



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

## Press Information

### 2013 Japanese Grand Prix Sunday Press Conference Transcript

13.10.2013

#### DRIVERS

1 – Sebastian VETTEL (Red Bull Racing)

2 – Mark WEBBER (Red Bull Racing)

3 – Romain GROSJEAN (Lotus)

#### PODIUM INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Eddie Jordan)

**Q: [Sebastian] Nine times a winner already this season – but the championship is still alive. Tell me all about it.**

**Sebastian VETTEL:** Konnichi-wa, first of all. Yeah, first of all, I would like to say thank you to all the fans. Every time we come here, the appreciation, the respect we get as drivers is incredible. Obviously, I'm blown away with today's race. I had a very, very poor start. I think it was right between Romain and, I think, Lewis and I clipped a little bit the front wing. I think Lewis had a puncture after that. I couldn't go anywhere. After that we were patient, looked after the tyres and had incredible pace towards the end. So we managed to get past Romain, beat Mark on another strategy so, all in all, fantastic. I'm so overwhelmed every time we come here. Thank you very much again for the support.

**Q: Who made the final decision on what tyres you were going to run? We got the impression you made the decision right at the very last moment.**

**SV:** Well, to be honest, it happened... I think the decision was already made in the first stint because we stayed out longer, so we obviously took into account that we lapped slower than the others who were on fresh tyres, in order to push them later in the race. We had a similar race in 2011, where I think I came in always as the first and I was under enormous pressure towards the end of the race and got passed by two cars. So this time we did it the other way around: had enough pace in the car to look after the tyres, control the race. Yeah, it was not easy to make the two-stop work, especially in the middle stint – but I think the first

stint was crucial to make the decision to stay out and then decide for a two-stop, which turned out to be... [interrupted]

**Q: Mark, your last grand prix in a Formula One car at Suzuka, one of the great all-time tracks. Tell us about it.**

**Mark WEBBER:** Yeah, it's an amazing circuit. The race today was pretty good, I'd say. Obviously I would have liked one more step on the podium but there were different strategies going on. Seb went longer in the first stint and then it unloaded his race a bit better than mine at the end. So, in general, pretty happy with second but, yeah, hey, you always want a bit more but we got the best out of what I could today. Both of us had very poor starts, which put us on the back foot a little bit and then after that it was just really trying to pace the car again on the tyres and making sure they survived to do the sort of strategy we wanted to. In the end we went to three-stop, which put us a little bit on the back foot but still we got back to where we were.

**Q: Romain, we were writing you off last year, we didn't think you'd have a seat, and here you are, on the podium. How does that feel?**

**Romain GROSJEAN:** Well, much better than last year for sure. What a start! Terrific. From the past not the best memories here but today was just a very, very good race. The car was fantastic on option tyres to start the race with and we did manage to pull away. Then the Red Bulls catch us a little bit I think, but generally with the work we did, we are the only ones able to follow those guys. We almost catch the Bull I said to my engineer today – it's a home race for my engineer and I think he's very happy. Always very good to come here, always very proud of the fans and being on the podium at such a difficult track – it's good.

**Q: Sebastian, you're ever so close to pulling it off with your fourth consecutive championship. What are your thoughts going into the next race?**

**SV:** First of all, I would like to enjoy today. I think it was a fantastic race. I love this track. As I said, the people are great and make it a very, very special place for us. I'd love to enjoy that first, obviously it does no harm when you win, for the championship. I've won now four times here in Suzuka, which is incredible. I'm really looking forward to next year, to be honest. Regarding the championship, as I said, I think obviously we have a very, very good gap but we still keep pushing. I think we've proven in the last couple of years that we never give up. I think we've won one or two championships because of that. Obviously this year it looks very good at this stage – but it's not over before it's over.

## **PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Q: Sebastian, you really did seem to enjoy this victory hugely. Is it because of the various problems that happened along the way? The start, for example, the first corner, one or two lock-ups, an interesting tactic...**

**SV:** Yeah, certainly – but I think mostly it's because of the circuit and the fans to be honest. It's one of the highlights in the year. I love this track and I've been very, very fortunate to have a great car in the past and against this year, being able to finish on the podium and win four times now. Incredible. When we leave the hotel in the morning I think it's the same for all of us. It makes it so special. The people are crazy about Formula One. They really, yeah, admire us, which is very nice. They love what we do and appreciate the fact we go around. You have the people on the grandstand yesterday, I ran the circuit and there were I think 5,000 people on the grandstand just watching. They are amazed by Formula One and

I think that makes it so special and taste so sweet. As you touched on, obviously with the race today, a horrible start but then a fantastic comeback.

**Q: That long middle stint – a 23-lap middle stint – and there were one or two lock-ups. Were you affected by that or were the tyres in good condition all the way?**

**SV:** Well, you know, you struggle more in the end obviously. I tried to control the gaps. Obviously we started already to go longer than Romain and Mark in the first stint, so we took into account that we lap a second a lap slower for two or three laps compared to them in order to get the range in the next stint and then tried to extend that to really put them under pressure towards the end. That was, let's say, the game plan. Obviously after the first pit stop I think very soon in the second stint, Mark decided to go for the three-stop, which wasn't far off. Before the race I think we targeted more towards two stops but the tyres weren't holding up as well as probably we thought. As I said, I really tried to manage the gaps in the beginning of the stint and then close the gap, which worked brilliantly, especially with Romain. The end of the second stint I was just on his tail when he pitted, able to stay out another couple of laps and then I had more or less fresh tyres when I was able to pass him, so, yeah, great strategy. It obviously worked. We made it... we didn't lose the patience early on. Tried obviously to make the stints as long as possible to help us at the end of the race.

**Q: Mark, I guess you were hoping you were going to be able to challenge Sebastian during the closing stages. That's what the engineers suggested to both of you in fact – but you just couldn't get past Romain.**

**MW:** Ah, no. I don't think the battle was going to be with Sebastian at the end to be honest. I think that it was pretty much done when we didn't do enough damage on the three-stop against Seb's pace on the two. I think we tried to race Romain at the start and then in the end we switched to the three. So I was the meat in the sandwich, trying to beat Romain on a two and then all of a sudden we decided to do a three. I was a little bit surprised. I asked was it the right thing to do because I felt we could get to the lap we were looking to get to. Of course Seb was two or three laps longer, four laps maybe but in terms of the target lap that we looked to get for the two-stop I thought was achievable but in the end Seb did a good race, the strategy worked out perfect and yeah, the three was... not absolutely ridiculous but it's a bit more high risk we know, and you have to clear people obviously, so yeah, piggy in the middle, trying to do both. In the end, we got back to where we were in terms of position but Seb jumped both of us. But a great result for the team, a sensational result for me in my last time here in Japan in Formula One. The fans are incredible. I enjoyed the grand prix today, it was nice to have fresh tyres a bit more, which is always enjoyable around Suzuka. So that was today's race.

**I mentioned drama-filled for Sebastian, one or two things happened to him, what about yourself?**

**MW:** Apart from the shocking start for both Seb and I, that was really it. After that we could plan our race accordingly. It wasn't what we expected to be honest, both of us didn't do anything off the front row. So that put us on the back foot already and Romain was quite strong on the option but I don't think he was that strong on the prime. Anyway, as I say, I did everything I could today. It's not too bad a result obviously. It's nice to be back on the podium after the last few races where I think we could have certainly have been there but we weren't. All in all, I leave here happy and off to Oz tomorrow for a bit more surfing.

**Well done. Romain, tell us about that start because it was a lightning one.**

**RG:** Yeah, it was probably one of the best; I just spoke with Seb [about it]. When I dropped the clutch I said 'whoah, whoah, that's a good one, come on, come on go for it'. Amazing. Then when you're leading it makes the thing easier on the first stint. We were very quick on the option. The car was using less the tyres and I could open the gap. Unfortunately, it was less good on prime than option today for some reason, rather than yesterday when it was the opposite, so the pace dropped a little bit and Seb was really too quick for us. I think it would have been nice with Mark until the end of the race but we caught some slower cars, lapped cars, and they really blocked me a lot. I lost the position against Mark. I don't know if I could have held him until the end but, yeah, it cost me, I think, quite a lot. Never mind, we were the only car to be able to follow them. We did not even think about racing them before the race and the strategy says that our target was Lewis, so, so far it was a pretty good race and for sure being ahead in the first corner helps quite a lot but we did a very good job to come back from a disaster Friday to have a very good Saturday and Sunday.

**Q: You were right in the middle of a backmarker battle right at the end there – there was a lot of traffic around. A little bit of sadness having been out in front and finishing third?**

**RG:** I thought it was the day that the first victory was coming. Honestly on option, I did struggle a little bit but then I could pull away to Mark and I said "our car is beautiful today, it's gonna be good," and then Mark pitted earlier than what we thought, we fitted the prime – hard tyres – and the degradation was not the same any more and it was making it harder to drive. I think I lost second with the Caterham in the middle stint when Mark catch me just before he pitted and then on the last few laps there were a lot of cars in front of us. I know it's not easy for anyone to let us by but on such a nice big track it costs you a lot . As my tyres were really on the edge every small aero... wing perturbation will cost me a lot and at the exit of the chicane a little bit of wheelspin and Mark could go for it. So, a bit of a shame to lose the second position but never mind, I think the positives that I gain outweigh... were challenging them and that counts for us.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Mark, you spoke about the second stop but the first one was already pretty early for a two stop strategy. Was it just to do an undercut on Romain, or do you feel that you were in the role of a rabbit to challenge Romain to follow you and then obviously it paid out for Seb?**

**MW:** Yeah, we were obviously looking to get in the lead, to put some pressure on Romain. I don't think the option was easy to handle for any of us. I wanted to put some pressure on Romain towards the end of that stint. We were more or less in the window for a two stop. As soon as I pitted after the prime, the guys said 'yeah, we're on a two stop, it's no problem. Look after the tyres and we'll stay on two.' And then I was on two and then we switched to three so I think they just saw that it was just a quicker way for me to do three stops. That's what they thought, that was the reason they did it. That's the reason for that.

**Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and National Speedsport News) Mark, in those laps, you were trying to get Grosjean but you couldn't quite get him down the straights; what was happening through the chicane and down the pit straight?**

**MW:** Well, at the end of the race, the DRS is not as effective because you're on the limiter, basically. We managed to get off the chicane a bit better on the... when you arrive on someone you want to get the job done pretty quickly. First sector is obviously not that easy because... Romain is a bit low on tyres but they also had more downforce than us. I was

quite low on wing. When I arrived on him, I was obviously hoping to get it done a little bit earlier but it was also knowing that his tyres were going to be quite tired, getting towards the end of the race as well. The backmarkers didn't work out for Romain, it's a bit of a nightmare when you catch so many guys; they all want the DRS, they all want to fight and in the end, it was beneficial for me to pounce when Romain got not the best run with the backmarkers, which was no fault of his own.

**Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Romain, what do you think you still miss to get a victory: another car, another team, another strategy? And the same for you, Sebastian, about Romain.**

**RG:** From my side, I think, today, was a little bit of pace on the hard tyre. We covered Mark on the first stop. It was two laps shorter than what we thought and then again, the second stop was just a little bit earlier than we thought because of the tyres' age and so on. And I think we missed Friday, so we had to do a long run in FP3 to know how the tyres were going because from Friday we had no information from our long runs, we really struggled with the car, so we lost that information that we are normally pretty good on. Today the hard tyres didn't behave as we expected and before the race, honestly, we said we'll start on option but then what's going on in the second stint, we didn't know if we had to fit option or prime and it was just an unknown. I think the Red Bull today was... we said in the strategy meeting that we never thought that we could beat them. So we are where we expected to be. Just sometimes, it's a little bit of everything. Today was not the luck missing, it was not the start, the driving, it was just a little bit of pace from the car.

**SV:** Well, I think after the start and the first stint, I thought that it would be a great race for Romain. Obviously we tried to make our stint longer and so on, to come back in the end but they looked very strong. I think they struggled a little bit more on the prime probably but then again as he just said, they didn't expect to race where they ended up racing. I think he drove a fantastic race today. I don't think it's a matter of... he can beat me, he beat me last year at the Race of Champions. I put the car in the wall. I think it's not a matter of that. The race is long. Today obviously favoured us over the distance which is a little bit unusual compared to the Lotus because I knew that being in third, losing out in the first stint, usually the distance is more, you know, let's say the strength of the Lotuses. I think Romain did a great job, great performance all weekend I think, great qualifying yesterday again, outqualified Kimi. We know that Kimi is a strong driver. Last year I think Romain made some mistakes but the most important thing is that we learn from these mistakes as drivers so I think he learned a lot of things and gradually he's improving, so big respect for that.

**Q: (Anne Giuntini – L'Equipe) Mark, last year you had an incident with Romain here. Did you change your mind about him during this year, especially in this race, but also the whole season?**

**MW:** No, I think it's very clear that Romain has a very different mental approach to the job at the moment this year. He's driven some quite strong races, putting together the whole weekend which is a sign of a driver starting to get a bit more relaxed and confident. A lot less mistakes, not just in races but in practice so it's not... You know, we're not here to blow smoke up his arse but in the end he's doing a very good job this year and it's a big step for him because last year, in Formula One, also the first year against Fernando in Formula One wasn't easy for him and to come back... yeah, he's doing a good job. It starts and stops with him. Hope he doesn't improve too much more before the end of the year! And we can keep going.

**Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Sebastian, you haven't won your fourth consecutive title yet but it's almost certain to happen this season, barring something very odd. Now you're also a man who collects an awful lot of race wins, record after record. What means more to you: going down in history with the likes of Fangio and Schumacher as one of three men to have collected four consecutive titles, or to stand on the top of every podium on the calendar?**

**SV:** I think I prefer the second thing you said. You know, I love racing. When I was small, I was dreaming about Formula One and honestly never thought that one day I would be able to test one of these cars. First time I tested the car, it was... Mark drove in the morning, I drove in the afternoon. I shit myself the first couple of laps and I thought, alright, that's for real men, not for me. Then I got used to it and obviously wanted to do more. A couple of years later, obviously I had the chance to get a drive, Red Bull gave me the chance at Toro Rosso to get some races. It's incredible what's happened over the last couple of years but nothing has changed in the way that I still love racing, I love the challenge, I'm still nervous when I wake up on Sunday, still excited when I walk on the grid and tense, looking forward to the race. Enjoying - not the numbers – but enjoying the fact that I'm racing and a great crowd today, a fantastic day. As I said, I think it would be a shame if you were too tense and if you tried to force things too much. I think you have to allow yourself to enjoy it because this is not normal, it doesn't happen to everyone. I think I'm very fortunate that I'm one of these 22/24 guys in Formula One. As I said, we leave the hotel, great respect from the fans, they're cheering, they're shouting our names and it's just great. That's what I'm looking forward to most, obviously try to do it again. I love trophies so I don't mind collecting a few either!

**Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Sebastian, after overtaking Grosjean, did you ask the team what position Alonso was in in the race?**

**SV:** No.

**Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Did the team inform you?**

**SV:** After the race. Obviously I knew that in the last stint, once we got past Romain, I knew that Mark was the biggest threat from behind. He was on fresher tyres and pretty quick. Obviously he got stuck with Romain a little bit which helped us. But I didn't really... I didn't ask and I didn't want to know because there are still things that can happen at the end, even if you have a little bit of a gap and so on. We've seen today a lot of lock-ups; I was wide once in turn two, at the beginning of the race. Mark just said he knew where I was in one of the stints in the race because there was smoke here, smoke there. I was struggling a little bit with locking up the tyres. I was busy enough, also carrying the car to the chequered flag.

Ends