still some discussions there with the FIA and Pirelli, so I'm not sure what's going to happen but we will go forward, we will work with what Pirelli will provide. Tyres are changing, some people deal better with them than others and I think we have to adapt.

RG: Well, it's not able to change in the middle of the championship, even though it's maybe only a small change, we don't know but I think we were pretty competitive with the original ones and the team has been working well with that so we will see, we will do our best.

Q: (Gary Meenaghan – The National, Abu Dhabi) Question to all of you: could you just talk about your first memory of Monaco when you were growing up as a fan and what your impressions were and how they compare to how it was when you actually got here as a racer?

JB: Obviously, when I was young, I was watching Formula One and that was my life because I was racing in go-karts and coming here to Monaco with my family to watch a race was something special, it was like a dream to maybe one day drive on this track. I didn't expect that. Now I'm here, it's a special moment for me and I can't wait to be on the track and enjoy this moment with my car; for sure it will be a great moment.

AS: My first time here in Monaco was in Formula Three in 2006, I believe, when I raced with Lewis in the European championship. It was a great race weekend, yes, I really enjoyed it, but no contact before that. It was maybe a bit too expensive for my family at that time, we couldn't afford it.

NH: Is that specially about Monaco or in general? First time I came here was in karting, there used to be a kart race here. I don't know if that's still on and then after that, GP2 in 2009, yeah, it was great, good fun, a very unique place, very challenging, one of the few circuits that we still have in the calendar which doesn't allow any mistakes. I always really enjoy coming here for the track, for the atmosphere, for everything really so I'm happy to be here.

RG: One of my first memories was 1996 when Olivier Panis won, the last French driver to win, a long time ago. When I came here, I found it more challenging than what you think it is on the TV. A long time ago.

JBu: Well, my first memory was in 2000, my first year in F1 and it was all going well until Loews (now Grand Hotel) and I T-boned Pedro de la Rosa and caused a red flag. In those days we had spare cars – in those days, Christ, a long time ago – so we basically had a running race back to the paddock for who got the spare car. That was quite fun.

LH: I think for me, apart from watching Ayrton crash into the wall when he was leading by a long way, I think my first real experience here was the same as Adrian's when we were both here in Formula Three. It was a great weekend. I remember I was planning to stay in Menton and then I called Martin (Whitmarsh) and he fixed me up with a hotel room in the Beach Plaza and it was just a ball all weekend, it was one of the best weekends of my life up to that point.

Q: (Ian Parkes - Press Association) Lewis, you've been asked about your relationship with Nico a few questions ago; what about your relationship with Adrian these days? Has that changed at all now since Adrian's returned to Formula One? Obviously it ended quite acrimoniously not so long ago. Adrian, from your perspective, how are things between you and Lewis now?

LH: Things are different, definitely. We've spoken a couple of times and we've planned to get together at some stage and just have a chat basically. We've been great friends for a long long time and we've had some of the best times together along the way, especially, as you said, in Formula Three times. You can only really count your good friends on one hand maybe, so as people say, good friends are hard to come by, so I want to make sure we get things right.

AS: Well, as he said, yes, different and I'm still waiting for a coming together. I can't say anything more.

Q: (Aleksander Tabakovski – Vecer Macedonia) Question for all drivers and especially for the German drivers, because this weekend will be the final of the football Champions' league, between two German teams, Borussia and Bayern. I just want to hear your feelings about it and from each driver, who is their favourite soccer team?

JBu: I'm not a big football fan.

Q: Which B do you fancy most?

JBu: Whoever scores more goals, I'll go for.

LH: I always like Bayern Munich. When I was playing football – I used to – when I was playing on the computer games I used to play Bayern Munich quite often, so I will say them.

RG: I'll follow Jenson's club.

JBi: I kind of like Bayern so I hope they will win.

NH: It's kind of cool to have two German clubs in the final but strange as well at the same time. They've played twice in the German league and now they meet again in the European final which is a bit weird. I'm pretty neutral, I'm not a Munich or Dortmund fan but I've become more of a football follower recently and I just watch it, enjoy it, but I don't really care who wins.

AS: OK, so I'm not a football fan but I'm from Munich, that's the answer: Bayern Munich for me, yes. I'll keep my fingers crossed.

Q: More importantly, do either of you think you could be the back page headlines in the German newspapers on Monday morning or will it all be about the football?

NH: Probably be a lot about the football.

AS: I hope I make some good headlines after this weekend.

Ends