



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

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Spanish Grand Prix
Post-Race Press Conference Transcript
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DRIVERS

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- 2 – Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)**
- 3 – Max VERSTAPPEN (Red Bull Racing)**

TRACK INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Paul Di Resta)

Lewis, what an absolute masterclass. You had an answer for everybody today out on track.
Lewis HAMILTON: Thank you so much. I couldn't have done it without this incredibly team. These guys have done an amazing job and I'm just really proud of everyone. Today, the car and myself, I felt that synergy today, which I hadn't been feeling for the whole year, so it's a good feeling.

Back-to-back wins, is this where Mercedes' season really kick-starts and you take the fight to Ferrari?

LH: This is when we are going to start trying to continue to apply the pressure. A 1-2 for the team. We have the Mercedes board here with us who have been supporting us from day one, so it's great to have them all here and see that true force within the team – strength in depth. So I hope we can continue. And a big thank you to all the fans that have come out because the fans have been incredible, as they always are here, and I'm glad the weather stayed good.

Valtteri, a very solid day. A better strategy there to beat the Ferrari in the end after he got past. Are you happy with it?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Well, of course I wanted to fight for the win of the race today, but for us as a team it such a good race. We had such a good car and the team was so reactive today with the strategy. I never believed that we could do one stop, but we could, so with that I'm happy.

You need a little bit of luck on your side, but what here and next? In front of the Mercedes-Benz management you sit [at the top of the] the Constructors Championship and that's exactly what you set out to do isn't it?

VB: Indeed. I think, as a team, this weekend we have been perfect, and we just need to continue like that and for me also the wins are going to come.

Q: Max, very unlucky. We can see the front wing damage on your car you picked up after the Safety Car, but fighting spirit, P5 to P3, that's a good day at the office.

Max VERSTAPPEN: Absolutely. The car was working really well. As you know, it's just really hard to pass, We just stayed close to everyone in front of us and we got the luck with Kimi retiring but

then the degradation of the tyres went really well, they were handling really well, so I think that gave us third position today.

Q: You could always take the challenge, you're a fighter to the end. Did you think after the Virtual Safety Car you had a chance of catching Bottas?

MV: No, I think he was a bit too far away, but of course I had to keep pushing, because I had Sebastian behind me. I just wanted to see how my front wing was holding on, but it seemed alright. It doesn't look as nice but it's alright.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Christian Menath – Motorsport-Magazin.com) Question for Max. We heard Daniel on the radio saying he was faster than you at the beginning of the race. Did you know that, did the team tell you anything about it and do you have an explanation for why you were so much faster afterwards than Daniel was?

MV: I was just controlling my pace. Yeah. I mean I was stuck behind Kimi. I can't drive over him. So, yeah, I was just driving to what I think was best for the tyres and yeah... You could see it all the time. At the end of the two stints I was very quick, so yeah. I guess that's always the case. If you see the guy ahead is stuck and you are catching up, you're just like 'aw, guys I'm faster'. I would probably have said exactly the same thing.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, three second places in five races. When you have to lose, does it make it any easier when you lose to your team-mate?

VB: Well, you know, there's always a big part of me, if we're one-two, and if I'm second and Lewis wins, big part of me is really happy for us as a team – because that means we are strong as a team and we are getting the results we want. But then of course there's always a part of me not happy being second because I want to win races – but it's still a long year ahead and y'know, I'm a racer but I'm also a team player but, for sure, second is not ideal but for us today, it couldn't be better for us as a team.

Valtteri, were you surprised to see Vettel pit under the Virtual Safety Car?

VB: Yes, and no. We honestly never thought it would be possible to do the race quickly with one stop but the conditions changed and the tyres were behaving better than expected today, then it was possible. I'm happy the team was so reactive and we could spot that and maybe Ferrari didn't. I think we have good racing intelligence today.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Max, the front wing damage, you mentioned you were able to solve the front wing damage with some tools. How much of that was adjusting stuff within the car, how much was adjusting your driving style, and did you think that it was going to have a bigger impact than it did?

MV: Initially I thought so but then I kept going and yeah, I felt a bit more understeer in Turn Three and Nine, and maybe braking a bit deeper into hairpins but, yeah, it was not too bad to be honest. I opened a bit with some tools and all good. It was a little bit slower but I don't think it affected me too much.

Q: (Roope Visuri – Yle) To Valtteri, as in raw speed, do you feel you could have beat Sebastian?

VB: Yes. It felt like I had a lot more pace all through the race. As everyone knows it's extremely difficult to overtake here and I could always put pressure on him when we needed – but you need such a big gap between the pace to get through. We were waiting for the next opportunity as we missed the first opportunity during the first pitstop, waiting for the second pitstop if we could have done anything. I think there would have been a chance and I think with the strong car we had today, there would have been opportunities later. So... but yeah, I'm happy we made better decisions as a team and could get ahead like that.

Q: (Daniel Horvath – Racingline.hu) Lewis, we often say the season really starts in the Spanish Grand Prix. Do you think it can be a turning point in the Mercedes versus Ferrari fight?

LH: I think it's obviously a little bit early to say but I would like to hope that it could be part of a turning point. There is... race by race we're understanding the tyres more, which is a bit battle for everyone. We could just as easily go to the next race and struggle getting our tyres working and be nowhere. So, it's a little bit early to say. We do after the five races now have a much, much better

understanding of the car, of what we need to do to get the car to be working – but we still have learning to do, improvements to be made. We still need to add performance to the car throughout the year, so that's what we're going to be continuing to be working on.

Q: (Joe van Burik – Autocar NL) To all three: looking back at the weekend, do you think the three tyre compounds available were too similar?

LH: It was a very easy one-stop here and the tyres were very very similar but we have already spoken to Charlie. We spoke with Charlie and we spoke about potential options for next year or even later on this year, spreading the compounds out a little bit, making it a bit more racy. It was just so difficult to overtake. I was on fresher tyres than Max. These cars, more so maybe at this track, but following is even worse than I can remember before. Being that it was really windy, as soon as you get like four seconds behind, you start to feel – it's a long distance, it's like a hundred meters or something, maybe more - behind another car and you can feel the effect of the car ahead. You shouldn't be able to feel it until you get right right up their tail but it starts affecting the car already and you start to lose the momentum as you get closer and with these tyres... I think at the time I had a harder tyre which was slower so I couldn't catch and overtake, even though I had much much younger tyres. So the fundamentals definitely aren't right and need to be improved. Hopefully they'll do something more exciting later on in the year.

Q: Valtteri, do you agree?

VB: I think we knew it, coming to this race. What we saw in winter testing, there was nearly no difference between the compounds and it was the same this weekend so I think it was pretty much expected.

MV: I agree.

Q: Very long first stint for you today.

MV: Yup. The tyres just hold on better. I guess also the tarmac plays a role in this but yup, we saw that already in winter testing as well.

Q: (Lennart Bloemhof – Volkskrant) Max, how much does this race feel like it is a turning point in your season?

MV: Feels nice to be on the podium and nice to have a good clean race. Hopefully we can just work from here and score a lot of good results.

Q: (Aldona Marciniak - Fakt) Lewis, you just broke another Michael Schumacher record, winning 41 races from pole position. Those records are probably going to keep coming, so is it important for you? How do you feel about it?

LH: Well, I didn't know about it so... It's still very surreal. It just doesn't register because I remember like it was yesterday, sitting at home, playing this computer game as Michael! Literally, on the Saturday and Sunday, there was this game that you could do the whole Thursday, Friday practice and then Saturday qualifying and everything like that, and I used to do the whole process through the weekend on this computer. I didn't have a steering wheel, I did it on two keys and I remember playing as Michael, so it's just very surreal to think that I'm... it just still is very very surreal to think that every now and then I keep coming up against Michael in terms of records and it just reminds me of just what a great he was. It's taken a long time to be where I am today and he has some serious records and it's hard to beat a lot of these records that he had so to match it... it's always an honour when his name is brought and mine is brought up at the same time.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Max, just picking on what you said about hoping to build on this and get more good results. Going forward to Monaco, is this the first real chance for a Red Bull victory this season, and how far off do you think you are from Mercedes in qualifying and race trim now?

MV: Erm, we were good in the last sector here and that's mainly low speed corners, so in Monaco you have exactly the same thing. Over the last few seasons, I think Red Bull always has been stronger in Monaco so I'm looking forward to the weekend in general. And how far are we off? I don't know, it's a bit difficult to say. Some tracks it's a bit closer, some tracks it's a bit further away, just also depends on how long the straights are. Of course we have to keep working on our car but of course I hope that at one point as well that we get some performance from the engine.

Ends