



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2018 FIA Formula One World Championship

Azerbaijan Grand Prix

Post-Race Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS

- 1 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)**
- 2 – Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN (Ferrari)**
- 3 – Sergio PÉREZ (Force India)**

TRACK INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by David Coulthard)

We have our top three here. Lewis Hamilton just being weighed in. We just have to wait for the guys to get their helmets off. We've got a very happy Checo Pérez there and Kimi Räikkönen. Checo, you're first with the helmet off: fantastic, absolutely brilliant, last time you were on the podium was here.

Sergio PÉREZ: Yeah, two years ago. I think today I did the best two laps of my whole career. The last two laps with Sebastian behind, with cold tyres, it was so difficult. I was on the supersoft tyre. I had to keep a very strong rhythm, trying to keep close to Räikkönen, to make sure that Sebastian didn't get close enough, and in the end we did a real... I'm speechless.

Great stuff, great job indeed. We'll come across to our race winner, Lewis, that was the perfect example of you never give up, running down with cold tyres at the re-start. Could you predict what was going to happen with Seb?

Lewis HAMILTON: Definitely not. Really quite an emotional race to be honest. Valtteri did such an exceptional job today and really deserved to have the win. Also, Sebastian did a great job. I think it was really, really fortunate today, so it feels a little bit odd to be up here, but I've got to take it. I didn't give up, I keep pushing but definitely a very untidy race from me.

Well, it was absolutely a fantastic race to see, congratulations Lewis. We'll jump over to Kimi Räikkönen. Tough start to that grand prix, you came together with Ocon. The Clerk of the Course thought it was a race incident. I guess you have a different point of view?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Yeah, well, obviously I was inside and I think he probably didn't see me. It's pretty difficult sometimes to see. So obviously he just turned in and I was there. It wasn't ideal the start for me but I didn't get worse off from that, so I was lucky in that way. A difficult race after that. I tried to come back and at certain moments I felt good but I struggled a bit with the tyres, to keep them warm enough. I just tried to play the long game and to stay there, expecting issues. It paid off, but it wasn't easy.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Lewis, many congratulations, win number 63. You've already said it wasn't the easiest – but are you happier with the car this weekend than in China last time out?

LH: A little bit, yeah. In all honesty, I think I struggled throughout the weekend and I'm definitely struggling to extract, I think the car's potential but also my potential so it's definitely been a little difficult, particularly the last two races but also with the tyres in Bahrain. But I have to be happy with today. I have to be thankful and grateful for today because it is such a tricky race and you don't know what's going to happen: Safety Car comes out and you can lose out and lots of different things happening within this race but what's important is just to keep your head down and keep going and live to fight another day. I came out in the lead and honestly I couldn't believe that I was where I was, that I had a Ferrari behind me and I was just praying that I could keep it together, stay focussed and bring it home. So, we've definitely got a lot of work still to do, we still are behind, whilst we finished ahead today that was due to, as I said, lots of different circumstances getting in the way. But Kimi was nearly on pole yesterday, two-tenths ahead of Sebastian, their pure pace is a lot ahead of ours at the moment. Then, within the race, I'm sure Sebastian was managing but I'm sure their pace also in the race is a little bit up on ours. We definitely are there in the mix and we've not got a terrible car at all, by any means. We've just got to refine it a little bit and make it a little bit easier to drive. She definitely isn't as easy to drive as it was last year. So yeah, that's what we're going to continue to work to.

Q: And a sense of relief to be back at the top of the Championship?

LH: Hmm... I definitely don't feel relieved at the moment. I have really mixed emotions. Obviously, I could hear constantly I was battling with my team-mate over time, over the pitstop window and ultimately Valtteri had done an exceptional job. Obviously, I did a good job in qualifying and put myself in a good position – but there were a lot of faults in the race, which is rare for me – but I struggled with the car, struggled with the tyres and that's something I don't take lightly, so I've definitely got to go away from here and work even harder to make sure that there's not a repeat performance-wise of today for myself.

Q: Kimi, so close yesterday, so close today. Is there a sense of frustration building inside you now, of what do you have to do to win a grand prix?

KR: No, not really, yesterday I can only look in the mirror and the reason is easy to know. Yeah, it was frustrating, as I said earlier, I was taking it easy into the corner and I still managed to throw it away, so that is more painful that just if you happen to know that you have to try something to be fast enough – but that wasn't the case. Yeah, pretty eventful race today. Got a destroyed front wing and tyre in the first few corners. I had a good feeling sometimes but was struggling to switch the tyres on. It was kind of on and off. I had a great many close moments. Even on the way to the grid I was pretty certain that it's in the wall already but I managed to get it away from it. Too many close calls. The feeling was there but not consistently. I thought, OK, I just try to go as fast as I can and a little bit safer and the Red Bulls, looking at what they were doing earlier in the race it was pretty certain something will happen later on when they get close to each other. Everything changed after that and once put the other tyres on and again it felt OK and it all played into our hands. Very definitely a better day than yesterday but it still... second is not what you want but looking where we were earlier, you take it and we go from there. We know we have the speed. We just have to put things together, and I'm sure it will come.

Q: Checo, great to see you and Force India back on the podium. It's been a dramatic turnaround by the team over the last month. How confident are you that you can stay where you are going forwards?

SP: Well, obviously, this result is a coincidence of so many things happening but it's not a coincidence that we are always there to take anything that is offered to us. I think our battle is not here, to be honest, it's the midfield and finally we got plenty of points today with this podium, that we can close up the gap to the cars ahead, to the Renaults. I think we were definitely the fourth-best team this weekend. In two weeks' time, we have a very important challenge. Barcelona is where really the car is... you show all of your potential there. It will be very interesting to see where we are. I believe that we are making good progress. Up to now we only had one point as a team. It's definitely a massive motivation for all the boys that are doing a fantastic job. They did an incredible job with the stops. With the strategy. Yeah, what else can I say? Amazing job.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Kimi, you've had a lot of bad luck in the races this season. You've had some big results go amiss through no fault of your own. Do you feel that you got

a bit of that luck back today and how important is this for you to really kick on for the rest of the season?

KR: Well, I wouldn't say that I have had a lot of luck over the years, but I don't count on luck. You cannot count on that. I think you get what you deserve in a way and sometimes you are a bit luckier than other times but if I take over the years, I'm far from on the positive side yet. Maybe today certain things worked in our direction but then whatever happened in front of us are self-made issues in many ways. Stay out of trouble in this kind of race and definitely knowing what happened last year, it's going to pay off. I'm more happy that I have the speed - I know that I have the speed. We just didn't do it: the mistake yesterday and some issues earlier. That's the main thing, that we have the speed. We just need to put it together and I'm sure that we can do even better.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) Lewis, we didn't see Valtteri hit anything; did you see him hit anything on the lap he had in front of you? Do you think there was still debris around the area where Romain had crashed before?

LH: For me it was impossible to see. I was obviously chasing Valtteri and it was so blurred, the vision is quite blurred at that high speed so all I could see was a few things fly away from his car and his speed reduced massively so I lifted and I didn't really know what had happened, so I couldn't tell you. And I couldn't see any debris on the straight but the guys were telling me there was some debris there but there was also debris where Grosjean had crashed. It was all on the right side, before the left, fast lefthander so I can't honestly say where it came from.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) Kimi, Checo hit you on the first lap, then you had the incident with Ocon. Was your car damaged for the rest of the race? Did you feel there was something lacking there?

KR: Honestly, I don't know. Obviously we destroyed the front wing and right tyre but then they changed the front wing so I didn't check the car at all. Then also, I think on the first lap, after the restart, on the little kink, coming on the last part of the straight, I hit the inside wall at full speed so I'm pretty lucky that the front wheel didn't go. I was expecting to go quite fast but I was lucky. It felt OK, the car, honestly. I struggled a bit with the tyres sometimes but apart from that I'm sure there wasn't big damage.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Lewis, you mentioned that you think Ferrari's still a bit ahead of Mercedes at the moment. We saw exceptional pace from you in Australia, you've sort of struggled since then. So do you think that in order to get back on terms with them or get ahead it's going to be upgrades that you require or just unlocking more from the package you have at the moment?

LH: I think the performance upgrade battle will be important, to see how that development goes between both teams, so that will definitely be important. I think more unlocking the potential of the car. Australia, we started on the right foot on the Friday and it progressed and got better and better. Since then, every weekend we've generally started a couple of steps – at least – behind the Ferraris and struggled to catch up. So whilst there has been a lot of work that has been done, we are still, today, performance-wise, we are still behind them. If you look at them, they had a little bit more downforce this weekend yet they were a little bit slower on the straights but quicker through all the corners. The middle sector was always three tenths up, three or four tenths up, which we just couldn't catch up so their package really suited this track perfectly, I would say. Maybe ours did in Australia but I would imagine they just didn't unlock their potential in that race, particularly, and since then have. But I don't think we're under any illusions that we have the fastest car or that we don't have work to do. We know that. Everyone's working as hard as they can but we've got to keep pushing, really got to keep pushing. I've got to figure out how to get on top of this car a little bit more. Australia, as I said, I was really comfortable with it and since then I've not been and I don't really know why, so I've got to try and work on that.

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