



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2015 Belgian Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS – Max VERSTAPPEN (Toro Rosso), Daniil KVIAT (Red Bull Racing), Will STEVENS (Manor), Fernando ALONSO (McLaren), Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN (Ferrari), Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Kimi, we have to start with you. Obviously Spa has been very good to you over the years – four wins – but your drive for 2016 confirmed yesterday. What do you hope to achieve given the way the team is developing at the moment and your own performance level at this stage of your career?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Well, obviously it the same as every year – we want to do as well as we can and hopefully challenge for championships for next year and I'm sure we can produce even a quite bit better car than this year next year. Obviously the team is all working well together and we all feel very good and obviously I'm happy to stay there but we have to try to do a good second part of the year and maximise what we have and then prepare for next year.

You will have seen that after he won Sebastian gave you a lot of support with his words in Hungary before the break. What did that support mean to you?

KR: I know him well and we have a very good relationship and it's nice... I don't know exactly what you mean, I mean I haven't read so much things lately, but he tells me and I tell him if he does well and I do well, we have a very good feeling of respect in the team. It's always nice to hear from him also. We try to beat each other in the races but we still can be friends as before, so I think that is also very good for us as a team that we can work very closely.

OK, thank you for that. Lewis, coming to you: twice on pole here, you've got a win, of course, at this circuit as well. You said that your performance in Hungary was short of your own expectations, but you still managed to increase your championship lead. Does that kind of thing make you feel that this might be your year?

Lewis HAMILTON: Definitely not, definitely not. I think the team effort that goes in; seeing how hard my team is working, seeing the progress we're making I think encourages me to believe that it's going to be our year. You know you just have to keep your head down and you can't win them all.

Sebastian Vettel is just 42 behind you at this stage; 225 points maximum up for grabs. Any concerns there about the threat from him or does your qualifying superiority underpin confidence for the second half of the season in particular?

LH: Well naturally we're here to win and we're focused on making sure we stay up front but we're conscious... we're fully aware that other teams are pushing very hard and Ferrari are looking great. So we don't arrive at any race thinking that we are superior to anyone. We know that we have a fight on our hands and so we're doing to work at trying to make sure we work harder than them.

OK, thanks for that. Fernando, coming to you, amazingly you've never won at Spa in Formula One. You've won in plenty of other categories but not in Formula One. Looking back a remarkable Hungary; fifth place for you, both cars in the points. Does that represent real progress or does it just represent an opportunity taken?

Fernando ALONSO: Well, I think half and half; a little bit of both. There was a better performance from us in Hungary. I think the circuit layout helped us a little bit in terms of the characteristics of our car and then secondly, I think we have been lucky with some of the retirements and some of the incidents that happened in Hungary, [they] helped us to get some places. I think 12 or 13 cars had some issues during the race in terms of penalties or in terms of mechanical failures, so I think that was definitely a help.

Now, you've experienced many different situations, technical situations and rules around grand prix starts during your long career, could you give us an insight into how much these new rules, starting this weekend in Spa, will change things for the drivers?

FA: I think not much. It will not be a significant change. I know that there is some talk about this but maybe for next year or the following years will be more different. What we will have here is just some restrictions in communications with the drivers and the team etc but I think... at least in our team we were not doing any specific communication or strategy during the formation laps etc so it will not change much.

Q: Coming to you Will, on podium here I believe here in World Series, first time here racing in Formula One. What are your thoughts on racing at this historic venue, what it means to a driver in his first full season in F1 to race here. Is this one that, when you looked at the calendar on your kitchen wall you looked at and really thought 'I'm looking forward to racing at F1 car at Spa.'

Will STEVENS: Yeah, I think Spa is always a special circuit. I think all the drivers always like coming here a lot. Every car you come in goes quicker and quicker and the track gets better so really excited to get out to see what an F1 car feels like 'round here. It's always been a good track for me and looking forward to getting out there.

Q: Tell us about the match-up with your team-mate. It seems to have been in his favour a little bit in the last couple of races. What's the story behind that.

WS: I think our pace has been really strong throughout the year. Just the last few grands prix haven't really fallen my way to be honest but I know that I've got good pace in the car and I think coming back to a circuit like this it should really suit what I like. I'm confident to kick on for the rest of the season and finish strongly.

Q: Coming to you Daniil. Obviously your best-ever Formula One result last time out in Hungary, second place, also, the best result for a Russian in Formula One. What was the reaction like back home?

Daniil KVIAT: It was a good race for me in Hungary. Hard to say what was the reaction – I didn't count any reactions or stuff like that but I think it was good for myself, good for the team generally to achieve that in this hard season. Now there's been the summer break and we are back to our basic work. We hope to keep working hard to achieve similar results – even though we know it's not going to be easy because also in Hungary we had to take some opportunities. Nevertheless, when they come, you have to take them.

Q: It's very clear that Red Bull has made significant steps, particularly on the chassis side since Silverstone. How do you fancy your chances of repeating that kind of result in the second half of the year? Which races are you looking at in particular?

DK: Once it happened I think it's possible to do second time as well. We should never give up on that. I think you know in theory Singapore is looking good for us but I wouldn't limit... I wouldn't say that we would just work on one particular race. We have to take any chances in every race – and this will be one of them. Anything can happen in any other race and we have to keep pushing for any opportunity because every race is a new chance.

Q: And talking of best-ever career Formula One results, Max Verstappen, you won three times here in F3 at Spa but you got your best-ever Formula One result, fourth place in Hungary, a real breakthrough for you. What does that say about you and your challenge this year?

Max VERSTAPPEN: I think it was also a bit unexpected result there but, I mean, you still need to be there when people make mistakes or have problems so, at the end, I was very happy to finish fourth especially after the beginning of the race which was a bit difficult for me. But I think the first half of the season went quite well. I think if I knew this before I would have signed off – I would have liked it like this but now it's time to focus again on this weekend. On my home grand prix. Won't be as good, I think, as Hungary but you never know. We can get some good chances here again. We just have to optimise everything.

Q: You're about to race a Formula One car around this daunting F1 track – but can you give us an update on how you're going with getting a road car licence?

MV: I still don't have it. Still not 18. But yeah, I don't have so much time – so I'll do it a bit later.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Kimi, fighting for your fifth victory here, does it help you that all the pressure of the new contract is now put behind and you don't have to prove yourself that much any more?

KR: It doesn't change anything. I mean we still try to do the same as every other race. So, that contract thing, it's not going to change our approach for the weekend or the end result. Hopefully the end result will be good but no, we will do the same things as in all the other races. So, hopefully we can have a good weekend, no problems and see where we end up.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action, Speedsport Magazines) Next year, the engineers will not be able to coach the drivers over the radio on things like tyre degradation and fuel saving, so I would like to ask an experienced driver, Fernando, and a new guy, Max, if you welcome this because it's more in the driver's hands or do you prefer to have as many tools and inputs to optimise your driving?

FA: Well, I don't think it will make a huge change because... yeah, we are receiving some information now on the radio about tyres, about fuel or other things on the car but we are perfectly aware of what is happening in the car and what is the best solution for the specific issues that we are facing during the race so if that information is not coming, it will come anyway by instinct and by the reactions of the car. So yeah, we will have to pay a little bit more attention to a few things that now we rely a little bit on the radio but it's not a big change and probably it's welcome, all those changes, to have a little bit more to do in the car and feeling a little bit more important.

MV: For me, I don't think it will change a lot. You always drive on your instincts. You feel when the tyres are dropping off so the engineer doesn't need to tell you that. I think you learn that already from a very young age so yeah, I don't mind, to be honest, to talk a little bit less on the radio.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Serra) Kimi, you are approaching your sixth season with the red car. You have won a title, some races, you've got some podiums. What are you still missing in your experience with Ferrari?

KR: Obviously we want more wins, me and the team, but I've had good years, difficult years, some up and downs but I always enjoy it, always enjoy it more when things are going more nicely when you get results but as a team, I've had a great time there and I'm very pleased that we can be working together next year again. As a team, as they are now, I really feel that we are going in the right direction and we can do great things in the future. No, if I miss something... like I said, people more happy, we are more happy when we can do better results. Obviously you write less negative things after that. We keep working and believe in what we're doing so I'm sure we will get there and we will have many happy days in front of us and a lot of good results.

Q: (Thomas Bastin – La Derniere Heure) Max, I remember your wins last year in Formula Three very well. It seems that when you arrive at this track you were immediately very much at ease. Does it give you more confidence before your first attempt in Formula One?

MV: I'm always confident but I'm racing against very competitive and experienced guys so we will see. I always try to do my best and from there on we always go into the weekend.

Q: (Angelique Belokopytov – Autodigest) Lots of drivers just love Spa for its legendary corners, for opportunities to overtake and so on so my question is for all drivers: what do you dislike in Spa, what would you optimise or improve? So let's start with Kimi as he has the record for the most wins of any driver here?

KR: What would I change? I think I would go back to how the last chicane was, coming into the chicane and I guess it was called the Bus Stop at that time, it was nicer than how it is now. It was just better, kind of more like it should be. Now one part is a bit different to the others, the new one doesn't feel like it fits exactly there. I think it was a nicer corner, there was a bit more speed, over the kerbs more. I guess that not much else has changed really, a little bit the first corner.

LH: I think I would agree but I never drove that circuit, I just watched and played it on the computer game but it was definitely even more fun on computer games so I would imagine it would be better in real life.

Q: Is this one of your favourite tracks?

LH: No

Q: Anybody else like to make any changes?

MV: There are quite a lot of wasps. I don't like them. That's the only thing. I think the track is great.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Globosport.com) Lewis, you have been seen in the social media, many pictures of your maybe new way of life. What do you think, do you think you can arrive at the races more relaxed, it helps you to develop even better work? Or in the future, you can charge some price?

LH: I don't really have a new way of life. This is what I've sort of been doing... it's just more visible to you, that's about it. It's been working quite well the last couple of years.

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