



Press Information

2019 Monaco Grand Prix Saturday Press Conference Transcript

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TRACK INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Paul Di Resta)

Q: Lewis, you're pretty excited about that. They say 95% per cent of the job gets done today but to qualify here on pole at Monaco, it's an incredible result.

Lewis HAMILTON: It really is. Firstly, I want to say a big thank you to the crowd that's here. I love it here; it's my home. This is the race that every driver dreams of, from being kid. It doesn't matter how many times you come here, it's still a dream. You still put absolutely everything you've got, all the work we've put in, all the guys back at the factory have just worked tirelessly. So we've arrived with a great car and then a great battle with Valtteri, who has just been quick all weekend and all these races up until now, and just the desire and the will to get this pole; it means so much to me. I had to dig was deeper than ever. And I'm so glad that I could get that deep. I'm just really grateful to my team and the lap was beautiful. So I feel amazing, and just super grateful.

Q: When you get in the zone around here, do you have to get in the spirit of the lap and let the car do the work, pushing all the way through? I mean Valtteri, he was on fire today as well, wasn't he? What extra did you have to do to get that?

LH: It Well, obviously we have got a great package but what people need to realize is that all of us drivers, as you know, whatever car we have, fast or slow, we take it to the limit. And when you take it to the limit, it's like wrestling a bull or whatever you want to say it is. It's out of control the whole time, so it's really trying to balance it, react at the right times. The lap was hard and particularly at the end I had an oversteer moment coming in Rascasse and I just managed to pull it off, you know. And then coming out of the last corner I was losing a little bit out of the last corner but still I was coming across the line hoping 'OK, just that one millisecond, I hope that makes the difference'. I don't know what the gap is, but I'll take it whatever it is. It's perfect.

Q: It's enough. It's a front row start. All the best. Valtteri, it was pretty incredible the lap you did in the first run in Q3, but you didn't get a second attempt. How do you feel?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Yeah, I'm disappointed. I still felt after the first lap that there were plenty of places I could improve so I left that for the last run. On the out lap I had a lot of traffic and I couldn't get the tyres hot enough for the timed lap and that was it. I felt I had it today but obviously not.

Q: A front-row start still. You've been on fire all weekend. Ultimately Lewis has won the last couple of grands prix starting from P2, so can you still win this tomorrow, do you feel that starting from P2?

VB: Well, anything can happen. Obviously it would have been nice to be on pole, but there is no point giving up after Saturday. There is a long race ahead and for sure I will try to do everything I can to get it back.

Q: Max, P3 today. It looked like at one point, in Q2, you were going to be able to split these Mercedes, or at least get in the fight, but just at the end they had too much for you?

Max VERSTAPPEN: Yeah, I think they were a bit quick. My lap in Q2 was good but then in Q3 my first lap I lost it a bit in Turn 1, a bit of cold tyres. Still it was a reasonable lap. In these streets to push, your heart rate goes up quite a lot, as you know. Then my second lap, just my out lap was too slow, so I went into Turn 1 already, cold tyres, and as soon as you see you are two tenths up, you can't risk it anymore. I decided to abort, but still P3 was good, because 10 minutes before the session there was not even a floor on the car so the mechanics did a great job today to bring the car in a full piece before we went out.

Q: And the journey you've had in the last year has been quite incredible. If you look where you were this time last year, you're a bit further up, so you should be more in the fight shouldn't you?

MV: I didn't do many qualifying here so of course very happy to be third.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Lewis, your second pole position of this season, but you said you had to dig deeper than ever to get this one. Tell us what it means?

LH: Yeah, this is definitely one of the best poles that I can remember. We've had lots of success over the years, but I can't really remember one that means as much this one, being that it has been such a difficult week for the whole team. Personally, it has been quite a difficult weekend, so... Obviously the goal here was always to get pole; it's such a difficult circuit. It's amazing that we have turned up, as a team, continuing to take strides forward together, collectively, and get stronger and improve our performance weekend-in, weekend out, so I'm so proud of everyone. But to have a little bit of a cloud over us this weekend, we're really, really trying to lift each other up and trying to deliver for Niki. Valtteri had been doing a sensational job. I think practice one and practice two were good for me and then today the car didn't feel anywhere near as good as it did on Thursday, so digging deep to turn the car round. Valtteri did a great lap the first lap. I was struggling to get the first lap time out on the tyres, so I did a prep lap for my first lap and the second one was not very good. So I pushed for that first lap at the end, and naturally I had to gain two tenths because Valtteri was ahead and I thought Valtteri would be up, so I was just throwing the car around. I'm pretty sure I touched a couple of barriers along the way but there's no better way of doing it around Monaco. I've not had a huge amount of success here over the years. It's always been a track

that I've been quick at, but never quite get that perfect lap. I think today was about as close as I could get to it, so this one is for Niki.

Q: You mentioned how tough this weekend has been for the team. How difficult is it as a driver to then get in and have to put the helmet on and perform and put that all out of your mind when you get in the car?

LH: Ultimately we're professionals so you get in and do what you love doing. Niki would just want us to get in and Niki and would always just say 'give it arseholes', so that's what I try to do every time I get in the car. That's honestly what he says all the time. We just try to walk around with a smile and really try to lift each other up, as I said, and do him proud. I think so far hopefully we are and we have to continue to try to pull out something special tomorrow. Max has been really quick this weekend as well, so anything can happen still tomorrow, so still got a good job to do tomorrow. But there's no better place to start.

Q: Valtteri you were on provisional pole at the end of those first runs, so where do you think pole position got away from you today?

VB: Well, first of all, congrats to Lewis for the pole, he definitely did a good job and as a team really proud again being one-two again. My feelings at the moment, I'm really, really disappointed with the qualifying. I really felt I had the speed today. I felt really good in the car all day. In the first run, I felt there were two or three tenths I could still improve, so I should have done a better job on the first run. On the second run I had quite a bit of traffic on the out lap so had to go off the line in a few places on the out laps and the tyres just didn't work on the second run, so disappointing.

Q: Obviously track position is king here, so how do you approach the start of tomorrow's race alongside your team-mate on such a narrow run to Turn 1?

VB: Well, for sure we always aim for a good start but here it's a super short distance from start to the first corner so normally not many position changes but obviously I'll try to do a good start and as a team we want to be one-two again. Obviously for me then it's going to be waiting for any opportunities that come up.

Q: Max, you were quickest in Q2, heading into to Q3, what was the target, what was realistic and are you satisfied with third place?

MV: Yeah, all in all yes. I think in general, when you look to the weekend I think we were just missing that two or three tenths at the end but yeah, Q2 was a very good lap but also the tyres were switched on so around here, when your tyres work that makes quite a bit of a difference and in Q3, my first run, I went into turn one and the rear tyres were still not gripping up fully so I lost a bit of time there and basically from there on my lap was pretty stable compared to Q2 so it was not bad. And then in my final run in Q3 I had a bit of traffic on my out lap and when I started the lap, the tyres just felt cold, no grip and I was already 0.2s above it so I decided to abort. But in general I think we did a good job. I think coming into this weekend I already had the feeling we were not as strong as we were last year here but for myself I think it was a good qualifying. I think this is my first qualifying here but I've only done three now. It's really good to be here.

Q: What can you do in tomorrow's race to try and put some pressure on the two guys ahead of you?

MV: There's not much you can do but the funny thing is that two of my practice starts have been from P3 so I've rubbered in my own box so that's good, so we will see what's going to happen but normally in the race you need to be a bit lucky. I'm happy about today and let's see what brings tomorrow.

Q: Lewis, just returning to you, what are going to be the big threats in tomorrow's race? Obviously starting from pole is the best place to start but what do you have to look out for?

LH: Hopefully the weather stays something like today. I heard that there's a potential chance of rain tomorrow but it will be the same for all of us and if anything that makes it more exciting at this track but I guess ultimately, when you're on pole, you hope it will be just smooth sailing, a dry, safety car kind of day but yeah, the tyres that we have, it's a one-stop race generally, it has been for a long time here, so it's really just about keeping calm, cool and collected and just delivering on what we've practised throughout the weekend. But you know, this race – as you've seen in the previous years – lots of things get thrown at you so we've just got to stay on our toes. But I honestly feel that were the best prepared, we've had a really solid weekend of preparation. We've had good years of experience too but that doesn't mean that there are unknowns ahead but we'll face it together. We always win and lose together so we'll do what we can tomorrow.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Oliver Brown – The Telegraph) Lewis, Niki Lauda was clearly instrumental in bringing you to a team where you've won four of your five world titles, also a man known for his very blunt advice to his drivers. Just how influential do you reflect that he was on your development as a driver?

LH: Firstly, the other day it was quite... I didn't feel like I was really ready I think Toto also felt fairly similar and maybe Valtteri as well. There was time for us to really dig deep into our feelings because we were still reminiscing over the lots of experiences that we've had. Me and Toto have had multiple conversations this week and also myself and Birgit. I was really in touch with Niki a lot, through this past eight months. We would be sending videos back and forth to each other and it was always difficult because some days he looked good and he was really perky and 'I'm coming back, I'm coming strong and I'll be at this race' and then there's other days where he had immediately lost a lot of weight. So it was definitely tough from afar and then I was very fortunate that I got to see him and when I found out the other day I was just thinking because I was here at home in Monaco, I was down by the pool where I live and I remember getting a call from Niki in 2012 and we had never really spoken, me and Niki so he's on the phone and he's like, no you should come to Mercedes, this is where you need to be and I remember that was the first time we started talking. I had always talked about how Ross was the convincing element in me coming to the team because when I went and sat down with him, he explained what the team was doing, where it was going, their plans, Mercedes and I truly believed in that vision but Niki was the one that brought it to me and got it across the line. And in all of these years, he's kind of been my partner in crime: all negotiations, when we were pushing for improvements on the car he was such a racer and even though he wasn't racing himself he would come up to us and say 'what could we do better, what needs to be improved on the car?' You would say front suspension or it's downforce or it's the engine and he would say OK and he will go to the factory and he'll be giving them arseholes like he would always say! So yeah, ultimately he was part of the process

of changing my life. If I hadn't had the call all that time ago, I would be a one time World Champion now and probably 22 wins whatever it was when I was at McLaren and I sit here a five time World Champion and I definitely feel like I owe him a lot. So it was very very difficult at the beginning of the week. Everyone's posting pictures and... I don't feel like I have to conform to how everyone operates. I took my time and again, coming here on Wednesday I didn't feel like it was the time to do that but we all love him and miss him and it's hard to imagine or to think that when someone goes, you're never going to get to see them again or to talk to them or have conversations but I've got the greatest of memories with him so he will live on in all our memories.

Q: (Giovanni Messi – newsf1.it) My question is for Lewis. Hi Lewis. In my opinion, at this time you are happy than the other qualifying for the result? Maybe because seeing the speed of Valtteri after the first run, you didn't believe in this result?

LH: No, I think it's a combination of things. It's a tough – very, very tough track to get the pole. Often when you're qualifying, in qualifying and particularly here, the first lap is even more important. The second lap is the one where we take all the risks and often it's the one that there's usually yellow flags or traffic or something – so the percentage, the chances of you improving on the second lap are smaller and also Valtteri had the opportunity to improve on that second lap. And again, because it had been a difficult week, the desire to perform well and get that first, it was just elevated. So, to get it, to come across the line, I went across the line, I knew that I was up on my time, and I knew that I'd be pole for a second – because I came out of Turn One, and I could see the screen but I didn't know where Valtteri was. I could see a Red Bull come by, and then I was past the screen and I didn't know where Valtteri was. It was quiet for some time. I think it was until I got to the tunnel to the chicane where they came and told me. So, after that, you're just sitting there with your fingers crossed kind of thing – not that I really had my fingers crossed – but that kind of feeling. It's just great because I've been doing this for such a long time, y'know? And to still have that desire and that will and that excitement, it's encouraging, because I want to be here for a little bit longer if I can.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) To the two Mercedes drivers. Valtteri, obviously frustrated with what happened for you. Is that because you feel it was the tyre prep or the warm-up that cost you pole – or do you feel that there's something you could have done differently? And Lewis, you mention that feeling, waiting to find out what the result was. What was that feeling, when it come over you? We saw that reaction afterwards, jumping up on the fence. Can you just talk us through those moments please?

VB: The issue for me was the traffic on the out-lap. There was a couple of cars I was stuck behind and then pass off the line, and obviously you collect a bit of dust on the tyres and you can't get enough temperature. This track is really critical and, yeah, already at Turn One I felt the tyres were not there. It was just every corner slower and slower until I had a big snap in Turn Eight or something. Yeah, that was it. Like Lewis saw on the screen, he was in the lead, I saw at the Swimming Pool area that he did manage to improve his lap, and I knew that's game over. That's the name of the game.

Lewis, your emotions when you were told by the team that you'd got it?

LH: Through the qualifying session, through practice I wasn't able to get the first timed lap, so that's why I went into Q3 and I was like 'I want to do a prep lap', and then I did a prep lap and, the start of my lap, the first sector was terrible and it didn't pay off. And often, when you

don't have the foundation level, the first banker lap to then build upon, the second one you have to dig deeper. So, normally you do a good time, maybe you're half a tenth behind or half a tenth ahead, you can build on that. You don't have to take drastic risk but you can just improve on that and hopefully hold position. But I was two-tenths behind. Normally he would probably improve another tenth or two, as the track does improve, so I'm digging deeper and going a little bit further into an unknown and it was really on the ragged edge the whole way. I mean, that how it should be but Jeez, yeah, when I came across the line I didn't know if it was enough. I think I came out of the Swimming Pool, I was .039 up, and then came out of the last corner and that just started to drop down to .033, or something like that. And it could have been that half a tenth that could have been the difference, who knows? I was just waiting for a long, long time to find out. I was like 'where the hell is Valtteri?' Talk about sitting on the edge of your seat, not knowing what's happening. And when you're getting that call, whether it's good or bad, it's horrible either way, the way sometimes you get it, and it wasn't good enough, and you're like 'damn it!' y'know? And then you start to reminisce over the lap, thinking OK, I could have done better here if I'd done that. You know how the race has gone – but fortunately it was a positive call. It's always great. Bono's been with me for seven years, the longest relationship I've had with an engineer. It's always great to see his encouragement and his excitement as well.

And then just a spontaneous decision to jump on the fence with the fans?

LH: Oh man, I was just so super-hyped, I couldn't help it. As I tried to hold it in. The fans are great here. There's a lot of Brits and a lot of British flags and, I don't know, I just spare a moment... I felt the fence was going to come over actually. Luckily it didn't. But yeah, I think ultimately in life, probably for all of us, there's great things that happen in our lives and we probably don't always celebrate them, y'know? I've won races and you just go straight into a meeting and then you go home and sit and watch TV and just sit and do normal stuff and don't actually capture the moment. And so that's... I think it was just important for me to enjoy the moment – because you never know when your next pole is going to be. You never know when that moment's ever going to happen again – so I'm grateful for it.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – AP) Question for Lewis. Earlier on you used the term 'best prepared' to describe how well Mercedes have been preparing for several seasons now. Given that, is it astonishing for you, as a consummate professional, to see the baffling – and quite frankly bizarre – mistakes that Ferrari are making?

LH: Well I don't know what... I've not really watched them today, so I don't know what mistakes. Obviously Sebastian, which is very easy to do here. The Red Bull's always really quick here and Max did a great job, so I don't really know where the whole layout is. I think they've got a really good car. For some reason it's really quick on the straights and a bit slower through the corners. We're quicker through the corners in general – I think the same for the Red Bulls. So, I think this year they have taken a slightly different philosophy and naturally it's currently not working everywhere but I think they were quite quick at some points through the session. But, you know, it's such an intense battle naturally still. Whatever package you have, you're still trying to squeeze every little drop out of it and more. And when you're on that knife-edge, you're prone to make more mistakes, y'know? When your car is off the pace, you hope, as a driver, you can bring another two, three, four tenths, whatever it is, so you push it beyond the limit and you make more mistakes. That's the natural thing. I don't look at it as anything less than them just pushing as hard as they can.

That question was because Charles got knocked out in Q1

LH: I didn't know that. What happened? Just didn't get a lap?

Didn't go out at the end of the session.

LH: Ah.

Didn't do a final run and Seb was the last guy across the line to knock him out.

LH: Ah, OK, I didn't know that. So that's just all about preparation. It's really a formality. We sit down and we talk a lot the plan – even until going into Q3, we were talking about the timings and the preparation and what we were going to be doing. The communication is constant. That relationship is so, so important. We've got great, great people within our team that are just not making mistakes and they're delivering on their word, as we are.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – AP) Sorry Lewis, just to clarify what I meant by my question, Leclerc had said on TV that it's absolutely unacceptable what happened to him in Q1, that they kept him in and didn't send him out – probably to save tyres – and he just couldn't understand the decision-making. That was also part of the question.

LH: Sometimes it happens, y'know? They'll have a minimum time, the knock-out time. They'll say the least time is this, and they'll predict that the track is going to improve a certain amount. You go out, you do a lap, and they say you're safe. My first lap, they said I was safe – but I could stay out and do more. I decided to stay out and better my time and see the track improve. I've, in the past, been sat in the garage and they're like: "we're on the edge, we might go out again, we might not." They chose to risk it. We don't really take many risks like that.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) For the two Mercedes drivers, this wasn't a great track for you over the last two years but now you've dominated it. Do you see any areas where the car needs to improve?

VB: For sure it's very nice to feel that in the car, the improvements we've made here, for example how it felt here last year or the year before, but even to last year, the car gives a lot more confidence to the driver and it's more driveable on this kind of track now and that allows me and Lewis to really push on the limit and really kiss the walls and so on and it makes it more enjoyable. So for sure, we've improved a lot but there's always things we can improve, there's still some things with the handling, some corners are still a lot trickier in terms of balance to the others and a bit more grip, a bit more power is always better.

LH: Yeah, the same. The great thing with technology is that you can always improve and that's the beauty of what our job is you know. We're always evolving, we're always improving, there's always something more. We'll go back right now and – yes, we've got one-two but we'll say constructive criticism, this could be improved, that could be improved. Hey, so-and-so, work on that area and they'll be like dammit, when it's going to be enough? It's never enough, that's why it's a great sport, we're always pushing.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) Max, they are so quick here, nearly half a second quicker than you. Is it discouraging or do you think there's still time to catch up and beat them?

MV: Well, I don't think it's half a second anyway but in Q3 we just didn't get the tyres to work so round here that's very crucial because in Q2 we were competitive. We know that we have

some more work to do to catch up but as a team we keep pushing very hard to try and do that as soon as possible.

Q: (Andrew Frankel- Forza) I'm just wondering with you gentlemen being first and second and with the church of Ste Devote being just up the road, can we expect team orders, at least as far as the first corner is concerned? It's quite hairy up there.

Q: We're only (inaudible) for like a second and a half or two seconds, that's really short. We don't have team orders, we're currently fighting for a World Championship. The great thing is that Toto and the team allows us to race, to battle it out. We're responsible men, we always talk about turn one in every scenario, whatever the track, the last one, every single one, when we're one and two and how we respect or we can be aggressive but ultimately we still want to be one and two so we both know where the limitations are.

Q: (Luke Smith – Crash.net) Max, Saturday in Monaco last year is spoken about widely as being a key point for you. Christian said the other day that he thought it was the lowest point of your career. To be here 12 months later in the top three press conference and having taken the fight to the Mercedes drivers, is there a certain level of redemption and satisfaction that you can take from that transformation?

MV: No. I also don't think it was the lowest point of my career. Those things happen, unfortunately and of course last year we had a great opportunity to win it and yes, sometimes you need the ones which hurt a bit more to become a better driver and that's exactly what happened last year.

Q: (Valtteri Bottas – Mercedes, from Finland) Does anyone know the ice hockey game, Finland-Russia, how did it end up?

Answer (off mike): Zero-zero after...

Q: (Daniel Horva – Racing Line) Valtteri, you said in Barcelona that strange clutch behaviour had cost you the win. I think the team changed it for you this weekend but have you already found what caused that problem?

VB: Well, on Wednesday I have so many questions about this already so I don't know. I'm sure the information is somewhere but yes, we've found issues and we fixed those and there's no concerns on that.

Q: (Christian Menarth – Motorsportmagazin.com) For both Mercedes drivers: I don't know who it was but one of you had a really big drift at the Lowes hairpin. Can you explain it because it looked really really cool and I've never seen anything like that in a modern Formula One car?

VB: Yeah, actually last week I went rallying in France so I had like a black-out in rally mode for one lap so... No, I just used a bit too much brake pressure at the rear and I had a drift, obviously not the quickest way around with this car.

Q: (Arjan Schouten – AD) Max, outside of the qualifying you mentioned some problems with the floor, I think? Can you explain something more?

MV: Yep, we were still building the car together.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) Lewis, but I remember in 2005 you celebrated your two victories in Formula Three and today you are celebrating again. Can you make a bridge between these two periods? At that time, did you imagine you could reach the point you have reached today in Formula One?

LH: I have a pretty good imagination but it's more like space stuff but I definitely... Where I am today is beyond my dreams, I would say. Yes, I was in Formula Three, I was obviously at McLaren and Mercedes and this was the perfect platform to be able to show your ability and I had a really great team. I had two really awesome races. I think the first one was pretty straightforward and the second one I clipped the barrier and I had a broken rear pullrod I think it was and I managed to pull it home and so I guess that was a cool demonstration of still being able to keep your cool even though you've made a mistake. And then the following year, I was fortunate enough to know Felipe so I got to spend a little bit of time with Felipe as he lived here and I had a really awesome time in GP2 and I know I was getting close. I remember when I was in GP2 winning the race here and I knew I was getting close and I didn't know when the opportunity was going to come to get to Formula One but every now and then I was like, I'm sure I can compete with the guys at the front, I'm sure, but obviously that was a long long time ago, but I still have fond memories of it. Honestly I prefer the older cars that we... the old go-karts back in the day were better than the go-karts today. You've got the water-cooled stuff today and the Formula Three cars that we had before were way cooler than the cars... they made much better noise and then obviously when I got to Formula One in 2005/2006, those cars started better than they do today but still the sport is fantastic but yeah, jeez, I'm re-writing the story or that story's being written as we go along and it's... who would have known it would be as great as this?

Ends