



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

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DRIVERS – Adrian SUTIL (Sauber), Sergio PEREZ (Force India), Esteban GUTIERREZ (Sauber), Daniel RICCIARDO (Red Bull Racing), Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes), Fernando ALONSO (Ferrari)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Daniel, some bad news earlier on at the start of this week for you, what was your reaction to that?

Daniel RICCIARDO: Obviously a little bit disappointed but at the same time I had moved on already. I think Sunday night in Melbourne the damage was already done and I went from a big high to a pretty big low, so I'd sort of already moved on. I hoped but didn't really expect too much to come from it. So that's it. I'm here now in Shanghai and that's it. There's no more ifs or buts, it's here, I have 12 points and I just have to play catch-up.

Fernando, it's also been an interesting week for you with some interesting news from the team.

Fernando ALONSO: Yeah, there has been some news from the team and we're here to try to improve the situation a little bit, be a little bit more competitive, more than we have shown in the first three races. We're here to fight back.

Is that slightly unsettling for you?

FA: I think we need to be honest with our situation. It's not where we wanted to be. I think there is a lot of room to improve. We need to become better in all the areas from the car. There is a long way to go, the championship is very long and we know that probably in the first (part) of the championship we will not be as competitive as Mercedes or some of the teams that now they are on top but as I said we need to maximise what we have in our hands now, try to score as many points as possible and hopefully we can be very competitive later in the season.

Lewis, a fantastic race for you in Bahrain and an interesting quote from you saying it was a "real racer's race", using the skills that you had acquired as a karter. Are we going to see lots more of that and have you had a look at the race and seen what was happening all the way down the field?

Lewis HAMILTON: Yeah, it was quite an exciting race, I got to spend some time at home with the family at the weekend and we watched the highlights. Yeah, it was quite interesting to see the duel between each team and between team-mates. As I said it was a bit more like a go-kart race. Whether or not it will always be like that... that was a great race, I hope there are more races like that through the year.

It was always interests me, as a karting dad, as I have been, when you guys start talking about karting and how it is the purest form of racing. It's extraordinary that you can race like that, almost like a karter, in a Formula One car.

LH: Yeah, it is. You don't see it too often. Obviously in karting you don't have downforce, you just have mechanical grip, so it is more exciting in general. But to have the staggered tyres, difference between different cars enabling that racing in the last race was quite unique.

Well any time you like; we'd like some more of it. Esteban can I come to you now? First of all, you said this was one of your best races last year. Obviously we saw you end the last race in not the best way and hopefully there is no lasting damage but tell us about this race from your point of view.

Esteban GUTIERREZ: Well, yes it was very challenging, especially as the performance at the moment is not where we want to be and this puts everything in a very difficult position. The whole team is really pushing very hard, we are trying to recover our pace and to really be where we belong and where we are aiming to. We have a great team behind and everyone is pushing very hard to achieve that very soon, hopefully very soon.

And you were perfectly alright the next day after the crash?

EG: Yeah definitely. Nothing happened. This was the most important thing on the weekend and on the incident as well, apart from really actually what happened. Afterwards it was just necessary to do all the check up and be sure that everything was fine.

Q: Sergio, obviously an excellent race for you in Bahrain as well. What is it that's making Force India so competitive at the moment?

Sergio PÉREZ: It was a great race for the team as well. Nico finishing fifth, a lot of points, second in the Constructors' so it's a big motivation for the team. Right now we are maximising every opportunity that we are having. I had a little bit of a difficult start of the season, I struggled in Malaysia with some issues. We managed to come into Bahrain and do a great job and I think right now we have a good package with Mercedes but I think as well the car. We're beating all the other Mercedes engine [customers], so we're doing a good job as a team, we are maximising what we have and hopefully we can... we come into a different challenge here in China, very different track to Bahrain so I think it will be a good target for us to try to do as good as we did in Bahrain. It will be a big challenge for us here.

Q: Adrian, I think there's quite a few areas that Sauber have to improve. Did you make some progress at the test? What are the areas still to work on?

Adrian SUTIL: Yes. A little progress has been made at the test with the test drivers in Bahrain, so it was quite conclusive. Of course at the moment we are far too slow. Not really enjoyable but we are looking ahead. It will get better. It's just a question of time. We need to be a bit patient. So, for here, there are a few things changed already. So, I'm quite excited to see how the car will be. But our plan, especially for the next races going to Europe and going to Barcelona and on, the car should definitely be a different one to drive. It's not only one area, quite a few areas of the car. It's the power unit, it's the weight – and I'm fighting also personally a little bit here and there. It will get there and as soon as we do progress every race weekend, I'm happy. Fingers crossed it's going to happen very soon.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Sera) Fernando, the new team principle of Ferrari, Marco Mattiacci has no experience related to Formula One. Could it be an issue in your opinion, or not?

FA: Well, I think we need to give him time and try to see how he settles down. It's too early to say if, y'know, it will be a very good thing or very bad. I think we need to make sure he has all the facilities ready, all the technical stuff ready, all the team behind him, try to help him settle down as fast as possible. And, yes, try to put him in a condition to feel comfortable from day one. I certainly hope... we are really hoping it will be a successful managing of the team and everyone is looking forward.

Q: (Kate Walker – Crash.net) A question for all six of you. We've heard an awful lot about this year's technology and how it's changing the future of Formula One. Looking further ahead, how do you see the role of the driver evolving as the technology becomes more complex?

FA: I think it's going to be pretty similar to what we saw in the last couple of years. Drivers still have an input on the result and developing the car – but as we know Formula One is a category that is dominated by the performance of the car, in a way. We saw in Bahrain also in the last couple of laps, they were fighting two team-mates, two team-mates, two team-mates until the tenth or twelfth position. It's difficult to get away from that order. It has been more or less like this in the past. I don't see any big difference. Probably it's a little bit more extreme now with all the technology as you said. In the past there were some strange cases in races like Monaco or things like that, maybe a midfield car could fight for a podium etcetera. In this last couple of years it's difficult to see that but, y'know, you take it or you go in another category. It is what it is.

Sergio?

SP: I fully agree with Fernando. I think you are as good as your car. The level your team is and the performance your team has. We've seen it in the past. Drivers changing teams and sometimes you can be in a very good team and show very strong potential, win some races. Sometimes you don't even go into the points – and it's related to the level of the car. But I think the drivers still have a big influence on the development and the result but it's a factor now that Formula One is dominated by the car and how quick your car can be.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Universo On Line) Fernando, what were you celebrating at the end of the last race as you took the chequered flag and took your hand out of the cockpit and punched the air?

FA: Yeah, I was saying thanks to the mechanics. I said it a hundred times after the race also. They'd been working hard on Saturday. As you know, we had a problem on the engine side, on the power unit that slowed us a little bit in Q1, Q2 and then furthermore in Q3. We didn't have the solution for the problem, even on Sunday at 12 o'clock so we still were not completely sure that the car was perfectly OK and then in the race, we had everything in place – they did a fantastic job so when we crossed the line, they were on the pit wall saying hallo and I said hallo to them.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Fernando, it was quite shocking, the replacement of the team principal after three races. I don't know if you agree but in your opinion, is that enough to solve the problem – to save the season – or not?

FA: Well, I think we need to assess what Stefano decided. He was probably not any more in the mood to continue and with the feeling of taking the weight on his shoulders. He made a very responsible move. It's not easy, when you have a very privileged position in one Formula One team to be able to step back and to say 'maybe it's better to move'. But he did it, just for Ferrari's interest and improvement so that's something that we cannot forget and now we have to respect that decision. From that point, for sure, it's not that in this race we will improve one second, because I don't think Stefano was doing the front wing or the rear wing or whatever by his hands, so probably we need to wait a little bit of time and see what we can improve and try to help all the team with the new people coming to make us a little bit stronger and try to get back some of the success from the past.

Q: (Qian Jun – Oriental Morning Post) To all of you, this year the FIA has introduced a penalty point system. After just three Grands Prix, Jules Bianchi has four points and Pastor has three points. Do you think anybody will reach 12 points this season, and what's your opinion on this regulation?

AS: I think it's OK. I'm not sure if anyone will reach the full 12 but after three races, having four, then he should reach it very soon. Let's see how it's going to be. Most important is that there was a change from last year because there were at certain times some penalties, especially for the backmarkers, which were not doing anything. If you're last and you get a ten place penalty you're still last and that's it. This is a little bit different and I think there was a reason why it should be changed and now we need a little bit of time to see if it is working. I hope so.

DR: Yeah, I think you reach 12 if you're a bad boy but yeah, I think this system is OK. It's trying to keep us in line, really, so if it helps then yeah.

EG: I think it's a good system. It puts some conscience on ourselves to not do wrong moves and to respect each other and to race in a fair way, which is how racing should be.

Q: (Luis Fernando Ramos – Racing Magazine) To Lewis and Fernando, as World Champions. We will have the 20th anniversary of Ayrton Senna's death in a few weeks. I wanted to ask what are your memories from that day and if Senna was the driver that you most looked up to when you were in karting in those days?

LH: Yeah. For me, it's not unknown, I always comment on it: when I was a kid I had all the books, all the videos, he was the driver I looked up to, way before I even started racing. He kind of inspired me to even be a driver and of course, on the day of his passing, his death was... it was very difficult for me to show my emotions in my family so I went off to a quiet place and it was very difficult for several days to really... your hero's gone. But an incredible legend; you can still learn things from how he approached racing and how he drove. You like to think that one day you may be recognised as someone that was able to drive similarly to him.

FA: Yeah, the same for me: he was an inspiration. I remember some of the races that we could see in the news in Spain, because we didn't have the TV coverage of Formula One, but yeah, I remember I went to school – on my book, I didn't have (pictures of) girls, obviously I was too young to have girls on the book but I had Ayrton there and the same in my room. I had a big poster of Ayrton and even my first go-karts were in the colours of Ayrton's McLaren because my father also liked him. It was a very sad moment. I know there is something happening at Imola in Italy in the next weekends and I intend to be there, just to be close on this unfortunately important day.

Q: (Jerome Bourret – L'Equipe) Fernando, have you already had a discussion with your new team principal about the things you would like to change in the team and if not, what are the points you would like to discuss with him?

FA: No, I haven't had the chance... I don't know if he's coming here, I guess so, so it would be a good time to welcome him. I don't really have much to say. I drive the car. He will be good enough to recognise what are the weak areas of the team, what are the strong areas of the team and hopefully improve them. I think that as drivers, we will try to drive as fast as we can, Kimi and I, and try to help him in whatever field our help is required.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports F1) Fernando, you've worked and driven under a variety of team principals in Formula One. Where would Stefano Domenicali rank amongst your other team bosses and what do you think Ferrari will miss most about him?

FA: I think that Stefano was a great man, first of all. I'm a close friend of his, not just on the circuit. We ski together every January 1st in Italy in the mountains. We still have a close relationship. We've been talking all the week long. I think that will continue, because we

have known each for many years and we have worked very closely for this couple of years, so that's important, to separate work from friendship. Then, as a team principal, I think he made good choices, good things. Obviously we missed opportunities in 2010, in 2012. They missed opportunities in 2008 with Felipe (Massa). If not, he could probably have three championships in his pocket. I think he brought in Pat Fry, he brought James Allison, Raikkonen, so I think all the things that people ask from him he was giving to them, probably, as I said, the results in the sports are important and the pressure at Ferrari is also quite big, so he made his decision which we respect and we will try to move forward in different directions but try to move forward. I'm happy with the time that we passed together.

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