



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

## **Press Information**

### **2014 Australian Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript 13.03.2013**

**DRIVERS – Felipe MASSA (Williams), Daniel RICCIARDO (Red Bull Racing), Kevin MAGNUSSEN (McLaren), Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes), Sebastian VETTEL (Red Bull Racing), Fernando ALONSO (Ferrari)**

#### **PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Sebastian, can we start with you. You're a four-time world champion, it's your 121<sup>st</sup> grand prix and your seventh season in Formula One. Four times a world champion consecutively but would it be fair say that as we sit here today you're not terribly optimistic about making it a fifth in a row this year?**

**Sebastian VETTEL:** I don't think that's fair to say. It's a long year. Our pre-season testing, our preparation, hasn't been ideal and, yeah, we're probably not in the best position for this race but I think it's a different story when we think about the championship. There's a long way to go. Two years back Fernando was on the grid with 1.5 seconds to pole position but he was very close to beating us to the title at the very last race. Anything can happen. That's why this race is important, just as any other one. But there are a lot of races this year.

**Obviously we've all seen from the outside, and you've mentioned now the difficulties you had in pre-season testing but what are you doing to try to put that right – you personally?**

**SV:** It's obviously a tough step for all the teams, all the drivers, a lot of new things to get used to. We know that obviously we're not in the best shape yet. There are a lot of things we need to solve. Unfortunately, you can't solve them overnight. We'd love to but we can't. So you really have to go step by step, together with Daniel, I think just trying to be as precise as we can, trying to give the engineers the best feedback possible about the whole power unit so that we move forward on that and also talking about the car because at this stage it's a bit unknown where we are. It's not a secret: you need very, very strong reliability to be a title contender, so we'll see... I'm looking forward to tomorrow and especially Sunday to get a feel for the new regulations and see where we are.

**Thanks for that. Moving on to Fernando: two-time world champion of course, 193<sup>rd</sup> grand prix this weekend, 14<sup>th</sup> season he's beginning in Formula One. Ferrari a little hard to read from the outside in terms of testing, you haven't really stood out, for good or bad. From your perspective how do you feel Ferrari is placed with this new technology going into this very different new season?**

**Fernando ALONSO:** I think it's very difficult to tell how competitive we are at the moment. We'll get some answers in 24 hours or 48 hours, we will know a little bit more than we know now. The car itself and the technology that Formula One brought this year are a little bit complex to everyone. We are learning and we are developing the car every day that we

work on it. As I said, a little bit of an unknown situation for everybody. We just need to put everything together, maximise what we have, and see where we are.

**Some changes have just been announced recently to the qualifying format, particularly in relation to the final part of qualifying. I was wondering if we could get a comment from you on those changes and the impact they might have?**

**FA:** I think it will not be a huge difference, from the outside especially. OK there were some cars that didn't run in Q3 or they only did one run in Q3 and now maybe we'll see an extra lap from everybody but apart from that I think it's not a huge change in approach in the qualifying for the teams and the drivers. Anyway, I think this change is welcome, to see more cars on tracks. I arrive many times with no new sets for Q3, so now I'm happy.

**Moving on to the 2008 world champion Lewis Hamilton, who is starting his 130<sup>th</sup> grand prix. It's his eighth season now in Formula One at the age of 29. Obviously it looks very promising after testing and both you and Nico Rosberg it seems are in a position to take an advantage of Mercedes' competitiveness. I wonder will it come down to which one of the two of you wants it more?**

**Lewis HAMILTON:** Possibly. Yeah, it's very technical this year and we're all in the same boat. We're always trying to find where the advantages can be between two drivers. From race to race I think you'll see... one race he'll be ahead, one time I'll be ahead, same as you saw last year. Obviously the goal is to be ahead all the time.

**Can you talk about the feeling of driving these 2014 cars, compared to the cars of the last generation: the pleasure you get from driving them, whether they're more you're kind of car, what's coming through the steering wheel to you?**

**LH:** Well, naturally I think.. I probably speak for all of us that last year's car felt better, it was perhaps a little bit nicer to drive, when we had lots more downforce. But that was a car that was in the fourth year of its evolution. Now we're in a new phase and it's just something that just takes some time to get used to. The sound, for example, is not as impressive as what we had in the past but once you get all the cars on the track, on the grid, I'm pretty sure it will be impressive for the fans still.

**Q: Felipe, 192<sup>nd</sup> grand prix this weekend, your 12<sup>th</sup> season you're starting in Formula One and certainly from the outside, your decision to move to Williams at this stage of your career is starting to look fairly inspired, judging by the winter testing programme. What do you think can be achieved this year, in terms of results?**

**Felipe MASSA:** I don't know. I think it's new to everybody so maybe we start having some answers this weekend. Not all of the answers but some. I'm really happy to be with Williams. Really enjoying the working with it to now, to feel the car and the working. It's a lot to do. You can never forget that it was a very difficult time for Williams in the last years and it's a lot to do, a lot of work, a lot of development going on inside the factory, inside the team. So many new people arriving – including me. But, I'm pretty motivated. For sure we can be there. I don't know how competitive we're going to be compared to the other teams. Maybe we will see teams better than us – I don't know. Maybe we can see ourselves fighting with them and be as competitive as the top teams like these three guys here – but I think it's just the beginning. It's a lot to do, a lot to understand and the understanding will be very important for trying to make the car better and better all the time. But, feet on the ground, I think maybe this weekend we start to understand a little bit.

**Q: Obviously you've got the Mercedes engine which at this point looks to be the one to have, going into the season – but there's clearly more to the Williams renaissance than just that. Can you tell us some of the things you've noticed? Maybe one or two points of things that you've noticed that have changed?**

**FM:** Well, I feel the team is really motivated. They want to grow, they want to get better and they want to be back in the good times. So I feel a lot of understanding for the people. I'm really happy with the people I work with, they're really professional. So many new people are arriving and there are many good ideas inside the team. Me as well. I'm trying to give as much experience, as many ideas as I can from my experience in a different team. So, yeah, I'm really looking forward. I think it can be a nice season for us – but how nice I don't know. We need to see.

**Q: Daniel, it looks like you had one really good day of testing in the car. Observers were saying the car looked pretty good when it was going around. Do you share that view.**

**Daniel RICCIARDO:** I think we had one stand-out day. There weren't many, as Seb said but at least one for me was pretty good. I think we're all a bit unsure how good our cars are. Speaking for all the drivers, I think we're just curious and hanging out to get on the track this weekend and see where everyone stands and get a clearer picture. I've had a busy week leading up to the race and I'm probably more excited than anyone else right now to get in the car.

**Q: You've got your big break, here you are, it's the big time with the World Champion team. You've got a four-time world champion sitting on the other side of the garage from you. What's your strategy from here? Are you going to just focus on your own job or trying to look at what Sebastian's doing and try to beat him?**

**DR:** I think for now just focus on what I've done the last few years and keep doing what I've been doing to get to this point – and then assess it from there and see how it's going. Obviously I get a good view behind the scenes from the engineers of how Seb works with his guys and understand a little more through that as well – but for now it's just do my thing and see where I stand off that and we'll work from there.

**Q: Kevin, welcome to Formula One, if you look around you at the drivers sitting here with you this afternoon, who have seven Drivers' World Championships won between them, 104 grand prix victories between them. Do you feel you have to pinch yourself to believe you're sitting here today.**

**Kevin MAGNUSSEN:** Yeah. Definitely. It is a dream come true and every day is fantastic at the moment – I'm sure it will keep staying like that. I'm just really excited to be here. It's been a long winter, since signing. I've been looking forward to this weekend but yeah, feeling good. It's been a good winter in terms of preparation with the team. They've done a really good job in terms of preparing me for this. It's not easy. It's a big job, a big challenge but I think I'm pretty much as ready as you can be these days. I've done a lot of work over the winter but I'm not underestimating the challenge that I'm facing. It's a big challenge but I'm looking forward to it.

**Q: Shed a little light on it for us. McLaren looked very strong at the start of the testing but perhaps the end looked a bit more difficult. What was going on?**

**KM:** I think the whole testing we pretty much ran the launch car and were behind a little bit on development – but the car feels good. If you didn't know the lap times of the other guys you would think that it's pretty fast – and that's a good sign. If we can just put some downforce on the car and keep developing as we did over the winter with the car, I think we can be in a good position. The team obviously come off a difficult season and they are massively motivated to come back to where they belong and that's a good feeling.

## QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

**Q: (Kate Walker – Crash.net) To all six of you: I was wondering in development terms if you could tell us the difference between the cars that were packed up in Bahrain and the cars that we're going to see leaving the pit lane tomorrow?**

**SV:** I think it will be a very different car. Obviously, for us, we had a lot of problems during the test so we didn't get to test a lot of stuff and we hope we do some more running here and obviously put the parts to the car that we think are better for overall performance. Yeah, it will be a bit different but I think it's the same for all of us.

**Q: Fernando, I was on the same plane as Pat Fry and he was certainly pushing a lot of boxes out through customs when we arrived, so you've got quite a lot of new parts I guess.**

**FA:** No, maybe they found some...

**SV:** Spare parts.

**FA:** ...food or something. The car is exactly the same as it was in Bahrain, not new sponsor, not anything.

**LH:** It's very similar to the two next door... probably more so to Fernando. There'll be a couple of things on the car but generally it's going to look the same.

**FM:** The same car.

**KM:** We've got a few bits on the car so hopefully we will be good.

**Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Sebastian, obviously this past pre-season has been very different compared to previous pre-seasons with Red Bull. I was just wondering if you come into this season with a different mind-set, knowing you've got a car that could struggle to even cross the finishing line on Sunday, compared to the car you've had in previous seasons where you know it's going to be pushing for the front row of the grid, pushing for race wins. Does your mind-set alter?**

**SV:** I think generally, at this stage for all us it's difficult to know what to expect, how the racing will look, how it will feel inside the car, how many cars will cross the line. We saw that we had a lot of problems, others had a lot of problems during the tests that we had. It's difficult to have any sort of expectations for most of us I think, but as I said in the beginning, it's a long season and so obviously I'm going out here, not trying to just make it round, I'm going out here to push to the maximum and do the best I can and then we will see where we are and we will see how far we get. The target, for sure, is to finish and the target for sure is to finish in the best possible position, so that's the mind-set, fairly straightforward and for the rest of the year, I think we're a strong team, we have a lot of good people on board, we have strong resources so I'm confident we should progress as the season goes on.

**Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action) Lewis, you and Nico get along very well, you got along very well last year when you were going for wins. This year, you might be both going for the championship, you've been in that kind of a fight before. Do you see that putting a bit of a strain on the relationship with Nico?**

**LH:** I mean when everyone's talking about the relationship between us, it will be the same at the start as it will be at the end. We've been racing together since we were 13, we've been in championships competing right to the end, one where he's won, one where I've won and it's been the same since... It's a more fierce championship and a lot more is riding on it but at the end, I don't see any issues.

**Q: (Trent Pryce – Richland F1) Kevin, you say that the McLaren feels quick, does that mean it's responding well to set-up changes? Does it feel like it has a good baseline?**

**KM:** Yeah, both, I would say. It just feels like a Formula One car, it feels like it's balanced and I don't have a lot of experience with Formula One cars but definitely the car that we

had last year just didn't have the right feeling about it. This year's car is responding well in terms of driving the car and also set-up changes and has a good feel about it.

**Q: (Shane McInnes – 3AW) Seb, have you offered much advice to Daniel, your new teammate now racing at Red Bull and if you have offered some advice, can you share that with us?**

**SV:** Not much, we didn't drive that much this year so there was not much I could talk about. Obviously you do your own thing once you are in the car, but as a team we share everything that we experience and together with the engineers, it's always... people expect that if you come to a new team or if you have a new teammate or you know a certain driver very well, people expect kind of questions like 'how hard do you approach turn three in Australia' or in Monaco. It's not like that. Obviously everybody's got his own style and even if I told him to brake here or there, then he would still try and find his own way. There are some things where I'm open so if he has some questions he can ask. It's the same for me the other way round. I think I can learn a lot from him so obviously he's a new guy, he has a different driving style to Mark. I didn't see that much yet in testing because we didn't run so much, but I'm sure, as the season goes on we'll both learn from each other.

**Q: (Ben McKay – Australian Associated Press) Felipe and others if you wish, there are so many uncertainties leading into this season, is it fair to say that Formula One is under something of a cloud with the continued poor health of Michael Schumacher?**

**FM:** Sure, I always think about him every day, pray for him every day so I really hope that things can go back and be OK for him. For sure it was a shame to see what's happened but I keep thinking about him, he's on my helmet and we'll keep praying and believing that things can be OK for him and he's coming back.

**Q: (Mat Coch – Pitpass.com) Kevin, this year you're up against Jenson Button who I guess is getting towards the end of his career while you're at the very start. Do you feel that it's a little bit of a make or break year for both of you and that if you beat him, your career is made whereas if he beats you, you're perhaps in a bit of trouble?**

**KM:** Well, we all know that you are measured against your teammate but I don't see it like that, I try and do my best, try and learn as much as I can in the early part of the season and see where it takes me. There is a lot of pressure in being in Formula One, especially when you are with a big team as I am. It's where I want to be, I've always dreamed of being with McLaren and I'm here and I'm going to do my best and try not to worry too much about the negative things.

**Q: (Sylvia Arias - Parabrasas) Felipe, I want to know that after so much time with Ferrari, working with a Latin team, how do you feel now with a British team, what differences have you found, your feelings?**

**FM:** For sure, working with the car is the same and everything, similar things. It depends which team you are with but the idea, the working is the same but it's very different the way... outside, the way they talk, they are much more quiet. The Italians, they cannot talk without shaking their hands. I am like that because I am from Brazil as well, so for sure it's a big change for me. I'm trying to learn everything quickly, changing some names as well, understanding the way they talk as well, because I never lived in England, so that's also new for me. But it's nice, it's a nice experience as well, but definitely the mentality is pretty different.

**Q: (Carlos Miguel – La Gaceta) For all six, it's a simple question: which team is the favourite for the championship?**

**DR:** I think the championship is... as Seb said before, a long way away so... I could probably say for this race, judging from testing but I think we're going to develop so much

throughout the year, all teams with the new cars this year so to answer the question simply, for this race, I would put my money on Mercedes but try not to count anyone else out but to answer your question in one word then it's them.

**KM:** I don't know, it's very hard to predict. We've seen for many years whoever is strong for the first part of the season might not always be the one at the end of the season so it's hard to predict. I don't know.

**FM:** Yeah, I think I would say Mercedes.

**LH:** I will say Williams.

**SV:** Yeah, not much to add. I think for this race Mercedes based on winter testing for the season. I think after three or four races we will know a little bit more.

**FA:** I've no idea.

**Q: One final question: how many finishers in the race on Sunday?**

**FA:** How many are we? 16.

**SV:** 12

**LH:** 15

**FM:** 14

**DR:** No one. We're all going to be running across the line!

**KM:** 22.

Ends