



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

**2017 FIA Formula One World Championship**  
**Chinese Grand Prix**  
**Post-Qualifying Conference Transcript**

**DRIVERS – 1. Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes), 2. Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari), 3. Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)**

**TV UNILATERAL**

**Lewis, many congratulations on what looked like a great lap at the end of Q3 there. Talk us through the lap and your session.**

**Lewis HAMILTON:** Thank you. Yeah, it's been an interesting weekend so far, obviously without testing yesterday. Today was a real challenge for all of us in the sense that we had to compile a lot of yesterday's testing into this morning and hope we'd hit the nail on the head with the balance of the car. But the Ferraris have looked so fast, through practice this morning and then through each qualifying session. We knew it was going to be close, and it was going to mean we would have to pull out all the stops and really have a very, very perfect lap, you know, a solid lap. I managed to just chip away at it from session to session. No major issues. But the last lap was my best lap, which is always the plan – sometimes it's in another session. The lap started off not as good as perhaps the Q1 first lap but then the rest of the lap got better and better – I think it may have been tyre temperatures or something, who knows. It felt strong and then obviously coming into the last corner knowing I was up a couple of tenths... it's always nervous going into Turn 14 because you want to break late and gain some but you don't want to throw away everything you've gained. And through the last corner and coming across the line, and then just waiting after that to see what everyone else had done. These guys behind were still finishing off their laps. So, very, very happy, super grateful for the huge efforts that the team have put in to keep us in the fight. It's more exciting than ever for me, because we're really fighting these guys, you know. It's amazing, and I think that's what racing's all about. It really pushes you to raise the bar every time you go out, which I love. Lastly, just a big thank you to all the fans. We've got a lot of British flags here in China, which is amazing.

**And Lewis what does it mean to you to take the 75<sup>th</sup> pole in the history of Mercedes?**

**LH:** Well, I've been with Mercedes for a long, long time, since I started when I was 13 actually. Since I've been in Formula One, all my wins, all my poles have been with Mercedes, so very grateful and thankful to be in the family, and to be a part of this amazing journey that the whole team is on, that this whole brand is on. I'd like to go along and keep stamping something in the history books so someday I can look back on it.

**Q: Sebastian, a great session from you and Ferrari as well. How important was it for you to get on the front row today?**

**Sebastian VETTEL:** We'll see tomorrow how important it was. It was a nice session; I enjoyed it a lot. I think if we could have been a bit quicker at the end I would have enjoyed it a bit more. I think I was very happy with the lap I had. Last corner maybe I lost a little bit – maybe I 'chickened' onto the brakes a bit too soon. Obviously it was very close with Valtteri, good job we got just enough margin to make it to the front row.

**Q: Do you think you have a better race car than qualifying car at the moment?**

**SV:** I think our car is strong no matter what. It obviously depends what these guys are doing. Certainly we've seen also in the previous years that in quali they seem to be able to really get on top of what they have. I think we can still improve. Let's see what the race looks like tomorrow. The conditions will be quite different. Maybe we should put fuel in the car and race now. I don't know what happens tomorrow.

**Q: Valtteri, have you worked out where you lost that one thousandth of a second to Sebastian?**

**Valtteri BOTTAS:** I think on one lap around here there are quite a few places. One thousandth, like you mentioned, it like this maybe? It's not so much. It is a real shame he managed to get between us. I think last time it was two thousandths and now it's one thousandth, so...

**SV:** I think it was two hundredths, I don't know.

**VB:** It's getting closer! So yeah it's a shame but the race is tomorrow. We are starting as a team first and third. It's a good place to start. The weather can be anything really tomorrow. Lewis was strong today, Ferrari was strong and we were always expecting a close fight today on track. I think it will be the same case tomorrow. Thanks to the team again. We did a good job in the short amount of time in the practice today to get the car set up well and it was enjoyable to drive, but let's see what tomorrow brings.

**Q: Thank you Valtteri. Coming back to you Lewis, well, it looks like you've got a real fight on your hands tomorrow. How much are you relishing this battle with Ferrari?**

**LH:** Particularly for tomorrow, it's going to be an unusual day. I heard it's going to be wet potentially, to start off the race. I've not driven the wet tyre this season, so that's going to be fun, to experience the bigger car, wider tyres for the first time. I mean I did an out lap yesterday on the extreme, but it was a very slow lap, so I've not actually experienced it. So tomorrow will be a new lesson for me to learn if it is wet and it will be interesting to see... I think the Ferraris have a very, very strong car, particularly a step-up more so in the race pace and how they treat their tyres, particularly when it's warm, so it will be interesting to see what the weather brings us tomorrow. But I think we have worked hard to understand our car a little bit better and I think whatever the case it's going to be close between us and that bodes well for one of the most exciting days to come for a long time.

**Q: Lewis, how much do you feel that you are on the back foot after the lack of running yesterday? How much has it set everybody's programmes back?**

**LH:** I don't know. I think the thing is we've all been here for so long and the more you drive the more you learn to minimise the loss of a day like yesterday. So, y'know, as a team we've learnt so much over the years, and as a driver as well. You learn, even while you're not driving, you're thinking about the steps that you need to take. So we try go into a day like today as if there hasn't been a loss. But as I said, this morning we had to do long run, short run, and a qualifying run in one short session, as opposed to doing it in three sessions – but I think we got as much as we could done and if we had had yesterday, I don't think we'd have been much further up the road, if any at all, to be

honest. Don't know how these guys feel but we've got great engineers who analyse and analyse and analyse and did a fantastic job and, I'm assuming, for Sebastian.

**Q: The weather forecast looks indifferent for tomorrow at best... it could rain. You've touched on it already that you haven't used the new full wet tyre from Pirelli. Does that make you nervous?**

**LH:** No, I'm excited about it, to be honest, because it's a new experience. I'm sure it's not a huge, huge difference to what we've had in the past. Perhaps a little bit. I'm kind of excited about. It makes it more... it's great to have some excitement. To be faced with a new challenge. You just have to be the most proactive, most reactive tomorrow. If it is wet. If it is raining I just hope that the clouds stay high so that the helicopter can stay take off so that we can actually do a race. We've got an amazing turnout here so we want to make sure we can put on a good race for them.

**Q: Sebastian, it's 380m from the grid to Turn One tomorrow. How significant is that going to be – or do you think you are going to be able to overtake tomorrow?**

**SV:** For me it's 388m, I guess. Hopefully I can make up those eight metres. Which side are we starting on. Where's pole? **[on the outside]** OK, so if I make up 8m then it looks pretty good. I don't know. There's a lot of things that can turn out in many ways tomorrow. That's one option that I mentioned but we don't know what the conditions are going to be like. We'll see. I think it should be an exciting race nevertheless. Obviously very limited running yesterday, hardly any for me. I think I did two laps but nobody really did a lot of laps, so we'll see. The car is good, the car is fine, so I'm confident, no matter the conditions that the car is working, and then we try to do the fastest race.

**Q: Lewis has already said that racing against someone like yourself is what racing is all about. Just how much are you relishing the battle with him?**

**SV:** Well, it's been a while so yeah, I think we're on a good way. Obviously it's a lot of fun when you fight for poles and wins. Certainly enjoyed Australia a lot, despite the outcome on Sunday which obviously was fantastic – but in general, to be able to fight at the front for the podium, and really fight for it is a great feeling. Same here. You go into the weekend and... we didn't really have much expectation because it's a completely different track but on the hand we did know that our car is working well. So, just need to keep it up. Need to try to improve it whenever we can. So overall, I can only give it back, and hopefully there's a lot more for the rest of the season. But this is only race two. A lot of things can happen but we need to obviously give everything we have to stay there.

**Q: Valtteri, as Sebastian says, this is only race two, it's your second race with Mercedes. How comfortable are you feeling in the team? Are you settling in? Are there still a few things you need to learn?**

**VB:** Definitely. Approaching this weekend, compared to Melbourne, the first one of the year, it was a different feeling. Being true, that one full race weekend with the team, doing the qualifying session and the race, with a podium finish, it was a nice start, so definitely feeling more and more comfortable. I think still, as I've been mentioning, there is a big learning curve for me with everything and I feel more better and better still, every single day with the team and every single lap with the car. So, yeah...

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) Maybe a question to all of you. Different circuit, same result as in Melbourne. The advantage a little bit smaller than in Melbourne. Where does Ferrari stand against Mercedes? What do you think Lewis, Sebastian and Valtteri?**

**LH:** I'm not really sure how to explain that. Close. The times show it as close as it's been. It's within a tenth, I think, the distance between us.

**SV:** Being pragmatic, I think if you take the average of what we've had so far, then you can say that in qualifying we're still lacking a bit and in the race I think we are a good match. I think Lewis was struggling a bit in Australia with his tyres. We weren't as much. I don't know what happens tomorrow. It will be a lot cooler. Certainly after tomorrow you can draw another average – but what matters most is that after 20 races you draw the average and we come out on top. That would be great! But it's a long way, as I said. So, for now we're very happy being able to challenge Mercedes and hopefully we can do that more and more.

**Q: And Valtteri? What did you expect the gap between yourselves and Mercedes to do here in China?**

**SV:** A thousandth!

**VB:** Yeah! I was hoping for one thousandth at least. We were always expecting it would be really, really close. Everything between the two teams is between one or two tenths, depending on conditions for the sessions, race or qualifying. That's why it's going to be interesting tomorrow.

**Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Seb, the distance between you and Lewis, Ferrari and Mercedes in general, seems to be even closer than last year and the past years in general. This difference in qualifying, compared to last year and previous seasons; do you think it can be a trend throughout the season?**

**SV:** Well, I think we've made a big step as a team so I think it's really thanks to the team that simply supplied me with a better car. I think in general I like this formula a lot where you can push on the limit. Probably the last couple of years it was creeping away from all of us, step by step, and with this year's cars it's back to how it was a long time ago and back to how it should be. I don't know if it's a combination of things; as a driver you jump into the car and you always try to do your best but as I said, big thank you to the team to supply me with a great car this year, right from the first outing and I have high hopes that we can still improve it from where we are. I know the team is still growing together, there is still a lot of progress that we can make but the way I feel and the way the team feels and the way the team shows it to me directly and indirectly, there's no rush. We are here to do our job and we know that we can be strong. I think we've laid a good foundation and now it's up to us to build onto it. Now it's April, we still have a lot of time. The most important thing, I think, is that we enjoy it.

**Q: (Keren Wang – Top Driver) Lewis, we've seen a bit of happy tail from your car today on your flying laps. Could you tell us a little bit about your car set-up; is it compromised for a wet race tomorrow or is it somewhere between wet or dry, either condition?**

**LH:** What was the first part? Happy tail, ah oversteer. It's actually a little bit understeery I would say.

**SV:** Where was the happy tail? One corner to another?

**LH:** It was pretty good. It's like a see-saw, you know? You can decide to have it more understeery or oversteery. This is a track where you need to have a very good front end. I think generally in Formula One it's not too often where we have to set the car up for a wet race, particularly when you don't know if it's definitely going to be wet so you set it up for what you're faced with that day and tomorrow you can make changes to the wing; tomorrow, for example, if it is wet, that's the only real difference you need to make. It's not like go-karting where you loosen everything off, you slacken the car off. You don't really

need to do that necessarily for... If we know it's a completely wet weekend and maybe we can do some small things but it's quite similar. We've got to make sure we've put ourselves at the front.

**Q: (Jens Nagler – Bild) To all three of you: what do you think will be the key tomorrow: the start, the strategy or perhaps even some overtaking which would be exciting?**

**LH:** I think probably in that order: start, strategy and then, depending on what the conditions are on the track... if it's wet of course there are opportunities to overtake, if it's dry it's very hard to follow as has been the rule now, particularly when there's thousandths between us. You lose a lot of thousandths behind each other with the loss of downforce. Yeah, I think it would be great if we get some... a wet race would be exciting.

**SV:** I think... mostly conditions. If it's dry we know what to do, everybody knows what to do. It's fairly easy knowing what to expect. If there's an element of wet then it can mix things up so we will see. I think we wake up tomorrow, look outside and see what to do. We have enough wet tyres so it should be fine if it's wet.

**VB:** Seeing the forecast, I think really making the most of the conditions throughout the race, being on it with the strategy. I think that's going to be one of the key points.

**Q: (Fu Yu – China International Radio) Valtteri, you're only a thousandth of a second slower than Sebastian on the front row. Do you think you could have done a little bit better and how confident do you feel about making up that gap tomorrow?**

**VB:** Always if you could do the lap again, especially when it's one thousandth, you can find it somewhere, especially with the short amount of running throughout practice. We only really had practice three. Yes, definitely, I could have done better but I think every driver on this grid, having got a second qualifying, would improve and then it becomes more and more tricky to improve.

**Q: (Fu Yu – China International Radio) How confident do you feel about making up that thousandth of a second tomorrow?**

**VB:** When we're on the grid tomorrow then it doesn't matter. I always tend to get all the points from the qualifying that I need to improve and what we need to improve as a team. We move on for tomorrow and tomorrow I'm not going to think about the one thousandth; it's a new day and a completely new opportunity and we are going to do everything we can to be one and two and for me still chasing my career-best result.

**Q: (Marius Salvini – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Lewis, pole position number 65 is even closer. What do you think about it, is it something of a magic number for you?**

**LH:** It really is, I think. Every pole has been – it might be hard for you to believe – but every pole position has been so unique in its own way. There's always been a different journey to gain that pole, there are different things that have happened on that lap. It's still today – and I'm sure it will never change – it's still so real that I have that amount of poles and to think you can have a pole in Formula One.... because the dream was to get to Formula One. And now, it's perhaps even more exciting, I'm nearing Ayrton, he had a lot of pole positions with less races. We know what he did back then was just phenomenal, the same with Michael but just grateful to be up there up amongst them. I definitely feel that what I love even more now is that I feel like more than at any other time, I feel like I'm really having to earn those pole positions being that it's so close, so again, on top of that the feeling is even better.

Ends