



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

**2016 Singapore Grand Prix
Thursday Press Conference Transcript**

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DRIVERS – Marcus ERICSSON (Sauber), Felipe NASR (Sauber), Jolyon PALMER (Renault), Sergio PEREZ (Force India), Daniel RICCIARDO (Red Bull Racing), Valtteri BOTTAS (Williams)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Congratulations on your marriage last week. While your private life is settled, clearly you will be looking for a new partner in a professional sense next year, as a team-mate at Williams. What kind of driver would suit, a rookie or someone more experienced?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Thank you very much. The one thing is it is a fact that I'm going to have a new team-mate next year and it's still not obviously confirmed if I will be with Williams or not, but yeah, new team-mate and I've always said and that's how I feel, the quicker team-mate you have, it doesn't matter who it is, as long as he's quick it always boosts the performance of both drivers and helps the team, so that's always good. And a team player would be nice, but obviously I have nothing to do with choosing the team-mate, it's completely up to the team who I will be racing with so I hope everything's OK.

The battle with Force India in the championship is very tight: they were ahead on points, you moved back ahead after Monza. Where do you think your relative strengths lie as teams?

VB: I think it's going to be a great battle between us and Force India, we've been really close the last six races, really depending on the track; some tracks they have their strong points and some places us. So I think overall we are very, very equal in terms of how quick the cars are so it will be just depending race by race and trying to maximise everything, getting the strategy right every time and having a good qualifying, trying to be ahead of them. I'm looking forward to the end of the year and it's going to be a good fight.

Marcus, coming to you: congratulations, 50th GP start this weekend, only 4th Swede to make that mark. Sauber is now hiring again, some solid signings the last few weeks, how is the team evolving??

Marcus ERICSSON: Thanks a lot. Yeah, 50 sounds like a lot of race, but it's nice. With the team I think we are definitely moving in the right direction. Like you say, we got some new signings, new personnel in the team, and it's good, with fresh ideas, it's positive for everyone I think. Also on the car side we got some updates going in the last couple of races and it's interesting, we're trying them out, trying to optimise them, and coming here to Singapore will also be very interesting for us because it will be the first time we really run the full new package we have introduced after the summer break, so it will be a very interesting weekend for us to see how far it gets us really.

What weaknesses were you working on with that update package and what are you expecting this weekend from the sort of test that Singapore provides?

ME: I think for sure it's just general downforce that we have been lacking and hopefully from the signs we have got so far is that we have gained quite a bit on that side. Like I said, it's been both Monza and Spa, the last two races that we have had this package; it's not been high downforce tracks. It's a bit of an unknown, so hopefully here in Singapore it's obviously a very high downforce track so we will see then how this update package is working.

Felipe, coming to you: In points here last year. It's always a complex race strategy wise as Valtteri was alluding to earlier on, but with three different tyre options this season, how do you see the variables playing out, Saturday and Sunday?

Felipe NASR: Well, yes it is, it's normally a very challenging track, very demanding for both the car and the drivers and I feel the tyres will play a big part on it this weekend, you know having such softer compounds. I will be curious to see how many stops will be going in the race and I think the key really is to understand the tyres, how much you can make them last, understand how the car is reacting on track, with the temperatures here being very high. So it's always a challenging weekend and Singapore always brings some surprises in terms of the racing always being exciting. A lot of things can happen so hopefully we are in a position to take any profit.

The driver market is in gear now, you've been linked with a possible move to Williams, there may be openings at Renault, obviously Sauber has had investment. What's your personal objective regarding next season??

FN: Well, it's difficult to say. Right now I don't have any news. Hopefully soon but right now I don't have much to say really. All I can say, at Sauber things are moving forward. I can see the team really stepping up a lot of new people coming in, so as I said, it's still a very attractive place to be, but it's still and unknown. Hopefully when I have some news I'll bring it in.

OK, thank you very much for that. Sergio, 23-race finishing streak, scored points in all five of your appearances here in Singapore. What do you like about Singapore and do you see this as a weekend where you'll get the edge back over Williams?

Sergio PEREZ: Yeah well, that's the target coming here. We obviously want to close up the gap. We lost out in the battle last race. We knew they were going to be strong there, so hopefully here we can close up and hopefully beat them. Singapore is a great place, it's a very unique race, starting from racing at night, the way you get your routine; it's totally different to any other race, waking up so late, going to bed also. Yesterday I was running at the track at 1am in the morning. Things like that are just not common in any other race. Also, the track is a very big challenge – mentally, physically, it's just very difficult to finish the race, not having a contact or a crash. So it's always important to make it until the end of the race. So hopefully I can keep my good score in Singapore with the points on Sunday.

You seem to hold the key to the driver market at present. Force India say you are definitely with them next year, when will we know for sure your plans for 2017?

SP: Well, I tried. I was hoping to be able to be in a position to announce my plans for this weekend. Obviously we got some delays. But I really hope that before the next race we can definitely announce where I'll be racing.

Any little hints?

SP: Well, I always say I'll be very happy if I can stay, if everything is fine for me to stay where I am.

Jolyon, you won GP2 feature race here in 2013 and you've outqualified your team-mate Magnussen in 3 of the last 4 races, do you feel it's an important moment to show what you can do with an eye on securing a seat for next season?

Jolyon PALMER: I think so, yeah. Still obviously the seats are in doubt, or up for grabs, so every race from now on is a chance to show what I can do. It's a track I really like here and I feel like I'm driving the best I've driven all season at the moment. The results haven't really shown in the last couple of races but I feel good within myself. Yeah, it's a track I really like, I've had some good success here before, so hopefully keep on the good form at the moment and I think this one will suit our car a little bit more as well. Hopefully we will be able to challenge a little bit higher and I can show what I can do a bit more.

That leads on to my next question: Renault have been rather erratic in qualifying, between row seven and row 11 of the grid depending on which race track, so is this more of a row seven weekend than a row 11 weekend?

JP: I think it's more of a row seven. Row 11, Monza was pretty much everything that we don't want from a track. It was high speeds; Renault has made good steps with the engine but we're still behind Ferrari and Mercedes, and then slow-speed corners and kerb riding, so it was everything we don't want. Here, the straight-line speed is not so much; the corners are more suited to us. Even though it's a street circuit, it's reasonably smooth, so I think this could be one of our best of the year.

Coming to you Daniel: twice on the podium here, front-row starter last year and Monaco pole sitter this year, that adds up to making you many people's favourite for this weekend, Do you share that view?

Daniel RICCIARDO: I think I've got a pretty good chance of the top 10, absolutely. That's about it.

Come on, you can do better than that!

DR: I hope so, but top 10 is pretty safe you'd think.

The narrative for this weekend seems to be a chance to put right what went wrong in Monaco, to take the win that was snatched from you in the Principality, do you have a sense of unfinished business and are you asking the team for perfect execution this weekend?

DR: It's obviously the next closest track to Monaco, so sure we look at it as a good chance to try to get the victory I've been after this season. With the team, since Monaco, a lot of things have been working better, in terms of I think we've executed a lot more on a Sunday and I've left Sundays feeling a lot happier the last handful of races, so that's been good on both sides. I feel I have executed as well good things on Sunday. Let's see. I'm not going to put too much pressure on myself or them for this weekend but I think deep down we obviously want to win. I believe we are a group of winners, so if there is a bit of pressure on us to get it done then I think we will thrive off that. Let's see what happens. I'm definitely prepared and excited. I don't know what I'm paying for a top 10, but it's safe money.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) Question for Valtteri, Monza was supposed to be a very good circuit for your car – and it was, you could compete with Red Bull. This, on the other hand, shouldn't be as good, so what are the expectations for this weekend?

VB: Yeah, definitely. Monza was a lot better than what we've seen in the few races before that with high speed circuits really suiting our car. Definitely had Red Bull had a bit of an upper hand but definitely we could keep them behind for quite a long time. And yeah, this is a completely different circuit. You need so much more downforce from the car, you need good mechanical grip, you need good tyre life. Last year it wasn't too bad for us actually, coming to the weekend slightly carefully but then ending up fifth in the race with reasonable pace all weekend. So I think there are still good opportunities here, even though it's maybe in theory the best – but I always see

every weekend as a new opportunity, especially here where with a good qualifying, and if we can get a perfect strategy, very strong points are still possible.

Q: (Wojciech Paprota – Swiatwyscigow.pl) Question to all of the drivers, a simple one. Do you think it's the hardest race of the calendar?

ME: Definitely. I think it's for sure the hardest race of the year. It's probably similar heat and humidity to Malaysia but just the fact it's a street circuit and not many places to rest makes it the hardest one. But I like it, it's a good challenge and you need to be really on top of your fitness. For me it's the toughest – but it's also one of the most enjoyable.

Jolyon?

JP: I've never raced it in Formula One but in GP2 it was hard. It was the hardest of the year in that so I believe these guys – I'm sure they're all going to say it's the hardest.

Felipe?

FN: I agree. I think it's an amazing event. Night race, very demanding as I said, for both car and driver. Really it's an endless track, you're just doing corner by corner and to get everything precisely correct, it's a challenge. The race itself, normally it brings a lot of surprises here so I'm looking forward to the weekend, as I said, we've been fighting to get, to sneak into those points, so why not this weekend? Let's try it again.

Valtteri, you find this the toughest?

VB: It is, at least physically at least it is the toughest. Mentally, I think it feels a bit like Monaco. It's very intense and needs to be zero mistakes during the race.

Daniel, bit of tiredness, fatigue coming in, affecting concentration towards the end? Always a bit of an enemy there I guess?

DR: Yeah, when you're a high performance athlete... it is, it's the toughest, sure. I think they touched on it, it's similar heat and humidity to Malaysia but you're surrounded by just the city and a lot of concrete, so it's the one race I feel where you open your visor to get some air and you're not getting any reward for that. It's just heat and stale air. In Malaysia there's a bit of circulation: even though it's hot you get a bit of a breeze but here, no. It's a track that you can't... if you come here unprepared, then you can't luck into a good result. You've got to come ready to go.

Sergio?

SP: I don't feel the heat at all! I think it's just a normal race. No, just kidding. I think it's a really hard race out there. The last ten laps, twenty laps, you're really praying for a safety car because it's just really hard to finish the race, physically. And mentally as well. Mentally it's a very big challenge because every corner, most of the corners, if you do a mistake you just touch the wall and it's a puncture or something like that. I would say for me it's definitely the most demanding race of the year.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action / Speed Sport) Daniel, the last couple of times on the podium you've poured the sparkling wine into your shoe and drank it. What's the background for all that?

DR: I didn't start it! Well, as far as I know I started it in Formula One but not worldwide. It was a few loose Aussies, from what I saw, the Mad Hueys, they're surfies and fisherman and just loose guys, they travel the world fishing, surfing and whatever and they like to drink a bit of beer and whatnot, and that's where the shoey began. On their travels they'd get people to do it as well and it's just a bit of a laugh. I know Jack Miller knows a few of the guys from the Mad Hueys, so when he got his win in Assen, I suspected he was going to do it, and he did, so I thought I'd keep the

Australian tradition going – and now Valentino's got in on the mix, I saw he Instagrammed it yesterday and he said "everyone loves a shoe", and "delicious", and all that. A few words I used for it. I think it's just a bit of fun now – everyone's enjoying it.

VB: How does it taste?

DR: Honestly, if the sparkling wine is cold, then it tastes good. Normally it's cold on the podium, if it's warm then sure, you'd get the sweat and that through it – but the cold taste kills the bad stuff, so it's delicious, as we said!

So we can expect a shoe on Sunday if you win?

DR: If I win, sure! If it's just a second or third probably not now. For a victory, I'd expect to see a few people do it with me!

Q: (Chris Lines – AP) Question for Dan, bit different tyre strategy between Red Bull and Ferrari this weekend in terms of allocation of super soft and ultra soft. Do you think the tyre strategy will be the key factor here or will there be something else?

DR: I think it can maybe decide a few things, whether it's on Sunday I'm not sure, obviously we've got freedom to use any of those tyres during practice. Maybe us or Ferrari for example, will change our practice runs now and use a different compound to try and have something similar for the race – but yeah, it can, here because it's so hot, the tyres do normally get a hard time and it's low speed corners, a lot of traction and the rears can get a hard time for sure so I think if you've got too many softer compounds, you might run into a bit of trouble in the race but we'll see. It's been quite exciting this year, being able to use three compounds over a weekend and having been forced to choose them months in advance. Sure, if we could have picked the tyres this week, we all probably would have done something different. It's a bit more of a lottery, makes it exciting and makes our practice runs perhaps a little bit more calculated.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports F1) Obviously since Monza, gentlemen, some quite seismic news in Formula One, new commercial rights holders, new owners in Liberty Media. As drivers, you keep saying that you'd quite like to have more of an input in the sport so if the new owners came to you and said what would you like to see in the future, to maybe make the sport better, to put a bigger smile on your faces, what would your advice be to them?

SP: I think I would love to see Formula One a lot closer, the competition a lot closer, closer teams, giving the midfield teams the opportunity to be capable of winning a race, fighting for titles. I think that would be just something great for the fans to see one race Williams on top, another race another team, that would just be very good and for that you need to change the system, how you divide the money because there's obviously a massive difference, so I think that would be a very good thing for the sport.

DR: Nothing springs to mind; obviously we always talk about bits and pieces but nothing, I guess, that anyone's heard before. Saturday races, like a Saturday race as opposed to Sunday, just so we can plan a bigger night on Saturday. That would be good fun!

VB: Yeah, I think we need to see first of all how next year is going to be with all the changes already fixed for next year with the new cars, bigger tyres, more grip. I think we need to see how it goes then.

FN: I would say a bit of what they have already said I agree with but I think the most important thing is to see closer competition between the cars, I think that's what I hear from people or from fans – they always like to see more fighting on track between car, between teams. I think the closing line is what were looking for but also next year we have a big change in terms of the cars being different. I think everything will be a bit more aggressive in terms of the racing itself so let's wait and see how it goes and we'll take it from there.

JP: Yeah, I would agree with these guys. I think the main thing is closer competition. At the moment, we turn up for a weekend and we pretty much know maybe it's two, four, maximum six drivers can win the race but it would be nice to turn up here and think maybe, you know, Williams can win or maybe Force India or maybe someone can put in a big surprise. I think that's the biggest thing which would change a lot of fan involvement and make it a lot more interesting to watch.

ME: Not much to add, I agree with these guys: closer competition throughout the grid and more teams getting involved in race wins and podiums. I think that will make a big difference for the attraction to fans. That would be the biggest thing for me.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) For the three drivers in the back row: not so long ago, you were fighting for championships and winning them and fighting for victories but you get to two thirds of this season and you have no points probably for the first time in your careers. Does that play a little bit on your mind when you go into a race weekend and how do you cope with it?

FN: Well, I guess I'm experienced at this. Last year I had plenty of opportunities to score points and it's very rewarding when you can come into a weekend knowing that you have something to fight for. As I said, most of it is the reward you get back but coming to this year, you're facing a lot more difficulties but on the other hand, you try to explore areas that you're not really giving a hundred percent attention to so I think that as a driver I feel a lot more complete this year. Any opportunity counts so when it comes to a race weekend like this in Singapore, we know that there are a number of facts that happen in the race, you must be ready because they can come any time so let's see. Three of us here, we don't have a point so let's see who gets it first, if we can...

JP: I'm not massively focused on it. Of course I want to score points but if we don't have the car to score points then there's nothing we can really do. I'm focused on my own job, basically doing the best job I can with the machinery I've got. The last two races have been quite difficult. Hungary was the better chance to score, I think this one will be a better chance to score but I think for me it's all about improving as a driver, doing the best job I can with the machinery I've got and then I'm sure... I know in the future Renault will be fighting for points. If I can do a good job with what I've got at the moment, then the points will come further down the line.

ME: Yeah, of course it's different to when we were in junior categories like I said, fighting for wins every weekend or at least aiming for them. Now it's different. When you're in a smaller team and you know you're going into a weekend when even scoring points is a big challenge - it's a different mindset but it's something you have to accept and that's how it is in Formula One. I think it's always been like that as well, that different teams have different strengths so you need to accept that and try and maximise the car that you've got and that's all you can do, focusing a lot on your own performance and maybe not look so much at the results because it's more important to try and maximise what you've got. But of course, it's a lot nicer if you can fight for points.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, you have scored only 26 points from the last seven races since Canada; what number of points would have satisfied you from the last seven races?

VB: Yeah, it's not quite as many as I was hoping for after being on the podium in Canada but it is what it is at the moment. I can't say the exact number of points but the absolute maximum we can... I hope as a team we can leave every single race weekend at the end of the year feeling that we maximised the weekend, that we got everything out of it and the same for me personally. As a driver, that's the main thing and hopefully that way we will be ahead of these guys (Force India).

Q: (S. Dipak Ragav – The Hindu) Sergio, for the last two years, Force India have had a slow start to the season. Do you think it's a concern for you, going into the next year with the regulations? And the second part of my question is if Force India finishes fourth, do you think it has the

ability, in terms of resources and infrastructure, to take the leap to beat the top three like Red Bull did in 2008, 2009?

SP: Yes, I think the team, especially this season, now that the rules are more consistent, I think we started with a competitive car. We just needed to figure out some set-up options on the car to improve the tyre degradation but the car straight away in qualifying was capable of achieving Q3s in the early part of the year so that makes a good difference. And when you look at the past, when we had the massive regulation change for 2014, on my third race I was on the podium for the team, so it shows that Force India is capable of adapting well to new regulations so I think we have the potential to do so. I believe that we are going to be in front of them (Williams) at the end of the year so I really hope that we move up and hopefully next year we can do another step forward which is going to be very tough. Now you're fighting Ferrari, Red Bull, Mercedes, so it's going to be very tough but I fully believe in the team and I think if we manage to finish fourth it will be a massive bonus for everyone in the team.

Q: (Phil Duncan – PA) Jolyon, have you been given any indication by Renault when you'll get a decision for next year?

JP: No, nothing yet, so yeah, nothing changes for me really: just keep doing the job, I'll know when I know but yeah, if I just keep doing what I'm doing. I know I'm in the mix but we'll just see how things pan out.

Ends