



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2014 Monaco Grand Prix Wednesday Press Conference Transcript 21.05.2014

DRIVERS – Jules BIANCHI (Marussia), Jean-Eric VERGNE (Toro Rosso), Valtteri BOTTAS (Williams), Romain GROSJEAN (Lotus), Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes), Kimi RAIKKONEN (Ferrari)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Jules, can I start with you? Obviously it's been quite a tough start to the season for you. What do you put that down to? Is it adapting to the car, is it bad luck or a combination of those things?

Jules BIANCHI: Yeah, obviously it's been a very difficult start. The first few races have been pretty tough for me and the team but actually the last one especially was pretty good for me, so I am happy with that. So I will think about this only now and be focused for the next races coming now.

Tell us about your experience and thoughts about this unique race track here in Monaco. You had a good result here back in Renault 3.5 a few years ago, does that junior experience help in the first few years in Formula One?

JB: Yeah it helps a lot for sure to race in Monaco before your first year in Formula One. Last year has been really difficult for me. I had some issues in qualifying, I had engine failure and then in the race again some issue with the engine to start with and a brake failure to finish with, so it was not the best race I could have but I'm pretty confident now that I can do a good race this year.

Coming to you Valtteri, you're seventh now in the Drivers' Championship and well ahead of your team-mate. You had another good result in Spain. Do you feel that you and the team have moved up a gear now?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Yeah, since the start of the season everything's been positive if we compare it to the year before. All the time during this year we've been able to make progress, we've been bringing some updates, which always gave us a little bit. That's what we aim for, for that to continue for the whole season. We are definitely keeping up at least with the development. We just need to keep pushing really, because everyone is going to improve so much.

You said in the build-up to this race that you feel confident this year at Monaco. I wonder how much of a handicap it was last year for you that you'd never driven anything around this circuit? Can you tell us a bit what it's like to drive this place with absolutely zero database when you're driving a Formula One car.

VB: Yeah, definitely it was really tough last year, first time, immediately with a Formula One car but, you know, you just need to adapt to it, you need to build the speed up step-by-step in the practice and definitely going for the race this season I know the track now well, so it's much easier to approach the weekend and build from practice one onwards. I

definitely feel very confident for this weekend and I really think we can fight as a team for some really good points.

Nico, winner from pole here last year. Can you tell us what a win around this race track means to a Formula One driver, what it did for you personally and for your confidence?

Nico ROSBERG: For me personally it was a very, very special experience, because it's my home, it's where I've grown up. My whole life has been centred around Monaco. So to win here, yeah it was great. And not only that but also it's *the* race to win. It's the most challenging race to win and the most prestigious race to win, so really that was awesome.

With what happened in Spain, losing the initiative in the championship to your teammate, how are you feeling at this point, going into this race? Do you feel the strain or do you feel an impatience to get that lead back again?

NR: I'm not too focused on that. Of course I would prefer to be ahead than behind but it's very, very close and there still a long way to go. So I'm just focused on this weekend here, looking forward to it, because I know that I have a fantastic car at the moment and I expect the car to be very, very quick also here in Monaco. The gap – they might be a lot closer to us this weekend and we need to wait and see if we are the fastest and the chances are we will be, so I look forward to it and hope to have a fantastic weekend again.

Jean-Eric, like Jules you've had a difficult start to the season. You got four points in the opening round but since then you've been in a position to score more points but then you've had non-finishes. What's been going on?

Jean-Eric VERGNE: Yeah I think I've been pretty unlucky since the beginning of the season, started well in Melbourne and then always in a position to score some good points. But that's how it is; it's part of the sport. I'll just keep on smiling and hopefully the bad luck will go away and get tired of me. I'm just hoping to finish the race and have a good car and that's all I'm hoping for. So it will come.

You won here in your junior career I believe and last year this race was the start of a real turnaround in your season. What are your thoughts on the venue, your prospects for the weekend, and also I noted that you said that a driver must arrive in a humble state of mind at the beginning of a weekend in Monaco. What do you mean by that and what happens from there?

J-EV: Well, I think this track is really difficult for sure. You want to stay far away from the walls and at the beginning the walls always look really close, a lot closer than in the end of the weekend. This is a particular track where even the first session, the first P1, is really important for the confidence over the whole weekend, so you really have to build up your weekend in a good way.

Q: Romain, coming to you, first points of the season obviously in Spain and also fifth on the grid, followed up by what looked like a very encouraging test for Maldonado and Pic in Barcelona. Can you sum up where Lotus are now and what level of optimism there is for this next phase of the Championship?

Romain GROSJEAN: Well, if you look at the trend from Melbourne, we've been improving every time, going to Q3 for the first time in China, going to Q3 and being fifth on the grid in Barcelona. I think we were looking good in the race to keep the Ferrari behind but I had a small problem. It's good that all the work has been done, and the fact we understand more and more our car, it's going in the right direction and, of course, if you are fifth on the grid in Monaco, the race is even kind of easier to defend your position. You never know what you are going to get when you come to Monaco. It's such a specific track. But I do hope we get the same kind of car we had in Barcelona. Then we can be well placed in Q3 and score some more points.

Q: Looking at your record here over the years, Monaco has not been a very happy hunting ground for you, has it? In Formula One or the junior categories. Why is that, do you think?

RG: I think that's not fair to say. I've been on pole position here in GP2, won the race in GP2 – but on the other side if you have a look at crashes, I have a good record and few corners I know too well. To be fair, last year I completely missed my weekend and wherever I would have been, it would have been the same story. So, just try to not do that again. You have to respect the track. Every mistake is more obvious than everywhere else – but I've always been quick so I'll try to keep that in my pocket but stay away from the rails.

Q: Kimi, another Monaco winner, do you consider a win here to be more important than other races? What did you feel when you ticked that Monaco win off your bucket list?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Obviously it's been pretty OK many times for me the race but then it's not always from your side that the things go wrong here. There's so many things that can affect your result in the end. Previous years haven't been the most best again but hopefully this year can be a bit better and hopefully we get some good points but obviously it's too early to say how the car will be. Everything is different from last year so we have to just go open-minded and try to do the best that we can.

Q: Was Spain something of a turning point for you in terms of being able to extract closer to the maximum potential from the Ferrari? What made the difference there for you? And also, can you say anything about your analysis of the strategy in that race afterwards?

KR: We've been pretty good in other races also but obviously had some problems in the race or in practice and always messed up the complete big picture a bit. But obviously it was a bit better last time around. To be honest, if we finished where we finished, I think sixth and seventh, it's not at all where we want to be as a team, so we still have an awful lot of work to do. We improve things little-by-little but the other teams are also going forward so it's not a simple thing to fix and be in front suddenly. We know how it works and we know how much things have to improve but we keep working hard and for sure one day we will get there.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Aron Day – FormulaSpy.com) Kimi, you've driven the V10s, the V8s around Monaco. Do you think the new cars will be more difficult to drive?

KR: It's difficult to say before we drive. I think if your car is normally good, it doesn't really matter where you go. You know how it behaves and it will be OK. Obviously a bit less grip this year and maybe some cars are a bit more hard to handle but we have to see how it goes on the first practice and see what it is. But I think we've improved a lot since the winter and it should be OK.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – Gazzetta dello Sport) Nico, Lewis says he should be dominating you more. Does it mean the time of smiles is getting over slowly? Are we going to see a harder battle between you and him?

NR: I don't know what he said so I'm not going to... I didn't hear it myself so I'm not going to comment on such things. But, in general, it's been a tough battle up until now and I expect it to continue like that. Of course now he's had the result rhythm in a couple of races but it's been very close. I just need a tiny bit to turn it around. I'll start with trying to do that here in Monaco.

Q: (Vladimir Rogovets – SB Belarus Segodnya) To all of you: what is your favourite braking zone in Monaco?

JB: Well, I think after the tunnel, that's good, I like that.

J-EV: Last corner, there is nearly no braking. I don't know.

VB: Yeah, I think the tunnel as well, because that's one of the places it could be possible to overtake, so let's say that. Yeah.

RG: Casino. It goes quickly up hill and when you get to the top you just have to brake. It's quite a nice feeling.

NR: Same, up the hill, it's very very difficult because it's a very very fast corner and you're trying to carry the speed in and if you get it wrong and you're going too fast, it's very easy to lose the line.

KR: No, I don't really have one favourite one. Any of them. You can choose

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Kimi, are you going to carry on with the James Hunt-style design of your helmet here?

KR: No.

Q: (Vincent Marre – Sports Zeitung) To all six of you: if there is one day race that we have now in this calendar that you would like to change into a night race, assuming there is no technical issue, which one would it be? There must be one.

VB: This one would be cool, I think. It would look nice.

J-EV: Yeah, I think this one as well under lights.

JB: Same, same thing. It would be really nice to race in Monaco at night.

RG: I don't know; why not Melbourne?

NR: Japan, so there's no jetlag.

KR: I cannot hear the question. I understood by their answers but I'm happy how they are, we can always dream about things but we don't make the rules, so there's no point.

Q: (Haoran Zhou - Formula One Express) Nico, last year you controlled the race all the way until the last few laps because of the fear of tyre degradation. This year's tyres have more endurance, and also your car is quite good on tyre management. Are you going to be able to push more in the race, according to your simulation?

NR: Well, last year, before Monaco, it was really really bad, our car with the tyres so in Monaco it was all about just trying to make the tyres last for the race but this year the tyres are more durable and also we have a better control on tyres, as a team, so it should be a faster race if I'm at the front.

Q: (Pierre van Vliet – F1i.com) Nico, four pole positions for Lewis so far; do you plan to change your approach to qualifying? Here, you know that you dominated him last year; what do you plan to maybe change something in qualifying?

NR: No. Of course three of those qualifying were in the wet; in the dry it's 1-1 and it's supposed to be dry on Saturday so I'm confident I can make it happen so I'm not changing my approach or anything.

Q: (Ben Edwards – BBC) Nico and Kimi; we lost a legend of Formula One, Sir Jack Brabham, this last week. Obviously his exploits were before you guys were born but can I just ask if you had any contact with Sir Jack Brabham, if you have any thoughts about his career and also if you'd been born in a different era, would you have ever considered going down that kind of route that he did, of building his own car? Kimi, you've set up teams; Nico you have an interest in engineering. If you'd been born in that era, could you have seen yourselves go down that route?

KR: Obviously I read and I was so sad to hear that he had passed away. Obviously these days are different than the days that they used to race and they could do different categories, different races. It would be very nice if they would be able to do different things

at the same time and different races and try different things more. But the problem is everything gets so much more expensive these days and obviously people are more scared that you get hurt that they try to limit everything that you do. It's a shame because I think it would be more fun for everybody and all sports would also benefit from it, and F1. It would be nice to do stuff like they did.

NR: It's an amazing achievement that he did at the time, to win in another team but also in his own team, in his own car that he built. It's extremely unlikely to ever happen again but you never know, but it's a record that is definitely going to last a long time.

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