



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2015 Bahrain Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript

16.04.2015

DRIVERS - Sergio PEREZ (Force India), Max VERSTAPPEN (Toro Rosso), Will STEVENS (Manor), Pastor MALDONADO (Lotus), Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes), Daniel RICCIARDO (Red Bull Racing)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Lewis, you're coming off the back of three straight poles to a circuit where you've never been in on pole position before in your career. How do you see this weekend and the battleground that is qualifying on Saturday?

Lewis HAMILTON: The same as every race. Excited for it. The team have worked very hard to try to learn from the last race and improve. Naturally, for me, as you suggested, I've been on the front row but I've not been on pole here. So naturally that's something I want to try to change.

Now throughout Formula One history the psychological battle between title rivals has always been intense. Can you tell us a bit about how you've evolved your attitude that and your thinking about that as you've matured as a driver?

LH: It's not really changed much. I just do my talking on the track, that's how it's always been since I was eight years old. And naturally you just try to learn from decisions you take and experiences you have and hope that you get better.

So, the approach is not to get involved then?

LH: That's not what I said. You just do your talking on the track and try to do your best. All the stuff that comes out of the car I have no particular interest in it.

OK thank you for that. Coming to you Pastor, some good battles in China last time out and breakthrough points for the team, scored by your team-mate. How do see this Lotus team evolving in 2015?

Pastor MALDONADO: To be honest we've been a bit unlucky in the first two races, especially for me in the first corner I've been hit by Nasr in Australia and I was P6 already and the same in Malaysia, I was P8 or P9, I think it was P8, and I've been hit by Bottas in the first corner, so the first two races have been completely compromised by the first corner, you know. Last race was actually our first race where we've been able to compete against the other teams, or the other teams around us. We confirm what we've been expecting, the pace of the car. Actually in qualifying we still maybe are not at the top of our package. We've been working quite hard and hopefully this weekend it should be a bit better than it was in the past three races. But actually the race pace was quite good, encouraging and we are really looking to do our best and to finally be in the points this weekend.

There's been a Lotus in the final part of qualifying at every round this year so far but you yourself have only managed it once. Can you tell us what areas you are focusing on in particular to make sure that you get yourself into Q3?

PM: Yeah, quali is maybe the main focus for the team. We just need to try to put everything together. I think the speed is there. But normally it has been like this, even in the past, we've been less competitive in quali than in the race. I really expect, and we will approach different ways the qualifying to try to get 100 per cent from the car and then trying to keep the same situation or the same pace for the race.

Thank you for that. Coming to you Max: the performance in China. No points but plenty of praise worldwide for your performance there. Do you feel it's put you on the Formula One map and what was the highlight?

Max VERSTAPPEN: Well, first of all, I was really enjoying my race. We didn't have a great qualifying, but still I was very confident that we could do a good race because I think the car and its race pace is really strong, especially high speed. I had some good overtakes, I was really enjoying that. It's also every race I'm getting more and more confident in the car. Especially in the first two race you don't want to take too many risks and I decided in China it was time to do some overtakes and take some more risk.

Toro Rosso, apparently, have never scored a point here in Bahrain, amazingly in their ten years. This weekend that, I'm sure, will be your target, but you do have some engine issues going into this weekend. Can you give us your thoughts on how that's going to stack up?

MV: Yeah, for sure it's very short notice for us after China, where we had the engine issues. But we will try to do our best to deliver a good race and try to score points, because I think at the moment the car is capable of it and I'm feeling much better every race in the car. So I'm really looking forward to this race.

Sergio, coming to you, obviously 12 months ago here a very strong weekend, qualified well, in fourth, got up on the podium. Presumably it's one of your favourite tracks. What is it about this place and you?

Sergio PEREZ: Obviously it was great, no, to remember that day. It was a fantastic day, a fantastic race for me. It was really difficult to make it onto the podium, as it was a very intense race all the way through. Generally, I have been doing well [here]. The year before I did quite well at this track, so I think I get on with the track quite nicely. Unfortunately we are not in a similar position to dream about a podium for this weekend but I think, hopefully, we can score some points and make a great improvement. I think we managed to do a good step in China, we just finished out of the points, so I hope that here we can score some points.

You have a big update coming in Austria. From what you know of it what is the target of where it's going to put you in the pecking order?

SP: It's difficult to say, as everyone is improving all the time and everyone is bringing upgrades. We are not the only ones who are going to bring them but we really have identified our issues with the car, our weaknesses, so in that respect it should put us a lot better. I think if we can solve the general issue of the car, the main weakness of the car, then it can be a really good step that can put us in a really good position to be a constant points scorer.

Q: Will, obviously didn't start in Australia or Malaysia but a 15th place finish last time out in China. Tell us about the mindset in the team and how you set goals and objectives for each race - and what they are here.

Will STEVENS: As you said, China was the first race that I did personally this year - but as far as the weekend went, I think it was a big step forwards for the team. I think it was good to get both cars to the finish for the first time this year. As the weekend went, it ran pretty smoothly. I think, looking forward to this weekend, obviously we want to finish the race with both cars again. Every time I we back in the car, especially for me, missing Malaysia, I'm getting more and more comfortable. I think the pace that I showed in China was pretty strong. We just need to keep moving forward and see where we can get to.

Q: From what you've seen and experienced so far, what makes you believe in this project.

WS: From where we set out, we knew the first few races were going to be difficult. The team, where they finished last year in the Constructors', they're in a different position now to what they were before. So I think, moving forwards for the future, we can only get better. I think moving towards the end of this year, hopefully we'll get the new car coming in and then we can really start to make some progress.

Q: Daniel, coming to you, you've scored in all three races so far but not the kind of scores I imagine you were hoping for when the season started. Can you give us a window in on the mindset with things like engine duty cycles and other challenges you're facing, and how that's changed your expectations?

Daniel RICCIARDO: It sounded pretty good, finishing the first three in the points - but obviously we hope for more at this stage. Look, we're trying to do what we can, that's for sure. There is

progress being made. Still, obviously, we're wanting more each race and I obviously felt we had a better... or rather we all expected a bit more from China. I thought the weekend was going to be better for us, especially after Friday. I think we'd made real good progress. Didn't turn out that way but here we are a week later. Obviously there's not much, updates-wise, that can happen in a week but from myself and the team as well, we still know there's more potential in what we've got for now, and I think we can definitely try to grab that this weekend.

Q: Obviously your start in China was a bit of a talking point. I think I'm right in saying that, apart from your start in Malaysia, both you and Kvyat off the line have lost places every single time in the first three races this season. Can you tell us what that's all about.

DR: Yeah. To be honest, Melbourne wasn't as bad as it looked. As I guess most people are aware, we had a lot of driveability issues going on in Melbourne and it wasn't until we got the gears, and where these problems were affecting us, that's what really hindered our performance in Melbourne - otherwise the actual launch was decent. And yeah, Malaysia wasn't bad. Obviously it wasn't ideal, what happened in China, and obviously after looking through everything, yeah, it was my mistake in the end. Sometime I obviously won't let happen again. The important thing is that I'm aware why it happened and what happened and will move on from there. Definitely last year the starts weren't the strongest on the grid. In general it's a point that we all want to improve. I think it's got to be better this weekend.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Kate Walker - motorsport.com) I've got a question for Lewis. Your weekend in Shanghai has been rather overshadowed by coverage of the podium ceremony. I don't know if you've heard the comments from the grid girl who was finally contacted and said she thought the entire thing was a bit of a fuss for something that lasted one or two seconds. What are your thoughts on the podium ceremony and the media furore that has surrounded something entirely normal in motorsport?

LH: Good question. I hadn't really heard too much about it until today. Obviously when you come into the team you get a kind of debrief of what's happened during the week. So fortunately for me it's not overshadowed my week. Ultimately it was a great weekend. My actions are through excitement. This is Formula One, it's the pinnacle of motorsport, I'd just won a grand prix for the team and... I usually see it as a fun thing. I would never intend to disrespect someone or try to embarrass someone like that. So, yeah, I guess... I don't really know the reasons why people are starting to bring those kind of things up but this is a sport that so many people love and the more we show character and fun, perhaps it reflects just how great this sport is. That's what I try to do. I don't really know what to say about it. It hasn't really affected me and it's nice to know that the lady wrote in... if it had been the other way and she'd wrote in and she was really unhappy, then perhaps there would be more concern.

Q: (Dan Knutson - Auto Action / Speed Sport) Daniel, you said China didn't go quite the way you thought it would. Is there just maybe some fine-tuning in the setup that you can get the car much better to your liking?

DR: I think so. I mean, there's definitely, I believe, within the car, there's more to be unlocked, so to speak. In terms of setup, I don't think myself or Dany have really found a balance or setting that we're really comfortable with. I think China took a step forward, we did start to feel more comfortable but it still obviously didn't give us a big chunk of lap time that we thought was still in there. So, there's still a few balance things. If we keep ironing them out we will find... I don't think it's a second but we are going to find a fair few tenths that will put us in that group with Williams and hopefully get us onto the back of the Ferraris. Yeah. Good race here last year. I think we had good pace. Again just optimistic for a better weekend here. Everyone's ready to go, and obviously after my start last week I'm hanging out to get back on the grid and redeem myself.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Two questions for Lewis: the first is about management of the rear tyres. This is a hot track like Malaysia, the race is in the night. How afraid are you about the performance of Ferrari with the rear tyres? And the second one is about what Toto Wolff said about team orders. What comment can you make? If a driver says 'too close' they can make some unpopular decisions. I would like to have a comment from you.

LH: Regarding the tyres, still as it was in Malaysia, very much a rear-limited circuit so you have to assume that Ferrari will be very strong again, but I think we're going to try and take, from our experience with Malaysia, we're going to try and take a slightly different approach and hope that that helps us combat that whatever you want to call it: weakness or area in which we can improve. I feel quite confident that as a team we can rectify that issue that we had in Malaysia, but it's still going to be tough and Ferrari have been very very competitive in the last couple of races. So I anticipate they will be very strong this weekend and our race is definitely with them. I'm not really aware of Toto's comments so I don't really know anything about it. Team orders is not something we generally talk much about. It's not our approach but ultimately our job as two drivers is to try to help the team get the best result overall and regardless of whether you're first or second, it's your job to try and make sure you try and secure the most points as possible for the team.

Q: (Khodr Rawi - F1Zone.net) Sergio, how do you motivate yourself coming into this weekend, knowing that the maximum you could do is to score some points while last year you had a podium here?

SP: Yes, it's already the position that we have at the moment and only 12 months ago it was a different story but now it's time to give our best, the same as we did those months ago. The difference is now that a great result would be to finish in the points, whereas 12 months ago a great result would be to finish on the podium. But it doesn't really change anything. As a driver you have to be committed all the time and give your 120 per cent to your team to try to maximise the package that you have. It doesn't really change anything. Obviously I wish to have a more competitive car with which I can show the potential that I have as a driver but it's what it is and we will try to do our best. It doesn't really change anything.

Q: (Ralf Bach - Sport Bild) Lewis, did you really understand what Nico meant after the race that you drove too slowly? Did you truly understand what he meant?

LH: Well, it's something we spoke about after the race so I don't particularly see a reason to go back into it. Obviously you know what my comments were after the race and some people have spun those words in whichever way they wanted to spin them. Yeah, we're moving forwards and we will re-unite as a team this weekend and try to do a great job. There's no issue between me and Nico. We saw each other this morning and everything is good. They're going to be times when people are unhappy about some things but we're grown-ups and we move past it.

Q: (Ralf Bach - Sport Bild) The winner of the race is normally the quickest guy on the track, that's what I mean.

LH: But I was.

Q: (Alan Baldwin - Reuters) Lewis, if I can go even further back, to last year's race when you and Nico had a real battle here, given the comments that have been made over the last few days, do you think he'll be even more fired up to try and get past you this time?

LH: Well again, I don't know what comments have been made over the last few days, I don't read it, simply just not of interest to me, but last year we had an amazing race here, it was really fantastic, great fun, huge huge challenge both for Nico and for me and hopefully... that was the first night race here. It was honestly the best race, visibly, that I had seen here in Bahrain so it was great and I'm looking forward to that. I think with these tyres and with Ferrari in the mix, I think we could see a real special race here. On my part, I'm just going to keep doing what I do and try to... ultimately I want to improve. Last year I didn't qualify on pole here, I've never been on pole here so that's the challenge but as long as it doesn't get in the way of the challenge of trying to win the race.

Q: (Nahed Sayouh - Autosport Middle East) Max, after this race you will go to the European season where there are tracks which you have previously raced on. Do you believe that this will help you to show more speed?

MV: To be honest I think so. You always try to do your best on every track and that's how we are going to continue.

Q: (Dan Knutson - Auto Action and Speed Sport magazines) Will, you did your first race distance in China; these guys all did race distances in testing. Do you foresee that you have a much better baseline now, starting out the weekend as far as the car is concerned?

WS: Yeah, the longest stint I did before the race was six laps. So I had to learn the race as I was going. I think the race ran pretty smoothly so for sure starting here this weekend, we're starting

off from a much better position so I think as a team we can only progress and keep moving forward.

Ends