



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

## **2018 FIA Formula One World Championship**

### **Chinese Grand Prix**

#### **Saturday Post-Qualifying Press Conference Transcript**

**14.04.2018**

#### **DRIVERS**

**1 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)**

**2 – Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN (Ferrari)**

**3 – Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)**

#### **TRACK INTERVIEWS**

**(conducted by Davide Valsecchi)**

**Q: Sebastian, what a lap, it was just amazing. And then the last sector, how good it was, it was something unbelievable.**

**Sebastian VETTEL:** Yeah, I was happy with the whole lap, not just the last sector. The car was really amazing. It just kept getting better, so really happy. I knew that on the first lap I had some mistakes. I lost the rear at Turn 3 at the exit of the low-speed, and then 6 again, so I was a bit beaten up, but then I knew that if I got a tidy lap and I have a little bit of margin then I could push.

**Q: Do you ever check the reaction of the fans? They love it!**

**SV:** Yeah, really good. Also in the hairpin, in Turn 14, just under braking, outside, I see the people going crazy. It's really nice.

**Q: Kimi, you were on pole just until the last sector of Sebastian Vettel. You have to be proud of your quali? I know it must be disappointing but your drive was excellent today.**

**Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN:** It was OK, but not good enough. It's not exactly what I wanted, so, yeah, we go tomorrow and see what we can do.

**Q: About tomorrow: what do you think you can do?**

**KR:** Well, we try to improve. Obviously it's going to be a long race. We need to stay out of issues and go from there and see what it brings.

**Q: Valtteri, how was your quali? It seemed that you were struggling a bit but then just at the end you could improve. What do you think, how was your Mercedes today?**

**Valtteri BOTTAS:** I think for us it was quite straightforward honestly, as a qualifying, run by run understanding the tyres, getting them to work better. But we never could achieve similar grip levels to Ferrari today.

**Q: Let me check it out, tomorrow, first row, Turn 1, how is it going to be?**

**SV:** I don't know. We find out tomorrow. Looks like on Kimi's side there's more rubber, so I need a good start!

#### **PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Sebastian, just talk us through that session and how you built up to that incredible time of 1:31.095?**

**SV:** Yeah, it was indeed a crazy session – the car was unbelievable and it just got better. I think right from the first lap in the first of part of qualifying, in Q1, I was really happy and in the end we didn't have to do much on the car. I didn't have to fight so much finding the last fine tunings. I was very happy with the settings I had from the beginning. Usually you change quite a lot, you change your mind... it was tricky, because also the wind was changing, sometimes more, sometimes less, and a bit gusty as well. Trying to look around the lap to see where the flags are, trying to get a reference. The last lap in Q3 I knew I could step it up. I knew I had a bit more in me, because on the first run I had two moments, out of Turn 3, accelerating I was probably a bit keen. The same out of Turn 6, I lost the rear twice, so I lost a bit of momentum in those places. So I knew that I had a little bit more and obviously in the last lap I got it all together and very happy that when I crossed the line I was looking up to see the screen and I saw something green, which is usually good, and little bit of purple. Really pleased; it was a tight session but I think again a great result for the team.

**Your car seems to be getting stronger by the race. Are you surprised by the gap to Mercedes this weekend?**

**SV:** Yes, we are. I think the first three races have been a bit different now. The tracks are quite different to each other and to have that much of a gap is a bit of a surprise. But I think it's also a track where you just need to get in and find that sweet spot and if you are a little bit out then easily you drop a little bit of time, so I wouldn't be surprised tomorrow if that gap disappears and it will be a very tight race. Obviously, I wouldn't mind if it stays there but I think it will be a tight race amongst the top three teams, and a long, tough race, but obviously it's good to start from the front.

**Q: Kimi, coming on to you, you've been hooked up all weekend. Very, very close to your team-mate. Just talk us through the session from your point of view.**

**KR:** I think it was pretty straightforward. Not much really happened. Obviously after the morning it was a bit unknown where I was going to be with the wind and everything. I was pretty OK. Not much to say that was wrong. For sure there are things that we can improve always – but that's a never-ending story. It was close. How close I don't even know but close enough to make a difference, a few corners here and there. So, yeah, not ideal but tomorrow is another day. We'll see what happens.

**Q: You say tomorrow's the day. You're going to be starting the race on the soft tyre, as are the top four drivers. Was that a straightforward decision – or were you tempted to start on the ultrasoft?**

**KR:** It was quite an easy decision, at least in the minds. If you cannot be fast enough... that we only find out in qualifying always but I think it was quite straightforward decision. We'll see how it plays out tomorrow. It's a bit unknown tomorrow.

**Q: Valtteri, just talking about that gap to Ferrari. Sebastian has already told us that he's surprised at the size of the gap. Are you?**

**VB:** Yeah, we are. We thought coming into today that we would be fighting for the pole position but it was definitely out of reach today, there was nothing in the lap that we could have gained that much. I think there's a little bit in terms of getting the tyres absolutely perfect for the lap – but it's not half a second. You could feel it if it would be that big. So, I think they have a really strong car. We can see it, especially in long corners, Turn One-Two, they make some good gains to us and obviously not without any speed difference on the straights, they can keep the gains they make in the corners – so we definitely have work to do but yeah, tomorrow is a different day. Again, a long race ahead and like we saw last weekend it probably will be close. Hopefully we can make it up tomorrow what we lost today.

**Q: Can we elaborate a bit more about tomorrow. Do you think you're going to have a more competitive race car than you had today?**

**VB:** hmmm... it's difficult to say. We expected to go into today, that we would be fighting for the pole. From our numbers, it's going to be very close between us and Ferrari – but as they were quicker today, we don't know. But we will for sure try with everything we can. Obviously, we start on similar tyres so there's not going to be massive differences with the strategies but yeah, we need to try and take the opportunities.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Question for Kimi. Kimi, the first two sectors of your final lap were the fastest in the session so far, what happened in the final sector?**

**KR:** Nothing really. I lost some time but... I don't know why. It wasn't like I did some big mistake but yeah, need to see, I don't know right now.

**Q: (Christian Menath – Motorsport-Magazin.com) Question for the two Ferrari drivers. It's always a balance between race pace and qualifying pace. Now, as you've seen the gap to the Mercedes, do you feel you've sacrificed race pace a bit too much for qualifying pace?**

**SV:** No. No, I think we try to look at both, obviously, and tomorrow the forecast is quite different so I think we kept that in mind. Obviously we see how it works tomorrow but the answer is still no.

**Kimi, anything to add?**

**KR:** I honestly don't know how you could sacrifice something today to be better tomorrow. We have nothing that you could change like that. I never... as long as I remember, there has never been a case like that. You have somehow different setups for two days. It's what you have. If it's fast in qualifying it's fast in the race, if it works.

**Q: (Yiyi Duan - Titan Sport) Kimi, very good qualifying lap but still not good enough so what details do you think can be improved if you want to overtake your teammate, if it's possible, in tomorrow's race?**

**KR:** Well, obviously first of all we need to make sure that we run a troublefree race. Obviously that's the first point and then we have to see how it pans out, obviously, so it's a long race. We know what we're going to do between ourselves so there's nothing... I think the start will be a big part of it and who knows? We will see how it pans out and what it brings but we need to make the best out of it.

**Q: (Keren Wang - Top Driver) Valtteri, you mentioned that you were struggling to find the grip level that you had yesterday. Was it because of the low temperature, does that mean that your car is less competitive under low temperature conditions?**

**VB:** Well, I think the grip levels came up, for sure, from yesterday so in a way it was better but I think I said, I just struggled to find as much grip as Kimi and Seb. I said maybe some part of it can be from the tyres but I think some of it must come from the car. I don't know if yesterday... it's (tomorrow) going to be quite different to today, definitely warmer, a few degrees warmer with the air and definitely on the track; with the sun it's a question mark. But we don't think we are less competitive on a cold track. I thought we struggled a bit in Bahrain with the heat! For sure, we always need to understand everything better but for sure we need to make the car better as well.

**Q: (Christian Menath - Motorsport-Magazin.com) Seb, you had some problems yesterday; I don't think the balance was alright and on the long run the lap times dropped a bit. Why did it go so much better today? Did you change something dramatic in the car or what happened?**

**SV:** We made some small changes but I think it was already pretty OK yesterday afternoon. I think in the long run I was catching traffic and (on) the other one it started to rain so I think for everyone it was a bit compromised, the amount of laps that you got. Yeah, I think overall I was happier today. Obviously it helps a little bit to focus on one lap as well, if you get the P3 session right you get the better feeling for the car so between practice and qualifying we didn't do hardly anything. I think the overnight changes that we did, they were working and they made the car a little bit better. I was a little bit happier with the front end overall. I hope we can carry that momentum and feeling, obviously, into the race tomorrow.

**Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Valtteri, are we seeing a recurrence of Mercedes's struggles on the softest compound Pirellis from last year? And in those scenarios why do you think you are able to get more out of the car than Lewis?**

**VB:** I think we saw in the races before that in general we've been a bit better with the harder compounds. That is something that we're still working on, to get more out of the softer compounds and I think Ferrari is doing something better on that so yes, for that. I think the gap between me and Lewis was really small, it's been quite small all weekend so it's about fine details. I haven't seen the lap so it's difficult to say, really, why I was ahead but yeah, it's been close between us all season so far so that's how it is.

Ends