



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

**2016 Bahrain Grand Prix
Saturday Post Qualifying Press Conference Transcript**

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DRIVERS

1 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

2 – Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes)

3 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

TV UNILATERAL

Q: Lewis, great lap. Under a little bit of pressure after your first run in Q3, but you really hooked it up – fastest ever lap of this circuit?

Lewis HAMILTON: What a start. It's obviously not been a smooth-sailing weekend in terms of pace. Nico's been right on it all weekend and I was just generally struggling to put laps together. Luckily the one lap I did put together was the last lap. That was actually the only lap probably the whole weekend so far. I hope that's the first of many. The car felt great. It's quite incredible to think that we are quicker now to the V10 days. It just shows how far technology has come. Lastly, just for my engineers and mechanics who have been biting their nails all weekend and working so hard to get the car to where it is today, a big thank you to everyone here and also at the factory.

Q: Thank you for that. Coming to you Nico, just a few hundredths of a second between you and Lewis. As he was just saying, you've been on it all weekend. The difference?

Nico ROSBERG: I think Lewis just did a great lap in the end there. My lap felt good and I was actually sure that I was on pole! But that wasn't the case, so there we go, that's the way it is. Anyway, you know, at this track, I think it's one of the tracks where pole counts least, because a lot of things can happen in the race and strategy and everything tomorrow is going to be quite messy maybe even, so there are still a lot of opportunities.

Q: Thank you for that. Coming to you Sebastian. Only a tenth off in the first run in Q3, but at the end when push came to show it was more like half a second, what is that all about?

Sebastian VETTEL: I don't know, you should ask them [Mercedes]! I was very happy with the first attempt and yeah, my second attempt was more or less copy-paste. I thought that there was a little bit, there was, but five hundredths is probably not enough if they improve by half a second. I think very happy today, very happy with the car, the car felt fantastic throughout qualifying, it just kept getting better, which is natural as the circuit gets quicker. But there isn't one place or anything wrong on the track, where the car doesn't feel right. It feels good. We know that we are not where we want to be, but step by step I think we are getting there. We know what to do. Let's see what we can do tomorrow. We'll push them very hard. Ideally, we'll do the same thing on the start as we did two weeks ago. I wouldn't mind! So, yeah, we'll see. It's a long race. As Nico touched on, there are a lot of things that can happen here. Last year we saw an interesting race, so let's see what happens tomorrow night.

Q: Thank you. Coming back to you again Lewis, on pole. Looking for your third Bahrain victory tomorrow but of course, as Sebastian just referenced, a good start tomorrow, unlike Melbourne, will be important for you?

LH: It will be, for sure it's always important to get a good start. It's a longer run down to Turn One than there was in the last race. Of course it's something we've been trying to improve on, but it's only been a couple of weeks so whether or not we've made big improvements I highly doubt it, but hopefully it's better than it was, on my side at least. But yeah, just really happy with that lap. So happy with that lap, because throughout qualifying and practice you go round, do a lap, it wasn't quite perfect, Nico goes a tenth ahead or whatever it may be, so to finally pull it all together... It was actually even more of a pressured lap as well, because the previous lap I went off, so knowing that I've got to improve even more so than I did on the lap before, so yeah, super happy.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Lewis, you were referencing the speeds there and looking back historically but times were a lot quicker compared just to last year. I wonder if you could put your finger on what that is. It's a little colder ambient temperature, how much has that contributed? What else do you think is making the cars that much quicker this year?

LH: Well naturally it's with the development of the car. It's definitely a bit of... the tyres seem quite grippy this weekend so maybe a little bit of a step in grip on tyres compared to last year but just, overall, the car is globally, I guess everyone's cars globally have improved, be it power and downforce. The race is a little bit different. Obviously with different kind of tyre wear, it's still going to be a real challenge there, but every single lap it's... you would hope that we would be faster, otherwise we wouldn't be...

Q: Nico, I was going to ask you about the strategy choice tomorrow: two stop, three stop etcetera – then in your unilateral answer, you said you thought it was going to get 'messy'. So do you want to drill down into that a little bit and explain why you think it's going to get messy?

NR: I think we are going to see many different strategies and also surprises. People will be surprised if maybe their strategy doesn't work the way they thought – because we're going to see graining on the soft tyres because it's so cold, and that always causes a lot of unexpected things – because if you get graining you lose a lot of time, and you'll get it in

different ways. And then three different tyres, Safety Cars maybe coming into it, it's going to be all over the place.

Q: Finally to you Sebastian, this was a strong race for Ferrari last year. You've repeatedly said that, obviously, when it comes to the end of quali, you're giving something away to Mercedes but that you've got much closer race pace. So, does that give you a degree of optimism you can get amongst them tomorrow?

SV: Always. I think, yeah, last year we were very strong in the race. Kimi put a lot of pressure on Nico at the end of the race and managed to get past so I think we can be in good shape tomorrow. Obviously it's impossible to predict but the car feels good; the car felt good this afternoon with different conditions to the evening. It kept getting better. Some of it, I guess, is the track but also we made little improvements here and there. So, very happy with how the car feels on one lap but also for the race. So, yeah, high on confidence. Whether it's enough, we'll see – but we'll try to give them a hard time.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action/Speedsport magazines) A question to all three. We've now had two sessions of the new format. Are they more stressful or less stressful compared to the old Q1, Q2, Q3?

Lewis?

LH: Honestly, there's zero difference to us, I guess, at the front. You go out and position might help a little bit but really doesn't make any difference. I have not noticed a single difference, personally – you have to go out and get your laps just as you did before.

Nico, I guess the only difference is that the laps are done earlier on rather than right at the very end, right?

NR: Yeah, but I think in the end we should just listen to everyone watching in front of the TV and the fans at the racetrack, see what they say and, if they continue to not like it – as I'm sure they won't – we should change.

Sebastian?

SV: Well, naturally with this format everyone has to go out more or less straight away otherwise you get knocked out and then there's quite a lot of time you spend sitting in the garage and waiting, so obviously for us, running in, let's say, the top five... but yeah, I think it's just not right when you have the last four minutes and nothing's happening. That's usually when people should be smashing the lap times: not only in Q3 but also Q1 and Q2.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboSport.com) Nico, you were fastest yesterday and today you were 77 thousandths slower. Any reason – nature of competition or did you have any kind of a problem?

NR: No, all the way through the weekend it's been going well and even in the end of qualifying it was going well. I got a good lap in, Lewis just did seven-hundredths better. That's it.

Q: (Daniel Johnson – The Telegraph) Sorry to slightly move the conversation away from qualifying but to all three of you, and particularly Seb, given your role on the GPDA, Bernie said yesterday that drivers are just saying what their teams tell them to; they shouldn't have an opinion and I think he used the word 'windbags'. I just wondered what your response to that was, whether you think it's valid for you guys to have an opinion and what your response to Bernie is.

SV: Look, we're not political, I think if you read the letter, and you read the very end, it says, 'on behalf of all drivers'. I think Alex, my name and Jenson but, in general, all drivers. So, I don't read 'on behalf of all the teams' – or some of the teams. What I read is 'on behalf of the drivers'. So that's it.

Anything to add? Nico? Lewis? No.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Sebastian, you challenged Mercedes in Melbourne with, let's say, a riskier strategy, choosing more the softer tyres. Is the supersoft tyre here good enough to do the same, or is that only a tyre for the first stint?

SV: I think it always depends on how the race goes. I think probably here, more so that Melbourne, you have a couple of options with the strategy – but as I said it largely depends how the race goes. How you start off, where you are after the first corner, the first lap. And then it has to be seen. I think it should be fairly clear which tyre is the preferred one to use and then, I think we all go from there but, as we've seen last year, I think Kimi was on a mirrored strategy compared to Nico and Lewis, myself, and it worked out at the end – so there's always room for doing something different, so let's see what happens. If we can be smart tomorrow then I hope we will.

Q: (Christopher Joseph – Chicane) Question for Nico and Lewis. From this point on, how does the process work in terms of considering all of the variables tomorrow? How will you decide your strategy, both individually and how much do you look across the other side of the garage.

NR: So, the strategy is done by the team. We're going to discuss it tomorrow morning and we're going to go for the best possible strategy and then there will be a Plan B in case Plan A doesn't work out and I'm not even 100 per cent aware yet what we're going to decide to do – so let's see for tomorrow morning and then go for it.

Lewis?

LH: Yeah, it's not like we get any options. There's the optimal, and then there's sub-optimal and then there's worse. The team choose the optimal. They do all the simulations and know what's best. Of course you could ask for something different – but our strategist is incredibly smart, as all strategists in the teams will be, so we just follow in their direction.

Q: (Ralf Bach – Autobild Motorsport) A question to Sebastian. Do you really believe you can win the championship with Ferrari until 2020 and, if yes, can you tell us why?

SV: Until what? 2020? Well, it's a long time. I don't have a contract that goes to 2020 so that could be the first thing I need to sort out. Yeah, apart from being old at that time, I've very confident. I was very impressed when I first went to Maranello and saw the facilities, saw the potential, met the people and nothing has changed. Obviously it has been a very strong year last year which, to some extent, came unexpected – but obviously was very good to

boost our motivation – but we know a lot of things have happened, a lot of things are still due to happen that will make us stronger in the future. Naturally some of the stuff happened already and I think this year's car is a lot better than last year's car, big step. Other stuff is in the pipeline, still to come – that's talking about this year but also in general about the future. So once I think everything calms down and we focus and have everything in place then, I think, it will only make us stronger. Currently I think, if you measure on track, we are half a second behind today. Let's see what the gap is tomorrow. I don't see any reason why we cannot gain at least half a second or more in the future. To... whoever.

Ends