



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

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

DRIVERS

1 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

2 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

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PODIUM INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Martin Brundle)

Congratulations, Lewis, you led from start to finish, but it was pretty tricky at the beginning, the conditions looked part slick, part intermediate...

Lewis HAMILTON: It was incredible. Firstly, a big thank you to all the people here in Shanghai for coming out. Thank you. We've got such a great crowd here. Today was very, very tough for us all. It was difficult to know. I went out in inters initially, on the laps to the grid, and then I tried the slick and it was impossible, and then we all started on inters and it was very, very hard, because there was a lot of dry patches everywhere, mostly dry except for a couple of corners that were wet. So trying to keep the car on the track and look after the tyres at the same time was very tough. A great job done by Sebastian and this young dude here [Max Verstappen], who's always like...

[Max] has actually been voted driver of the day today, so he's beat you on that vote today.

LH: Oh, great, great! It's OK, I don't mind being on the top step! Lastly, I just want to say a big thank you to this team. I'm just so tremendously proud of everyone on my own personal team, in terms of my own like staff and that, but also my team who work so hard back at the factory to make this possible. And this race is so real; it's so exciting for me personally. I don't know how it is for everyone else but I hope they're enjoying it.

But he suddenly appeared just eight seconds behind you and closing you down at the end. You had to get back on the gas.

LH: Yeah, exactly. We were matching times. I think if there wasn't safety cars and stuff it would have been a lot closer.

Talking of that, congratulations Sebastian, a bit unlucky really, you pitted under the virtual safety car and there was a safety car straight after.

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, my start was OK but then I realized that the intermediates had quite a lot of degradation. It was very dry in some parts of the track so I knew they would not last. I was happy to take the risk. Obviously virtual safety car you save a bit of time in the pit stop. And then the safety car came just when I was about to start to feel that the dry tyre was a lot quicker, so I couldn't use the momentum, the advantage and I lost a lot of positions. But then I had a very exciting race; I really enjoyed it. I was stuck a little bit in the train for a while but then I finally made the move and then, yeah, I tried to chase Lewis down as much as possible but I had the feeling that every time I put a lap in he was able to respond, so I think we were a good match, it could have been a different race but a good recovery and as I said, wheel-to-wheel racing... I touched wheels with Daniel as well....

You took the paint off the side of his tyre!

SV: It was good fun at least.

Take us through those moves, because I think any racing driver in the history of Formula One would like those moves on his CV, because they were committed weren't they? Down into Turn 6 you were really going for it there.

SV: Yeah, obviously my target was to catch Lewis and I was stuck in the train and I was getting a bit angry or annoyed and I wanted to get by and I had the feeling that I could go a lot faster in these conditions, so when I was behind Daniel I saw him blocking down the inside because I had a good run out of Turn 4. I said 'OK, you have to try it around the outside, brake really late and hard'. Fortunately he didn't lock up. I had him in the mirror, checking, otherwise I have to open immediately before he would make contact. Then on the exit I was a bit compromised, a bit in the dirt, getting a bit of wheel spin, but then I got a bit my elbows out. Yeah, he really squeezed me, but it was good fun and I had the inside for the next corner.

Some cracking overtaking today. Moving on to Max. Wow, driver of the day as I said, the fans have voted for you. You had some pretty spectacular first few laps coming through the pack, tell us about it.

Max VERSTAPPEN: Yeah, it was very challenging. I think on lap one I passed nine cars. So, not to bad...

It was like a video game for you!

MV: More or less! It felt a bit like that. Of course very happy with that and then afterwards I think a very good race. I didn't have a lot of track time with the car balance from yesterday because I didn't do qualifying, so I was just basically nursing the car to the finish. And then, of course, very happy to be on the podium, I didn't expect that at all, especially starting 16th.

We sensed a bit of tension at the end. Daniel was catching you. You couldn't lap the Haas in front of you and you were getting a little bit anxious on the radio.

MV: I just wanted clear air, because I was already struggling a lot with the fronts and that doesn't help, but in the end I still finished on the podium, so very happy.

Great drive, congratulations, you gave us a lot of thrills there. Back to you, Lewis, you are equal on points now [with Vettel] after two races. This is going to be a real championship isn't it?

LH: I think it's going to be one of the closest ones, if not the closest I've personally ever experienced and I'm looking forward to this fight, not only with Sebastian but the other guys as well who are still going to be in amongst it. I think it's great that we have... we were

just saying that we were both pushing. Those last 20 laps or so really exchanging times. I kept having to be fed what times he was doing so I could try to match and he was closing the gap a little bit, but I managed to stay ahead.

You know what makes me really happy is you're all up here really smiling. You're enjoying these cars aren't you, you're enjoying the championship this year.

LH: We are because it's that close a battle, and the cars look better and they are nicer to drive. It's not the easiest to get past but this guy seems to find it possible, particularly when it's wet, so we'll have to watch the video and see what he's been doing.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Lewis, that was the third grand slam of your career: pole, win, fastest lap, led every lap. You've had a few minutes to reflect on it now: how good was that?

LH: It's been a fantastic weekend and very, very grateful for all the efforts that the team have put in to enable us to be where we are and where I am today. It's very overwhelming when you have a weekend like this, because I'm just a link in the chain and, when you really think about it, there's thousands of people involved, hundreds and hundreds of people involved in me being up here and us being where we are. So, congratulations to all of them. I hope they're all celebrating back home. I hope they're feeling the spirit, I hope they're feeling the fight... because it's on. With the race... qualifying was great, to be able to pull that good lap out, it put me in a great position. Start was fantastic: I'm so happy with the way starts are going to I need to keep that up! And then in the race, really just keeping my composure. Some really tricky conditions out there, particularly on the Intermediate. Then, after that, once we'd done the pitstop with the Safety Car, the speed was very low and being very cold, our temperatures in our tyres, they're like... they're just not working, they're so cold. So it was very, very easy to make mistakes and I'm just grateful I didn't. And then at the end, the last 20-odd laps we were just pounding around as fast as we can, exchanging lap times and I think that's what racing is all about. Perhaps in the future there will be times when we won't have a Safety Car and their won't be that six seconds gap, it'll be right on the tail either way. Excited for that.

Q: Who had the faster car today? Mercedes or Ferrari?

SV: Well, you won, so...

LH: Yeah, the only summary we can come up with is that. It is, as I said, very, very close and there were times when Sebastian put laps in and it was hard to even match the time. The last ten or 12 laps he was doing a 35.6 and I was doing a 35.8 and it was very hard to get to where he was. Then there was other times in the race when I was quicker.

Q: Sebastian, perhaps I can put that question to you as well. Who do you think had the faster car today?

SV: I'm maybe not clever enough but I try to not confuse myself. So I just go with the fact that who wins the race deserves to win. Every race we do I think the race winner deserves to win. So, yeah, Lewis did the best job. Obviously we were a bit unfortunate maybe with the Safety Car maybe early on – but even if it wasn't there you never know how it could have impacted on the race. Was it enough? We thought... I thought yes – but then it's a long race from there and it could have been a different outcome. But yeah, it was really good fun. Like Lewis said, I had a bit more to do in the race than he had. I saw he was controlling the pace, probably, in the beginning. Once I got past Kimi and Daniel I obviously tried to hunt him down but knowing that it would be difficult with that gap. And in the last couple of laps I asked the team to give me an average of what we needed to catch up etcetera, just to know what I have to do. When they came up with the

conclusion that it's a bit more than half a second a lap... yeah... I kept pushing because you never know, maybe Lewis is doing a mistake, or has an issue with the car so I wanted to keep the pressure on – but yeah, I enjoyed the fact we were racing, even though not side-by-side or right behind each other but five, six, eight seconds apart. To hear that he was pushing as well I think is good news. So in terms of pace it was probably a match. Sometimes he was a bit faster, sometimes I was a bit faster. Overall it was good fun.

Q: Could you have challenged Lewis had you not lost so much time behind your team-mate?

SV: Ah, would, could, should. I think Lewis was quick. Full stop. I think they did a good race, he did a good race, so to get into these kind of conversations, or discussions, usually there is no point. Today we finished second, very happy with that, we take it, good points. More than that, and much more valuable than that, it was an entertaining and fun race for me. I had some overtaking. It was difficult to get close to the car, like last race you felt the effect but here I think it's a better track to overtake and yeah, it's the way it should be in my opinion: you need to make it stick so it shouldn't come for free. You shouldn't just open the flap and sail past. It was good fun. I can't complain.

Q: Max, you've scored Red Bull Racing's 100th podium today – but when you ripped open your curtains this morning, did you really think third place was on from 16th on the grid?

MV: No, of course not. I was targeting... if we could score some nice points that would be positive but then the first lap was very challenging. I think I passed nine cars. So that's not too bad. From there on I think we made the right call with the change of tyres to slicks. It's a bit of a gamble but it worked out. I was a bit cautious to not go too early and it paid off. Then I was in a good position afterwards. I managed to get past Daniel in Turn Six and then I was building a gap. But then straight away I felt the balance of the car was a bit limited to the front so I was destroying the left front and I couldn't get the car to turn and that's what basically happened when Sebastian was behind me, just under braking, very difficult, locked up and went wide. Then had quite a bit flat-spot. Tried to continue for one lap but then I decided to box. I knew the last stint would be very hard with which lap I stopped, but I managed to stay in third and that's, of course, very positive, especially after starting 16th. It was a great and entertaining race, I think.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Fu Yu – China Radio International) Question to Max. Congratulations on a podium finish. You conquered much of the field ahead of you and surged up early on in the race. When did you realise a podium finish was in sight and what did you do after that? I mean, did you keep on pushing and hope for a better place or were you more conservative and trying to hold on to your third place?

MV: To be honest, with ten laps to go I looked on the board and saw I was third. Before that I didn't know where I was. I had to keep pushing because I had my team-mate behind who was trying to get past. And then I had a Haas in front of me. He didn't move out of the way and he was always one and a half seconds in front so it was very tricky for me to get the front tyres to work, y'know, with the understeer? So yeah, I had to push quite hard at the end – but that's how it should be.

Q: (Keren Wang – Top Driver) Max, do tell us more about the first lap when you said you passed around nine cars on the first lap. How did you find the grip so quickly on the first lap?

MV: To be honest, I had a good start, but I got a bit blocked because the two cars in front of me went into the middle so I had to back off, but still I gained one or two positions and

then, yeah, basically just trying to find a gap so trying to go round the outside in turn one, I got another car, then inside turn two, another car, outside turn three, because there was space, trying to find grip because when you're behind a car you lose a lot of downforce so just trying to find some free space and basically everything happened... also turn six, turn seven, eight, always trying to go around the outside or inside and it worked. Yeah, nine cars is quite a lot on one lap but of course very happy that it worked.

Q: (Ma Yue – Shanghai Daily) Just wanted to ask you all, do you think the weather was an advantage or disadvantage for you?

LH: I think the weather often makes it more exciting. These are some of the most exciting circumstances when you have a track that starts wet and it goes through a drying phase. It just adds so much more fun and more of a lottery into the equation, so then your smart decisions, driving and how you utilise the tyres. Driving in the dry is a great thing or just in the wet is also very tough but this one is quite spicy with both in it.

SV: Nothing to add.

MV: Well, for me, definitely for me today it worked out because I started 16th, so in the wet it's easier to overtake. I think it was a perfect race for me because then afterwards you go on the slick tyres, you have passed most of the field already and you are basically back in the position where you should be.

Q: What do you think you could have achieved, Max, had it been dry?

MV: Well, not third, for sure. Maybe sixth? Good conditions for me.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sebastian, what do you expect from the Bahrain race, another great battle against Lewis as in Melbourne and maybe better than today?

SV: I don't know what to expect. Obviously in a week we will know. I think if we can challenge Mercedes again, that's very good news. They are very very strong. They have had a very very strong run the last couple of years. This year as well, so a good package. If we can be close it's good. I think we need to look after ourselves. I think there's stuff that we can do better, must do better, can improve so I'm happy to get a surprise, but expectation I don't really have.

Q: Before we move on to Max, Lewis, what are you expecting from Bahrain?

LH: Being that it's often a warmer race, Ferrari is very good in hotter conditions. These were quite good conditions for me today with our car. When it steps up in temperature... so far in the first race it's been shown as not the greatest for us just yet, so we're just learning on the tyres. Hopefully it will be better... it will definitely be better than it was in the Melbourne. I think they will be very very quick in the next race but there's a lot of straights there as well and we've obviously got, I think, still the strongest power unit on the grid, so I think that will come into play, for sure.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Max, was that the best race of your career?

MV: I always find it difficult to compare but it was definitely one of the best, yeah, of course very happy with it. Looking back to last year, I think a victory is always very special so it's one of my best for the moment and Brazil was also very nice but this is definitely in my top five, I think.

Q: (Oscar Garshagen – NRC) There were in the last weeks some issues with your car, Max. Does this third place mean that those issues are behind you right now?

MV: Difficult to say. On true pace, both Ferrari and Mercedes should be ahead with both of their drivers so we still need to work very hard to catch up. I think at the moment we're a bit in a lonely competition because in front of us they are too quick and behind us they are too slow but like I've already said before, we are working really hard and trying to close the gap but it's not that easy. But we'll keep pushing hard.

Q: (Arjan Schouter – AD) Lewis, I was just wondering how you see this young Dutch guy next to you? He's delivering all those overtaking shows; what do you think of it?

LH: I quite like him up here next to us; makes me look younger when I'm up here. It's good to have a younger person around and yeah, Max has obviously done a fantastic job since he's been in the sport and I think he's been a real breath of fresh air for everyone so obviously he's got a great following and he's definitely been in some great situations in some races and really maximised above and beyond in those, which is why he gets driver of the day. It's a lot harder to do that when you're in the lead of a race, obviously, because you can't really do much overtaking.

MV: If you want to swap it's alright.

LH: No... Honestly, I hope that Red Bull can improve through the season because I think a third element in the fight I think would be even more exciting.

Ends