



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

## 2018 FIA Formula One World Championship

### Russian Grand Prix

#### Saturday Post-Qualifying Press Conference Transcript

29.09.2018

#### DRIVERS

- 1 – Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)
- 2 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)
- 3 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

#### TRACK INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Paul Di Resta )

**Q: Valtteri, I have to say, an incredible lap. Your team-mate looked in supreme form, but you go the job done and you got pole position on a track where you took your first win last year.**

**Valtteri BOTTAS:** Thanks, yeah, it was a nice lap. In the end I managed to also improve a little bit. I don't know what happened, I think he aborted his lap. It feels good. I've still got a bit of the shakes. It takes some concentration, but it was fun.

**Q: Did it take that much to get pole position? I can see you're still shaking, the emotion are trying to get on top. Lewis on supreme form at the moment coming up behind you to congratulate you.**

**VB:** Yeah, maybe I don't look like it, but I'm really happy, for sure. But it's only the first step in this weekend. It's a massively long run from the start line to Turn 1, so it's going to be important to try to keep that position.

**Q: You can be happiest today, you got the job done. Lewis, another front row lock-out by Mercedes. You looked like you did a very good sector, but just lost it out of Turn 7?**

**Lewis HAMILTON:** Yeah, first of all a big congratulations to Valtteri, he has been driving all weekend and just did the better job. It's a great track and the weather is fantastic and we have a great crowd. It was intense naturally as it always is. Just my last two laps were not special at all! But you can't always get it right and at least we are still in the fight for the race tomorrow. But the team are doing an amazing job, so really happy with the 1-2.

**Q: You did the good job in Singapore. You got the best qualifying lap of everybody and you managed to control the race. You've come here with an upgrade and the car is working very well. How much do you owe to the team to keep that momentum and to keep that carrying on for you to take the fight to Sebastian?**

**LH:** We rely fully on the team. The guys back at the factory, the guys here do an impeccable job and it's really motivating to see new upgrades come, just to see the evolution of the car throughout the

year, because I'm the one that gets to go out and test it. And as I said, a big thank you to everyone here in Russia for having us, because it's a beautiful place so far.

**Q: Sebastian, P3 today. I think we can say it's not over, this weekend, but it's very difficult from Ferrari's point of view. Mercedes have come here with some upgrades and you just haven't had the pace, have you?**

**Sebastian VETTEL:** Not yet. We'll see, maybe it happens tomorrow. Obviously it was important to get as close as possible to them, and then we'll see. But it's true that they have been very quick so we'll see. Tomorrow is a long race, we've seen that the tyres are very important. For today, I think it should have been a bit closer, the gap, but not enough to be a threat. I had a tiny mistake in the last sector. But I knew that I had to improve by half a second, so I had to try. It didn't work but I'm quite happy. The car felt alright, so that makes me quite positive for Sunday.

**Q: It's a long run down to Turn 2, which is the first braking zone. Do you think you can use the extra power you've normally got and equally is it your best chance of getting on top of these two?**

**SV:** I hope so. I just spoke to Valtteri and reminded him of what happened here last year. Maybe we can turn it around; that would be nice. I think it depends on the start, the initial jump, that's important. Then I think you know where you are and then we see what we can do for the first corner but after that, as I said, it's a long race. Tricky one, but for sure if there's a gap we'll go for it.

## **PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Q: Valtteri, after a fairly tough run of form, you said you wanted a big result, so how sweet does this pole position feel today?**

**VB:** For sure it feels good. I've only once on pole, earlier this year in Austria, so it's been a bit long since last time, so it is a good feeling. Coming into this weekend I knew that normally this has been a pretty good track for me and again managed to get some good laps in qualifying and the car just felt really, really strong. As the times show, I think the team has done an exceptional job again, bringing new bits again at this race. We're just step-by-step improving this car, which is going to be really important for the rest of the year with the championship fight

**Q: Congratulations. Lewis, fastest in Q1 and fastest in Q2. It's still a Mercedes one-two, but just talk us through your session, finishing second today?**

**LH:** Well, big congratulations to Valtteri, he did a great job in Q3. It's been a really good weekend so far, honestly. I really can't complain. I don't know where it really got away from me in Q3 but I struggled a little bit and Valtteri obviously picked up quite a bit of pace. The middle sector was where I was slacking, as I'd call it. Anyway, it's great to have a one-two and it's a long way down to Turn 1 so we'll still have a fight at least tomorrow. It's going to be a long race, for sure.

**Q: Seb, third place today and with the pace that Mercedes' showed in FP2, FP3 and then earlier in qualifying as well, do you think Ferrari maximised its potential today?**

**SV:** Yes.

**Q: ...and in that case, what's the potential for tomorrow?**

**SV:** Well, we go racing. You never know what's going to happen. I think... I was joking with Valtteri earlier that he should remember what happened last year where he was third, I was on pole. But you never know. It depends on the start. It depends on so many things. So, we will see. As I said, we will go racing and try to do, obviously, our best. It's been a bit of a tricky one for us. We didn't have the pace by quite a big gap, which is a surprise but it is like this and we will fight as much as we can tomorrow.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Lewis, question for you. You mentioned the time loss in the middle sector so far. Can you talk us through where you think you've been losing that time – and did that have any bearing on the mistake on the second run, just knowing you had a little bit of time to find?**

**LH:** The middle sector hadn't been too bad throughout qualifying. Q1 was really good and then Q2 wasn't so great and just generally throughout the weekend it's been a bit up and down through that sector but been quick in the first and third. And then, yeah, the first lap in Q3, was down three-tenths in the middle sector but I was quickest in the first and last. So I knew I had to push quite a lot because I knew also he would gain time, so it wasn't three tenths it has half a second I needed to improve. And so just over-egged it a little bit. I think I picked up a little bit of dirt on my outside tyres and then there was less grip there for the next corner.

**Q: (Livio Oricchio – globoesporte.com) To Sebastian. What's the main problem in your car? Your tyres don't reach the temperature? They go over temperature? Or they are normal and you have understeer? Oversteer?**

**SV:** To be honest, I was pretty happy. I think the car was pretty good. The balance was pretty good. I think it peaked in Q3 just the way it should so I think we got everything we could. I had a tiny bit of a mistake because I knew I had half a second to find, not just a couple of hundredths, so should have been two-tenths up on the last lap – but yeah, I was pretty happy with the car. It's not like there's a big issue with car balance. I think we reached out full potential today.

**Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Question for all three drivers. We've seen that the track's been resurfaced slightly on the approach to Turn One and that means the first row of the grid will definitely start on the new tarmac. Not sure if the second row of the grid gets it. How much has that come up with your discussions with the teams this weekend? Have you talked about it – and do you think it could make any difference off the start tomorrow?**

**VB:** I think it's a little bit unknown, to say exactly how much there is going to be a grip difference, if there is going to be – but usually new tarmac tends to have a bit more grip – but also it depends on the type of tarmac. We've been only driving around that part of the track in non grip-limited conditions, so flat-out. We'll find out tomorrow how it's going to affect.

**Lewis, do you see it affecting the starts?**

**LH:** I really don't know. Pretty much the same as what Valtteri said. So, tarmac's always different but we've not done a start out there, so I anticipate it'll probably be different to the older stuff – but whether it's better or worse, we'll find out. Hopefully better.

**And Seb, your thoughts on the grid?**

**SV:** I don't know. I thought P3 is also just in the range. If not, that's not good. I think the grip should be a bit higher. I think it's wrong to resurface just a bit, whether that's positions one-two-three, or four-five-six, eight-nine-ten, it doesn't matter. If you resurface something of the grid you should resurface everything. But it is what it is.

**Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) A question for the two (Mercedes) drivers: of course there is a championship on the table. I would like to know about that, from both of you. How is the strategy for tomorrow? Valtteri, are you free to race completely or to look a little bit for your teammate at the start, particularly? And for Sebastian, I would like to know if you can explain what happened after Singapore, just because some new parts didn't work or there was something else wrong?**

**VB:** My approach to the race tomorrow is definitely just trying to win the race. You can't have any other goal, starting from the pole so that's going to be the aim, for sure, but of course we're here as a team, we're fighting for both championships. Obviously Lewis is leading the championship with a bit of a gap to Sebastian and a very big gap to me, so always need to keep those things in mind but yeah, my approach, starting the race, is trying to win and we'll then see how it goes.

**LH:** I think all of our goals is to try and win this race. It's a difficult track on which to try and overtake so the start will be an interesting one and after that it's partly about strategy which we're all pretty much on the same (strategy). We just give it everything we've got.

**Q: And Seb, your thoughts on Ferrari's form at Singapore compared to here?**

**SV:** Well, I don't think it's too different. Obviously in Singapore I think we were looking a bit more competitive until qualifying. Then, for various reasons, we didn't get a very good session but I think also on Sunday it was true that we didn't have enough pace. I don't think anything has happened, to be honest. I think the races that we've seen so far have been quite close. I don't think there was a race where we had really that superior pace in the race. I think it was always a match on Sunday, at best for us. On Saturday I think it's been one way or the other but yeah, for sure, yesterday we didn't get a very good feeling but I think today the car was really good and I was quite happy in qualifying. I didn't have much to complain about but we're still not quick enough so I think it's just what we saw today but tomorrow is the race and that's what we focus on now.

**Q: (Valery Kartashev - Racing News Agency) My question is not about qualifying. You know the current situation where we have only two seats available in Formula One and much more young drivers who would like to be a Formula One driver but have no opportunity to do this. And yesterday, Lando Norris actually said that the Formula Two car is quite fun to drive, so maybe they would like to continue to do GP3 or Formula Two but there is one problem. There are no more spectators in the grandstands, so what about if you, instead of giving all the interviews on Thursday, have one race in a Formula Two car so we could see you in the same cars and spectators go to the autodrome and the young drivers could use your result as a benchmark.**

**SV:** Yeah, anything's better than interviews! I think it would be fun. In the past racing drivers were a lot more all-rounders, they raced in different cars, different categories. Nowadays motor sport has changed, the sport has changed and everything has got more professional, more serious so there's also not that much time maybe on hand but I think it would be nice to drive more often and talk less.

**Q: Lewis, you won the GP2 title but would you go back to race a Formula Two car against some of the current guys?**

**LH:** I don't really feel the need to. We're already racing too much in my opinion, and I don't want to drive a slower car. GP2, it's the best thing you've ever driven up until you've driven a Formula One car. I'm pretty sure there's not a single driver who's driven a Formula One car who says I want to go back to a GP2 car. I don't really see the benefit of it, to be honest. GP2 is not there for spectators, it's a proving ground for young guys to get to Formula One, so I don't really have an answer there.

**Q: And Valtteri, would you rather race a Formula Two car on a Thursday than do interviews?**

**VB:** If I could chose, I definitely would drive but I'm not that keen to race there. Like Seb said, it is pretty professional nowadays and there's not much time and you want to invest more of your time or your thoughts or your commitment to this sport if you want to be at the top really.

Ends