



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2013 Belgian Grand Prix Sunday Press Conference Transcript 25.08.2013

DRIVERS

- 1 – Sebastian VETTEL (Red Bull Racing)
- 2 – Fernando ALONSO (Ferrari)
- 3 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

PODIUM INTERVIEW (Conducted by David Coulthard)

Q: Sebastian, your 31st Grand Prix victory, you're now just one behind the man who finished in second place. That looked pretty easy for you today.

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, it was fantastic race for us. From start to finish really very good tactics. Obviously it helped the first lap to have the tow off Lewis through Eau Rouge and then I was flying. Once I passed him we had incredible pace and really could control the race until the end. We were a bit afraid of the rain coming towards the end but I think it just passed the circuit. Great race. Thank you to the team, thanks to Renault. All the guys have been working very hard and... yeah, fantastic result, can't be any better.

Q: You passed a milestone today if you're into statistics. You seem to like to get the fastest lap towards the end of these grand prix but you've now led well over 2000 laps in your grand prix career. Were you aware of that one?

SV: Now I am. Thank You! Yeah, incredible. We are a bit confused down here because the crowd is booing and cheering and booing and we don't understand why.

We're not going to highlight why that is at the moment.

[note: the drivers were unable to see a protest taking place around and above the podium]

Q: Fernando, this must feel like a victory today. You've never won around the Belgian Grand Prix circuit, which is surprising given that you've got 32 victories in your career but that was typical attacking stuff from ninth place.

Fernando ALONSO: Yeah, we had to recover some places. We were not OK yesterday and everything went OK from the start and then the car has the speed to overtake some

cars and it was a little bit boring. After we get the second place we are nowhere near Sebastian and not a big threat from behind.

Q: Looking ahead to Monza, you must feel pretty much buoyed for Ferrari, going to what is the home grand prix for the Ferrari team.

FA: Yeah, definitely it's an important weekend for us, for the team. Last year we were very close to repeat the victory that we get also in 2010, so we arrive fully motivated again and in Monza we would like to give some smiles and some satisfaction to the tifosi and we will try our best.

Q: Lewis, that's your 54th podium, that equals you with Niki Lauda who is one of the senior management at the Mercedes grand prix team. Does that statistic mean anything to you and what do these points mean for you this afternoon?

Lewis HAMILTON: We had a tough race, these guys were a little bit faster than us but the team did a great job throughout the weekend and I'm really happy with the results. Of course to be put in the same sentence as someone as legendary as Niki is a real privilege. I'm happy with the result we had, I'm glad to see so many great fans here this weekend. They made the weekend.

Q: Once again we heard you on the team radio saying you were taking absolutely everything out of the car and the tyres. You went off into the summer break as the victor, you've come on a roll of four pole positions. Looking ahead to the next grand prix, what do you think you've learnt from this Belgian race.

LH: I came in this weekend and when we started I felt that we perhaps didn't have as good a package as these two here. I think we'll go away after this weekend, we'll try and see if we can improve for Monza. But definitely when we get to Singapore, I think we'll have a much better chance there.

[Sebastian] I believe your points lead is extended to the largest ever margin you've had. You must feel good looking to the second half of this season.

SV: Yeah. Obviously winning helps. Just really controlled. The car was much better than I think we expected going into the race. So we had a bit of pace on hand to control the race. I really enjoyed that a lot. I think the guys on the pit wall as well, it was not as stressed as at other times. Fortunately there was no rain, so in terms of critical calls there were none to make. It was a very good afternoon for us and obviously looking forward to Monza where we don't expect, maybe, to be that strong but let's see.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Sebastian, your 31st career victory – two less than Fernando – and your fifth this season. Clearly the decisive moment was the opening lap of the race. Tell us about that and how it set you up for the rest of the afternoon.

SV: Yeah, obviously very difficult around here to plan your start because first of all you need to have a good launch off the line and then there's a long straight coming. A bit like Korea. I tried my best to line up behind Lewis and basically benefit from a massive tow through Eau Rouge. I think especially in the opening lap when the tyres are not yet completely there and the fuel tank is full, Obviously the cars are quite heavy up the hill and produce a lot of drag and I was able, in the tow, to make up a lot of speed and when I got side by side I had a lot of advantage over Lewis and was able to get straight ahead. So, yeah, it worked very well, what I was trying to, let's say, plan at the exit of turn two. And after that I just tried to settle

into the rhythm. I tried to open a gap to be flexible at the first stop and yeah, until the end we had incredible pace. We didn't expect that. We knew, probably, going in that, in the dry, we should be able to beat Mercedes on the track but we knew other cars – Lotus, Ferrari – they looked very competitive in the dry, so in that regard yeah, we had massive pace and could control the race until the end.

Q: You've increased your championship lead as well, now over Fernando, almost two race wins clear. How are you feeling about it at this stage?

SV: For sure a positive message today but I'm honestly more happy to win the race today: it's a fantastic track and especially when the car works well, you don't want the race to stop. The car is getting lighter and lighter and I was very comfortable at the end on the Primes. The car, as I said, was just a pleasure to drive. You don't... I didn't think about the championship or points. Obviously I know the higher up you finish the better it is: ideally ahead of everyone else, which worked today. But yeah, such a great circuit. We've had good races here in the past so it's nice to have another one, another great memory today. So, that's what honestly I was focussing on most. For sure, regarding the championship, it's a bonus.

Q: Fernando, obviously for you also the start was pretty decisive. Ninth on the grid, up to fifth on the opening lap. You passed Rosberg, Webber, Button, Hamilton to come through to second place. That's quite a recovery from what must have been a very disappointing qualifying performance yesterday.

FA: Yeah, I think the weekend was more or less good for us with recovering some feelings that we lost in July with the car especially. We were a little bit more competitive – or we felt a little bit more competitive this weekend. Not for sure maybe for pole position but to be in the first four or five positions on the grid, maybe that was possible but yesterday I think were extremely unlucky with the situation in Q3 with weather and the track: where we were, in the place we were, at the time we were was wrong. So, unfortunately some times in these changeable conditions you are lucky, sometimes unlucky. I remember Malaysia very well in Q3, we were in the right place in the right moment and we were second and third of the grid. Yesterday was a little bit the opposite. So we had to plan a perfect race from the start to the pace of the car, to the strategy and everything worked fine and we could recover some places and extremely important for the championship also to get some good points again after three races not so good.

Q: Lewis touched on it yesterday in the press conference here, that throughout the practice and qualifying as well the Ferrari looked quite quick and looked like it had taken a step forward. Do you feel that over the course of this weekend? Is that giving you encouragement? Obviously we're going to some very different kinds of circuits in the next few weeks but are you taking encouragement from this weekend?

FA: I'm happy. I'm happy with the feeling that I had this weekend. I'm happy with the parts that we brought here, seems that they are working fine. We need to take things very carefully because, as you say, this is a very specific circuit and we are not first and second in any practice or any qualifying or any race. We are ninth and tenth in quali and now we are second and seventh in the race. At the moment it is still work to do.

Q: Lewis, great getaway from pole into the first corner but describe the remainder of that first part of that first lap from your perspective.

LH: It was not particularly exciting or anything. It was pretty straightforward. Half-decent start and I felt like I got a good exit out of turn one but these guys... Sebastian just caught

me massively, particularly through Eau Rouge. There was no defending really. I could only move once, so I moved once and just had to watch him glide by. After that it was very, very difficult to hold onto him. And also when Fernando came by, particularly down the straights, he was just pulling away.

Q: At one point on the radio you were saying “I’m getting everything I can out of the car.” Obviously finishing around 27 seconds behind at the end of the race. Is that a concern for you, given the way you translated pole to victory before the summer break?

LH: Not really. I think every year you come here – here and Monza – you come with a new package, new front and particularly rear wing and sometimes you hit the nail on the head and sometimes you don’t. I think we’ve done a decent job but obviously these guys have done a slightly better job. Whether or not we can make an adjustment before the next race, we’ll wait and see but I think more importantly we’ll be back to being very competitive – or more competitive when we get to Singapore.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Oana Popoiu – F1 Zone) Fernando, definitely a good race for you, starting from P9 but is it also good for your championship, as Vettel finished ahead of you?

FA: I think it’s good; obviously we lost an extra seven points but when they are dominating the weekend, when they do everything better than us and they win the race, they deserve the win and we need to aim for maximum points. Weekends like this one we need to extract the maximum from the car. That is what we did this weekend, all we could in qualifying, all we could in the race. In the race, once we were second we were two to four tenths slower per lap. When you are the second fastest, you deserve to finish second. So we just need to congratulate Sebastian, Red Bull and try to get better for Monza, but in terms of the championship, as I said, we came from two fifth places in Hockenheim and Hungary, with a little bit of a not good feeling and not good performance from the car and today I think we recovered some of the optimism that we lost and I think it was a good weekend for the championship in terms of feeling and in terms of points as well.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Sebastian, Kimi is now 63 points behind you. Do you think he’s out of this championship?

SV: No, there’s more than 63 points you can score before the end of the season. I don’t know what happened to him. It’s obviously a shame for him but these things can happen. I had a technical failure in Silverstone, we lost the race. It hurts but equally you have so many races that all of us we have these kind of things happening; surely the cars are – in terms of generation – at their end and it’s not a completely new car if you look at the previous years but still we are pushing. The cars are on the limit and you try to get everything out of them. Things that are built on the limit can also break.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sebastian, do you feel you are like in the situation of two years ago when you won the championship quite early in Japan? Do you think it’s going smoothly and you are relaxed with the situation around you?

SV: Well, I... maybe you have a different memory but what I remember from 2011 is that we had a fantastic season but we were working very hard, step by step, race by race and surely not working towards a certain race to seal the championship with a couple of races to go. I wasn’t relaxed at that time, I was as nervous as I am today, hopefully. Therefore, as I

said, it's really step by step and not trying to be too smart, too clever and think too far ahead.

Q: (Andy Young – Richland F1) Fernando, once again you were fast in the race but not so much in qualifying. Do you think this could affect your championship chances against Sebastian?

FA: Well, we need to improve the qualifying performance but to be honest, I'm doing what I can. I'm 8-3 against my teammate, I think. Yesterday was about qualifying but I was 0.6s quicker than my teammate, so in a way, it's not that the races are good and the qualifying are bad, it's just the way it is and we are extracting the maximum from the car all the time. In the races there are more aspects, not pure performance of the car. There is the strategy, the management of the tyres, the characteristics of the cars and on that aspect, I think we are very strong. In the pure performance of the car, we are maybe lacking some performance compared to the others but as I said, I'm extremely happy with the performance we are achieving on Saturday and also on Sunday and the championship is open and we have the best example last year. I was leading with 41 points ahead of Sebastian after the Monza race and I arrived in Texas 15 points behind, so things can change very quickly. Our hopes are to keep developing, to keep improving performance and try to repeat what happened last year the other way around.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Lewis, after being on pole position, is this more of less what you expected in the race or did you expect to be closer to Red Bull?

LH: I think yesterday I said that I don't think we generally have the same pace as these guys, or at least, not necessarily the Ferraris but more so the Red Bulls. But they were both too fast for us today. It's the best we could have done. Yesterday, the weather helped us to get up to where we were. At the end of the day, we just need to work a little bit harder. I think we can do a better job, hopefully for Monza.

Q: (Jerome Pugmeister – Associated Press) Fernando, you said the team's recovered some of its optimism. How far can that optimism take you; do you still believe you can mount a genuine title challenge with eight races left?

FA: Yeah, yeah. I think we cannot forget that in the first five races we were a very competitive team. We won two of the five races and we were in a position to fight for the podium all the time. At that point, we were a very few points behind the leader. Then there were some races in the championship where we went backwards in terms of a step in the car and we lost direction a little bit. We understood the problem, we analysed everything and all the things that we are now bringing to the races are delivering what we expected, finally, so this gives us the possibility to get our good form back but we still have to recover some of the gap, to fight for pole positions etc but the championship is very long, and as I said before, the example is what happened to us last year. If you have a competitive car and you win four or five consecutive races like Sebastian did last year in India, Japan, Singapore etc, you recover very quickly. If we are in the position to do that, we will find out very soon.

Q: (Peter Farkas – Auto Motor) Sebastian, I think unusually for Red Bull, your car was set up for quite a high top speed. Was it because you have taken into consideration that you expected to do some overtaking during the race, and how well does that look for Monza, with reasonably low downforce? You were very quick here.

SV: Well, ideally we try to set up our car to the optimum. I think we were maybe more competitive than we expected. Whether that's us over-performing or the others under-performing, I'm not entirely sure to be honest. So in that regard, it's always nice to have speed on the straights if you have to overtake, then it's obviously easier to get yourself side-by-side with the other car and to lose something more under braking, whereas if you're limited by straightline speed it's very difficult to pass. We've had some bad experiences around here so maybe this year we were a little bit on the higher side in terms of speed. For Monza, I don't know actually. It's very difficult to predict. We had painful years in a way, where we just get hammered down the straights and we've had years where the loss down the straight was limited, so we could come back in the corners and for sure, if you look back the 2011 experience was great in that regard. How it turns out to be this year it's difficult to say. I think we can be quite confident. We had a good race in Canada, we had a very good race here which are both medium downforce type of tracks, so I hope that our low downforce package goes in the same direction.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Sebastian, when you attacked Lewis did you have some KERS left for it and then obviously to Lewis, did you have some KERS to defend yourself or was everything gone after the start?

SV: I had some left.

LH: I had some left but he was catching me so I didn't use the rest of it, I saved it for the rest of the lap.

Ends