



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2013 Singapore Grand Prix Sunday Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS

- 1 – Sebastian VETTEL (Red Bull Racing)
- 2 – Fernando ALONSO (Ferrari)
- 3 – Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN (Lotus)

Podium Interview (conducted by Martin Brundle)

Q: Sebastian, it looked pretty easy from where we were sitting. How did it look from your carbon fibre seat?

Sebastian VETTEL: Obviously the start was quite hairy. Quite difficult with Nico having a good start, better than me. I didn't get going initially and then had to keep the inside clear to him but fortunately he went in a little bit too deep and I could get him back which was crucial because then we had some very good pace, controlled the first stint, with the safety car obviously it was difficult but then we seemed to come back. As soon as the safety car came in we had a very, very strong pace in the car. The car was incredible. I said to the team, you know this doesn't just happen like that, by accident or by luck. There's hard work behind, which I appreciate and it's just a pleasure to drive it around this crazy track.

Q: You could just take off at will, whenever you wanted to. It seemed to be the only man who could beat you today had the slowest car on the track, the safety car. It was the only thing that was going to stop you.

SV: Yeah, well I mean this is a long race, it seemed to go on forever, so there's a lot of things that can go wrong, the walls sometimes get really, really close, sometimes closer than you think. So you can't really afford to lean back. Obviously towards the end I was controlling the gap. It was helping that I was on fresh Options compared to these guys who were on very old Primes at the time, so we could control the gap to see the chequered flag.

Q: And physical? You're looking pretty sweaty up here. Was it a tough race?

SV: I think we're all sweating, not just the champagne men are wet, I think we all sweat a lot. As I said, it's hard work out there. It's quite hot but we like it. It's one of the toughest challenges all year and it's a very good feeling when you cross the line as a winner.

Q: Fernando, you're there. As always, you're right there. You made a lot of fans very happy again. Tell us about your start, it was electric.

Fernando ALONSO: Yeah, it was a fantastic start. We knew that we didn't have the pace today so we have to invent something. The first possibility was the start, then different strategy compared to the others. We did both things: a very good start and a different strategy. I think it paid off at the end. A fantastic podium, a second place that tastes like a victory for us.

Q: You pitted on lap 25 and put on the tyres that you ran to the end of the grand prix. When was that decision made? And how do you keep your tyres in when we saw the McLarens and many other drivers struggling with hopeless grip by the end?

FA: Yeah, it was a risky move but as I said, we are in a position in the championship where we have nothing to lose. To finish second in the race or to finish fifth: it doesn't matter too much to be honest so we push, we take care of the tyres, the car was performing really well in the race. And the fans pushed us a little bit to gain some extra tenths today.

Q: This man [Vettel] had some speed you just couldn't live with though.

FA: Yeah, they were too fast all weekend and we have to congratulate them for a fantastic weekend and next time we will try to do better.

Q: Kimi, you had a back problem in qualifying. Has that affected you during the race?

Kimi Räikkönen: Luckily not too much but now afterwards it's not 100 per cent but it doesn't matter: we have two weeks' time to rest and get it right. I think we did the best that we could and finished third, so I don't think we could have achieved much more today.

Q: You had to be patient through that race. You really had to believe that you could still be there at the end and take the places when they were there and not make mistakes.

KR: Yeah, I think I had pretty OK speed and then I could overtake a few people and then in the end I was following Jenson and I could see that his tyres were going off so I just gave some pressure and then I have to get past him because obviously some people changed to new tyres and they were catching us quickly. I managed to pass him and pull away and luckily nobody managed to catch me in the end. So not too bad.

Q: You say very calmly "I managed to pass him" but it was around the outside at Turn 14. It was at tricky one.

KR: Yeah, maybe it looks more tricky. Obviously you have more grip when you brake on the line and you know more or less where you have to brake. Much easier than inside. So, not an easy one but we managed to get past and that's the main thing.

Q: Sebastian, it's looking pretty good isn't it? But it's always this man [Alonso] who seems to be chasing you, up here on the podium with you.

SV: Yeah, it's incredible but to be honest with you I'm not really looking at the championship too much. Obviously we're in a very good position, very strong position but I'm enjoying the moment. Days like today, like yesterday when you can feel the tension. I'm enjoying the moment. I love racing and the car's fantastic and it doesn't happen, as I said, by accident. Whilst there's a lot of people hanging their balls in the pool very early on Fridays, we're still here working very hard and pushing very hard so that we have a strong race. Days like this it's just a pleasure to be in the car. The guys are completely committed, fully behind us, so it's great.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Sebastian, as always, Singapore, a safety car features somewhere, it cut your lead early on, it obviously presented an opportunity in terms of strategy for others around you – but you used the word ‘control’ in your message to the team on the slow-down lap and I guess that’s really what today was really all about. An incredible demonstration – the whole weekend – of control.

SV: Yeah, well, I mean it doesn’t happen just like that. It was surely not easy to get everything right all weekend. Extremely happy though. I think the whole team can be extremely proud. I know how much work is going in. Here obviously we have a funny rhythm. When it’s nine o’clock the curfew kicks in. That’s when our mechanics leave the track on Saturday morning. They are flat out checking everything on the car they can. Same with the engineers, late hours in the office here but also in the factory. So there’s a lot of team effort going in. If we have results like today where we have the luxury to control the race at some stage, then it’s because of those late hours, because of the commitment that goes in from everybody. It’s just a privilege to be part of the team and be part of that. To enjoy the moment completely. It’s one of my favourite races here. I’ve won here three times in a row – which is incredible – so I’m just extremely happy with that and extremely happy to be with the team at this stage.

Q: Obviously the decisive moment of the race was the start. Rosberg initially got ahead of you but then you managed to come back around the back of him and get him into Turn Three. Can you give us that from your point of view in a little detail?

SV: The lights went off, I thought I reacted pretty well but was a bit lazy to get off the line. I thought that Nico might still be there. He was and we were side-by-side, kind of, so I had to give him room. But fortunately he was braking quite deep into Turn One and I was able to come back on the inside to get the position. Fortunately the next corner was a left-hander so I got in front and from there we had a very, very strong pace. Safety car didn’t help but also I think didn’t hurt us. In the very end obviously we had a new set of Supersoft, compared to those guys, they were obviously on very old Primes so by then we could control the race. Don’t forget there is 1.5s difference between the tyres.

Q: Fernando, another Alonso special. Seventh on the grid, second at the finish. Obviously your brilliant start contributed to that but also the strategy and a brave call to pit under the safety car and go to the finish on a set of mediums. What is that? 36 laps? How did that feel in the cockpit?

FA: It was not easy, obviously, to finish the race with those tyres but we commit to that strategy when we pit under the safety car and we were controlling the pace all through the last stint thanks to the gap that we managed to build. Yes, the start again was very good and I was lucky to choose the right line. On Turn One there is always people going on the left, people going on the right in every circuit. We’ve managed so far to choose the right one. And then we were third which was already a good result for us. But when we didn’t stop Rosberg pitting in the safety car, we decided to pit and to try something different. We were too slow this weekend. We were not in a level that we should be. We try a little bit different things and it pay off at the end with a fantastic second place. For us it tastes like a victory today.

Q: You say you were too slow. You bought updates this weekend hoping it would get you closer to the pace of the Red Bull. That hasn’t come through. You’re now 60

points behind with six races to go. Does it feel like kind of a water torture? Do you have a trick? Do you have any thoughts on how you can turn this around?

FA: Well obviously we have to be realistic. A few races to go already, the gap is still increasing every weekend and now it's sixty points. So, as I said, we need to be honest with ourselves and knowing that we need a lot of luck. We don't need luck in Korea; we need luck in Korea, in Japan, in India, in Abu Dhabi... we need luck every weekend if we are one second off the pace. We need a lot of luck. On the other hand, we are a very uncomfortable opponent, I think, because if we get that luck, we will be there.

Q: Kimi, when you put those tyres on, did you know you were going to try to go on the finish on them – and what in your mind did you think was possible at stage?

KR: We had a plan and we know that what moment, if the safety car comes, we try to go until the end, so I knew what will happen and luckily some other teams couldn't do it and had to pit. I was kind of stuck behind Jenson for most of the race but then I tried to give him some pressure and keep him pushing so I noticed that he started running out of his tyres and I could start to get in closer and closer. In the end I decided to try to pass him and managed to get past – because there were people who stopped for the fresh tyres who were catching very quickly but luckily once I got past I could push a bit more and keep the gap big enough to end it in third place. After the weekend where we had some problems with myself and not the ideal setup with all those things and where we were yesterday, finishing third, I don't think we could have asked much more.

Q: Can you describe the back problem you've been suffering from and how do you feel right now?

KR: I didn't feel it too much during the race but obviously afterwards it's not ideal and yesterday it was pretty bad. I almost didn't drive, so between that and finishing third I think we have to be happy – and hopefully we can sort those problems for the next race. It's not the first time. For a long time there have been some issues with my back. I know that I have some work to do at the end of the year so we have to see what we do.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: Abhishek Takle – Mid-Day) Fernando, another strong drive, another strong second place but Seb just keeps extending his lead. Is there some sense of inevitability or perhaps acceptance on your part that you have to wait yet another year for that first world title with Ferrari?

FA: Well, as I said, there's nothing we can do. Obviously we try our maximum, we're trying to improve the car for every race and we are doing it but obviously not enough compared to our opponents. They are doing a better job than us, they are fantastic every weekend. They are winning and they deserve those wins. This is a sport, someone always has to win and the best one wins and we are not the best ones at the moment but we will keep working.

Q: (Heikki Kulta –Turun Sanomat) Kimi, was this the most painful race weekend you have ever had?

KR: Yes, I had some pain yesterday but for sure there have maybe been some more painful ones where something goes wrong, it doesn't always have to be physical pain, there can be something... you don't finish the race which is more painful in a way. Other things sometimes happen like this weekend and you have to live with it.

Q: (Jacob Polychronis – F1Plus.com) Sebastian, very sadly the boos returned this year. This was perhaps expected at Monza because it was Ferrari's home race and the fans are very passionate, but this is like the tourist Grand Prix, people are from all over the world, it's no home Grand Prix.

SV: It's called travelling, they are on a tour, they come to every race. Fortunately we keep winning so they've got a reason to boo.

Q: (Jacob Polychronis – F1Plus.com) Sadly perhaps they are going to stay on tour. Is this something that is very sad for you, are you concerned, is it mentally exhausting even?

SV: It's not nice but I think you should look around the grandstands. Most of the fans are dressed in red, Ferrari has a very strong fan base for a reason: they have a lot of tradition in Formula One, they've been around longer and won, and they've been more successful than any other team. There's more and more blue people – more and more people dressed in blue so we are doing a good job on that front but obviously they are quite emotional when they are not winning and if somebody else is winning, they don't really like it and as it seems, as I said, they are on a tour and they come back to... they are wealthy enough to go to a lot of races, Monza or take the flight to come here to Singapore. As long as they keep booing, we are doing a very good job so that's the way I see it. It's not people from Singapore or from one country only. It's normal in sports if some people support one driver then they don't like another driver to win. Equally there were a lot of German flags around the track, there are a lot of Germans here in Singapore, it's a very international city. The parade lap was quite nice and also the lap after the chequered flag there were a lot of people cheering. Obviously I didn't give them the most exciting race but on days like this, I really don't mind.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Fernando, you did 36 laps with the same set of tyres; did you have any reference that the tyre could support the race conditions or were you just playing the game?

FA: We didn't know exactly how long the tyres would survive. We were maybe not expecting that long but... We are sixty points behind in the championship, if it works OK, if it doesn't work maybe we don't finish second, we finish fourth or fifth. It's nothing really... what we can do. There was a small chance that if Rosberg, Webber and Hamilton were not that slow after the safety car, maybe Sebastian didn't get the 28 seconds necessary to exit in front of me but Nico, I think, had a problem with the front wing, Webber was without tyres and Hamilton pitted very late, the last. So when I had a free track and Seb pitted and exited in front of me already so we had a small chance to maybe lead the race but obviously very difficult to keep Sebastian... probably in the last part of the race with new tyres and we with a very slow pace. But we tried, nothing to lose and I think that will be the strategy in the last part of the championship. We are not as fast as they are in qualifying or in the race so we will try something different.

Q: (Carlos Miguel – La Gaceta) Fernando, a lot of people are talking about how this championship is finished. What's your mentality, no surrender? Do you think there are some tracks where you can try to win? What is the situation?

FA: Well, as I said before, it's very difficult. Nothing changed too much over the last two or three Grands Prix. We need to be very lucky but not only in one weekend, we need to be lucky for the last six races if we want to win the championship. We have a points deficit which is a big gap and we have a performance deficit which is a big gap so we need to be very lucky. We saw today, again: Webber stopped on the last lap. If this happened to Sebastian one weekend, we have to be there, in second place. If we cannot win the race,

we need to be right behind and try to take any opportunity but being realistic, we know that we need to be very very lucky.

Q: (Lim Say Heng – The New Paper/People Singapore) Sebastian, you said before that the race in Singapore is probably the toughest in the calendar. Now that you have won here, would you say that the toughest part of this year's title race is now over?

SV: Well, the toughest race in terms of physical challenge, I think – at least, that's the way I feel. A couple of years ago, Fernando asked for the race to be a bit shorter. It's quite long, to be honest. Obviously it depends where you are in the race but I think from a physical point of view this is the most challenging, not because there are so many high speed corners but it's a long lap, there are a lot of corners, no room for mistakes, very bumpy, it's very humid, artificial lights – all this makes it a very tough combination. It's then even sweeter to be successful here.

FA: I think it's long, obviously the only race where we have two hours, every single year. We're running 1m 55s and it's 61 laps so it's very easy to do the calculation that it will be two hours all the time. In Monaco, that is also a slower, street circuit, it's not 300, it's two hundred and something, it's more or less a reasonable time. So it's something that we may think for a year but they don't, they don't consider it's OK. It's five years that we race for two hours, last year was 59 laps, it was not 61 because we reached the two hours before the 61st lap and we need to check with the federation, but happy with any decision.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Fernando, whose call was it to try to stay out? Was it your call or was it from the team to try to stay out and to change the strategy?

FA: It was the team. I asked how many laps to go and they told me 36 and they said we will pit and then we will decide. At that moment, we lost only two positions with Webber and Hamilton so if we pit we will have new tyres for the restart and then looking at the safety car it was quite long etc, they were telling me 'our aim is to go to the end' so from the restart, taking care of the tyres for 32 laps.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) To all three of you: today we saw the Red Bull was good, the Lotus was good and there were two failures. Do you have an explanation as to why the failure often happens to the other car, not the leading driver?

KR: I have no idea what happened to Romain.

Q: He had a problem with the air system.

SV: The air system. And Mark?

Q: Gearbox, that's what he told me.

KR: It sometimes happens. I've had some issues. It can happen to anybody and then it's up to us, up to the team to try to make sure we don't have any issues but although they do everything to 100 percent you can have a failure, even the cheapest part of the car can fail or the most expensive part. It's just one of those things that happens, even though we do the best we can to make sure there are no failures.

SV: Yeah, I don't think there's a reason. We both had issues with the gearbox - if Mark had a gearbox issue - in Monza. When we came here, I think we understood it to some extent but not entirely. I had more issues on Friday with the gearbox than Mark had. Maybe he was in traffic the whole race. It's quite hot, temperatures were maybe a bit higher but on the other hand his gearbox suffered already a little bit more in Monza because I think a radiator had an issue. So maybe it's a consequence of that but I don't think there's a reason for that, between cars. We both get the same stuff from the same shelf.

Q: (Anthony Rowlinson – F1 Racing) Fernando, do you feel confident that Ferrari will be able to close the performance gap to Red Bull next season?

FA: Well, I think we start from zero next year, completely from zero. Big change in regulations so it's our best opportunity to close the gap. This year was a continuation in a way. I think we started in a good way, we were competitive in Australia, maybe not in qualifying but in the race we were taking care of the tyres very very well, together with Lotus. We won in China, we won in Spain and then we seemed to lose a little bit of performance, especially when the 2012 Pirelli tyres came back so that was probably our point in the championship; when they changed the tyres, we said bye bye. For next year I think we start from zero. Really we will put all our effort and hopes into 2014, because starting from zero is our best opportunity to close the gap with all the top teams.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Fernando, we heard during the race a radio message from (Andrea) Stella (Fernando's race engineer) when he said 'take care of the tyres, we have to put on the car the supersofts, take care of Paul di Resta, he's behind you.' It was a tricky joke for everybody else, to push Mercedes to stop again?

FA: I think it was maybe not clear on TV because, at least, what they told me, was take care of Paul di Resta behind because he's on supersoft, new supersoft and I was on medium, so there was a performance advantage, as Seb said before, of around one second in the first couple of laps, so I knew that maybe Paul was trying to attack me in those first laps with fresh supersoft. So that was the message: be careful with di Resta.

Q: (Trent Price – Richland F1) Sebastian, late in the race, Rocky (Guillaume Rocquelin, his race engineer) radioed in that he thought there was a brake vibration on the car. Was this something you could feel, was it affecting you under braking?

SV: Yeah, definitely, I could definitely feel it. It was building up towards the end of the race. Fortunately we were in the lead and we had a new set of supersofts which we saved yesterday, so I could afford to take it a bit easy. Surely, if we had been under a lot of pressure then... we've had those kind of issues before but it's not the most comfortable... you use the brakes quite a lot to stop around here. Then we could control it but had we raced harder until the end I think it would have been tough.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Kimi, do you think that you will be fully recovered for Korea and what do you target there?

KR: For sure, we will have to see. I think it should be OK and we try to do a better overall weekend there.

Ends