



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2018 FIA Formula One World Championship Singapore Grand Prix

Post-Race Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS

- 1 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)
- 2 – Max VERSTAPPEN (Red Bull Racing)
- 3 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

TRACK INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by David Coulthard)

Q: Congratulations Lewis, you are a serial winner. That's your 69th victory.

Lewis HAMILTON: I'm spent. That was a tough race. But I have such great support here. We had a great start. The team have just never given up faith and belief in me and in Valtteri and in our ability, and it is a blessing. It was a long race. That felt like the longest race of my life, so I'm glad it's over. Max put up a good fight as well, but what a day, what a weekend. I feel super blessed.

Q: My knees can't take this, can we stand? A man of a certain age. It got interesting around lap 38, there was a little bit of traffic there and they were in their own battle. You had to go defensive with Max, tell us about that moment?

LH: Yeah, I was a little bit unlucky with the traffic. These guys were moving around, it was quite difficult to follow. I think Max was a little bit luckier getting by some of the guys in terms of what point on the track and the guys weren't letting me by. Jeez, it was definitely close and my heart was definitely in my mouth for a minute but once I got clear of them I was able to put the pedal down and pull away.

Q: This has been an incredible September in your life, in all of the Septembers you've lived. You've won the Italian Grand Prix, you've been off launching fashion lines, you've come here and you've now taken the lead to 40 points over Sebastian Vettel. It doesn't get much better.

LH: Definitely not. I mean they put up a good fight this weekend and I'm not really quite sure where their pace disappeared to, but as I said, I'm just grateful for everyone's hard work, and the fans here. A lot of British flags come out Singapore, so thank you guys, love you, team LH all the way.

Q: Enjoy the moment, congratulations, fantastic moment. Max, come and join me up here. A brilliant result.

Max VERSTAPPEN: Yeah, it was not bad. A shame from the first lap, but you can clearly see we miss top speed. But from there on the team had a great strategy so we could get back into second. Basically we did our own race, tried to follow Lewis a little bit and at the end we knew second was going to be result so you just bring it home.

Q: We saw you have a little stumble as you were coming out of the pit box, it looked like you were between gears, you were in second and then you went down to first. Even with that you still managed to get out in front of Seb.

MV: It was not a perfect getaway, but also behind the safety car it was almost bogging down, false neutrals, so a lot of problems but still, very happy with second.

Q: Well done, Max, great result. Seb, congratulations, but I'm a little bit confused. You were quick all through free practice on a track you've been exceptional on in the past, it just didn't seem that you were in the fight today. Any ideas?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, it's true. I think overall we were not fast enough. We didn't have the pace in the race. But also I think we tried to be aggressive in the beginning and obviously it didn't work out. After that I think I had a different race from the other guys, on a different tyre, and I wasn't very convinced that we could make it to the end, but pitting wasn't an option because you lose too much time in the pit stop. So we just focused on making it home.

Q: The hopes of the tifosi rest with you. Have you got some light at the end of the tunnel? Lewis has started to open that gap up and time's running out. How optimistic are you for the future races?

SV: It doesn't help. Obviously I'm mostly thinking about today's race. I think today with the way we raced we didn't have a chance. There might be something extra in the fact that maybe we were not quick enough but I think I said before the weekend we can only beat ourselves and we didn't get everything out of the package.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Christian Menath – Motorsport-Magazin.com) Seb, you said it was pretty obvious what you have tried with the ultrasoft. But could you explain that a little bit, because even if you had jumped Lewis with the ultrasoft you would probably have been on the worse tyre for the rest of the race?

SV: Well, I mean, obviously the first stint was a cruise for most of it, and then Lewis was picking up the pace. Overall, if you see the gap in the end it is clear that we were not fast enough today in the race. We need to understand why. Obviously it's largely due to how we decided to race, on which tyres, for how many laps etc. With what we did we tried to get to first position but Lewis was too quick and then... once you are ahead you can control the pace around here but we never got ahead, so it's a bit pointless to answer.

Q: (Edd Straw – Autosport) Sebastian, you said you and the team didn't get everything out of the car this weekend. Can you just talk through the progression over the weekend, where you went in the wrong direction? And just in general, do you think the team is not necessarily making the right calls and doing the right things with the way they play the weekend to maximise your chances?

SV: No, I will always defend the team. I think the decision we took in the race, the decisions to try to be aggressive, if it works it's great, today it didn't work. Obviously it didn't work by quite a bit and we need to look into that. But I believe we saw something and that's why we go for it. Obviously inside the car it's difficult to be on top of everything because you cannot see where you come out etc. We were aggressive in trying to get ahead, taking into account that we have to go through traffic, which in the end bit us also, to lose the second place. If it doesn't work it is always easy to criticise but I will always defend what we did. Overall, we had a very strong package, both Kimi and myself, I think we looked very competitive throughout practice but in the end if you look at the race result we finished third and fifth. Like yesterday, probably not where the speed of our car belongs so that's what I mean by saying we didn't get everything out of ourselves.

Q: (Phil Duncan – PA) Lewis, you said earlier that you didn't expect to leave here adding ten extra points to your championship lead – so how big a boost is it to your title chances, winning here again, given that we always seem to think this is a Ferrari circuit?

LH: Well, we're really just taking it one race at a time, knowing that Ferrari have had quite good pace for the last few races. Generally, whilst we've finished on front foot, we start on the back foot, kinda thing, each weekend – but with a mentality that, if we do a good enough job, maybe we'll come out ahead. Right this second it definitely feels... it was a tough race. It was a hardcore race. The cars are much quicker than usual, and obviously that moment we had with the backmarkers and the crazy day we had yesterday, with the crazy week that I've had... the last two weeks have just been intense. So, I'm looking forward to a couple of days off, these following days – but, of course it feels great but I've been here a long, long time so I don't let... I know I can't get ahead of myself; we can't get ahead of ourselves. We have to continue to remain humble and just keep working as hard as we can. So, right now, I just feel, job done. I'm really happy with it. Still lots of

points available but with this performance, and this focus that we have as a team, I truly believe that we can deliver impactful weekends like this for the rest of the season. So that's the goal.

Q: (Laurence Edmondson – ESPN) Question for Seb. Looking at the weekend as a whole, how costly were those lost laps in FP2, in understanding the tyres and putting together the race strategy?

SV: Not at all. I mean, I've done enough laps around here. Obviously, it's never great if you miss out but I think Friday and Saturday morning we were first in practice, so I don't think that made a big difference. And also, late on in the season, you know enough about tyres and you can read from other people, so I think we got all the information and the fact that I think today we made it until the end with the most laps on the tyre you probably least expect to go that far, shows that we didn't have any problems with the tyres. But obviously, you know we had to manage our race differently than the other guys.

Q: (Julien Billotte – AutoHebdo) Question for Seb again. Did you guys pit earlier than expected because you misheard what Lewis reported on his tyre at the start of the race, in the early phase of the race?

SV: What did he report?

He said “I’ve got a lot left in my tyres,” and your engineer reported the opposite – which you didn’t believe actually. So did you pit earlier than expected?

SV: I did not believe it, I said it's not true – because we were going quite slowly in the beginning, and I think a couple of laps after that, Lewis decided to push, so obviously, when your tyres are fresh you can choose the pace a little bit here and not be under threat because the corners that matter, you still have very good exits and it's difficult to get close. So yeah, in the end I think we were fine in the first stint. We probably dropped back a little bit too much, so I think, overall, we did not have exactly the pace that we wanted – but also, if you are the first car it is always easier because you have nobody in front, you manage your tyres and then, at some point, you decide to go. Whereas if you are behind, you always need to be sort-of ready. If you drop back too much then you're too far away, so it's natural that, being behind, you lose quite a lot. Even if you go slower, being behind, you damage your tyres more than being in front, going slower. So, it was not a big surprise but that's how the game is played here, and he did it very well, and they executed well. For us, we tried to do something, it didn't work full stop and from their obviously we were more on the back foot and defence. So, we had a different race after that point.

Q: (Ben Hunt – The Sun) Question to Sebastian. After starting the season so well, still got the fastest car, is there a sense now that you might be losing your grip on this championship?

SV: Well, Lewis said he didn't expect to come here gaining ten points, we probably didn't come here expecting to lose ten points – but, having had the race that we had, I think there's a full justification for losing those ten points and we take it. Obviously, there is still a long way to go and a lot of points to score. I never believed that we had the fastest car by a big margin, as people said. I know that we have a very good car. I think we started the season well and then we were about half a second behind in qualifying and it was crucial to get back, which we managed to – and then we had a bit of a rough time but overall I think the speed is there but I think it's a match in qualifying as much as in the race. Today, if anything, I think we were a little bit slower, which we need to have a look and understand – but also it's difficult to draw the conclusion because our race, my race was very different. I was on the oldest tyres and probably on the tyre that was not supposed to last that long. You would probably like to go out and do the same stint on the same tyres, just to be able to compare – but that's not the race that we had today. So, you know, that's what it was this weekend. Russia, I think, has been getting better the last years for us, so it should suit our car as well. I don't think we have any tracks to fear that are coming. I think our car is working pretty much everywhere and that's a strength of our car, so no need to be afraid of what's coming.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – Associated Press) Sebastian, earlier you said you need to look as to why you were third and fifth and yesterday you had some questions about what happened in qualifying. Why is it that you can't put your finger on what's going wrong at the moment for Ferrari?

SV: I think first of all we're not playing a silly game, we're quite serious and it's quite tough competition, so the level of competition is very high and if you have the slightest mistake obviously there are people there who are usually there to benefit from it. I think today, you know the race that we had showed that Max was there straightaway to benefit. Maybe sometimes you are lucky and it's not showing as crucial but today it caught us and what we tried didn't work and also caught us out so it didn't help but I'm happy to try, I'm happy to try being aggressive to try and win. That was

the ambition and especially on a track where it's difficult to pass you need to try and figure something out. Yeah, but overall I think it's not the result that we wanted and it's a disappointment because we came here thinking that we are very strong. I think we were but not strong enough, not as strong as we probably wanted to be in terms of raw race pace. Yesterday, I still believe we could have had a better day but it's history so - same as today – we need to look forward. There are a couple of differences that are standing out about yesterday, about today, things that we can learn from the others, because they simply did a better job if they finish ahead of us by half a minute, so clearly they did some things better than us.

Q: (Daan de Geus – Formula 1 Magazine NL) Max...

MV: They are like the Finnish, you know...

Q: (Daan de Geus – Formula 1 Magazine NL) Max, you and Red Bull earmarked this as the best opportunity of the second half of the season. How important is it to deliver with a good result, and does it change your expectations heading into these last six races?

MV: No. I mean. Yeah. Well, it's quite straightforward. This race was better for us than Monza, for example, so I think we maximised the result with the problems we had with the engine which was a shame, because I was very happy the safety car was gone because I was almost stalling on the track so even my pit stop was not great. Yeah, looking forward to now... I don't know which track will come up as maybe good again. Maybe Mexico a little bit but we lose a lot on the straight, so I'm not expecting it to be like last year but you never know. You always have to be positive I guess and try to be there if something happens.

Q: (Joost Nederpelt – NU.NL) Max, was there any point in this race – pace-wise – where you thought you could win this race?

MV: Laps to the grid, I think. No, you can't pass, it's impossible. You could see that once in the first stint when we were all going quite slowly, even if you wanted to push a bit more you can't get close so you're just following a train. Yeah, you just have to do your own race, try to look after the tyres and that's what we did, that's why we could do the overcut which of course was great and once I was in second again, I know I would just try to follow Lewis to the end and bring it home.

Q: (Edd Straw – Autosport) Sebastian and Max, you had two battles, one on the first lap...

LH: Do you have a question for me?

Q: (Edd Straw – Autosport) You were just too good.

MV: Oh thanks, mate!

Q: (Edd Straw – Autosport) Sebastian and Max, you had two battles, one on the first lap and one after the pit stop. Could you just talk through those battles and if you could have done anything differently to reverse them? Could you have stayed there first time Max and Seb could you have got ahead second time?

MV: They were fine. I was a disappointed the first one and I guess Seb was a bit disappointed the second one.

SV: That's a good summary. I had a very good start, I tried in turn one but Max was covering the inside and from there I tried to line things up for the next corner which was successful and I got a bit of a tow from Lewis down the straight so that worked well. The pits it was tight so I lost it again, it was a pity, obviously.

Q: (Kate Walker – New York Times) Lewis, the perceived wisdom for most of this season is that you've got the second best car on the grid but you have also got the biggest advantage in the championship. Where are you finding these performances where you are able to outstrip both your car and your competitors' equipment?

LH: Good question, thank you, I appreciate it. It's hard up here because it's like an anti-climax. Naturally it was a hard race but we need to keep the energy up because this is a special moment for me and for the team. Was it an exciting race, or not really for you guys? That's probably why. I definitely heard a couple of people snoring here. Honestly, it's just great teamwork, very very diligent engineering. The guys obviously back at the car, we're constantly learning about the car and refining it but we're bringing out upgrades every now and then but it's pretty much the same times as they (Ferrari) bring theirs. But it's more understanding the tyres, it's more getting more comfortable with hitting the nail on the head with the balance of the car and really just eking out each little bit and each weekend we've got incredible communications. The debriefs are really solid, there's a lot of direction that comes from the debriefs. I give quite long debriefs nowadays and we work to the point that we leave no stone unturned, there's not a single stone unturned each

weekend that we arrive and so it's a real collective, it's just the strongest the team has ever been in terms of how we communicate. We've got great people in the team, both at the factory and here and it's a real privilege to work with everyone and also we're all so comfortable with each other and there's a huge confidence within the organisation. And in terms of my driving, as I said, I have these others things that I do outside which are stimulating. I know there were questions at the beginning of the week whether it is distracting and naturally you come here and if I put one foot wrong, people are going to point to the things that I do outside as a result of it. You can see, it doesn't affect my performance and if anything those things they add to the performance really. Healthwise, I'm super healthy. As I said, I went on a plant-based diet last year - here, actually, I started here last year - and it's been the best year of my life physically.

Ends