



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

## Press Information

### 2015 Belgian Grand Prix Sunday Race Press Conference Transcript

23.08.2015

#### DRIVERS

1 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

2 – Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes)

3 – Romain GROSJEAN (Lotus)

#### PODIUM INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by David Coulthard)

**Lewis, your 39<sup>th</sup> grand prix victory, your 80<sup>th</sup> time on the podium – equalling your great hero Ayrton Senna – a pretty good day at the office?**

**Lewis HAMILTON:** Wow. How you guys doing, you good? We've had such a great crowd here this weekend. It's been incredible, the whole circuit just packed out with all you fans, so thank you all for coming. And for me, just an amazing weekend again. Incredible job done by the team throughout the pit stops, throughout the whole weekend, the guys back at the factory... You know, today was a dream. The whole weekend the car was fantastic, so thank you guys.

**It seemed to me that the only real concern you had after the start was after the Virtual Safety Car and Nico was able to get that gap down to just a few seconds. Any other concerns during the race?**

**LH:** No. Nico had obviously good pace but I was able to answer most of the time, so I was fairly relaxed at the front. The car was feeling great and it was really about looking after the tyres, particularly at the end when I saw that one of the tyres had blown on another cars I was being very cautious, so in the last two laps Nico was allowed to close the gap. No, I felt in control all the way and as I said a lot of good assistance from the team, so I felt like 100 per cent all weekend.

**OK, Lewis, congratulations, your summer holiday obviously treated you well. Just come to our second-placed finisher here.**

**Nico, congratulations. It seemed it all went away from you at the start. You were able to come back at Lewis later in the race, but just talk us through what went wrong there?**

**Nico ROSBERG:** Yeah, I just completely messed up the start, so that was very annoying. I fought my way through. I gave it absolutely everything, I mean we were both on the edge all the way through.

The car has been amazing, so I'm really thankful to the team again for giving us such a car. It's awesome to drive it. And Lewis did a great job, so deserved to win. I tried to give it everything but not enough.

**Well, you certainly kept him honest. We know that you have a big event coming up in the coming few days, so you'll not be wanting to spend too much time on the interviews. Your lovely wife is expecting your first child, so you're rushing off after this?**

**NR:** Yeah, I'm rushing off very, very quickly yes, because we're expecting our first child any moment, so a very exciting time, looking forward to that, probably next week, let's see.

**We'll, good luck and congratulations for that. Now, Romain, welcome back, your 10<sup>th</sup> podium. This circuit saw one of the low points in your career I guess when you got a one-race ban, but focusing on this high today: fantastic and very timely for the Lotus team.**

**Romain GROSJEAN:** Hello, everyone. It has been an incredible weekend for us. A great qualifying yesterday, unfortunately we had the grid penalty, and a good race. I still can't believe that we are on the podium. Those guys have been working hard to give us that car to be able to be here today. Of course going into turn one, every time I take a start in Spa, I will remember 2012 but I think it made me stronger and indeed allowed me to be 10 times on the podium. Being here today is kind of special I think, it has the feel of a race win.

**Well congratulations, fantastic to see you back up here and you've never stopped smiling through the difficult times? Lewis, as you recognise the fans down there, just a closing question from us. As you look into the second half of the season, it's still very close with your team-mate, but do you start to feel now that you're getting your hands closer to another world title?**

**LH:** It definitely way too early for that. But as I said coming into this weekend, you want to get those pole positions and translate them into wins and hopefully today is the beginning of that, so I'm looking forward to the next races, I hope to see many of these fans at some of the other races coming up.

## **PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Q: Lewis, Mercedes' seventh one-two finish of the season, 2015, you just said on the podium there you were under control. Obviously a great start but obviously Nico was closing at various phases before the virtual safety car. I just wonder if the virtual safety car, also the cloud cover coming over, just helped you to bed in those medium tyres because after that initial spurt from Nico in the first lap or two after the virtual safety car, you were able to just stretch away from him. Maybe you could just tell us about that phase of the grand prix and his challenge at that point?**

**LH:** It was really just about utilising the tyres, not having to push. I didn't really push very hard on the out-laps, took it quite easy for the first three or four laps in which there was areas where Nico would be closing. And then I started to push after that – but I was really never in a position where I was nervous or anything. I had great pace in the car, the balance felt fantastic. It actually was getting better throughout the race. There was no real need to push any more than I was already. I had a comfortable gap and at the end of the day it doesn't matter if it's won by a tenth or won by ten seconds. So, at the end I saw that there was a blow-up so I was being very cautious with my tyres. I'd done pretty well up until then so I was just going to make sure I bought it home.

**Q: You said on Thursday this wasn't one of your favourites. Is it moving into becoming one of them again now?**

**LH:** I didn't mean that it wasn't one of my favourites. Monaco of course is definitely a favourite but this is a great circuit. It's incredibly challenging. The weather's been great this weekend so for sure when the weather's as good as it is today it really does make it a great weekend. Incredible turnout from all the fans, which is really good to see. A lot of British flags, which I really appreciate but the track is really fun to drive. It's a historic circuit. Eau Rouge. You can never get tired of driving through Eau Rouge. So it'll always be a special circuit, for sure.

**Q: Coming to you Nico. Obviously a terrific recovery after a poor getaway. Some good strategy as well that got you up into second place around the first pitstops – but tell us, from your perspective, about the way that gap seemed to come down and then just rose again.**

**NR:** Yeah, the start was really bad so I need to practice that a bit more I think, and then after that I just benefited from the fact they weren't racing me, in front of me. They were just racing all the people behind, so they just pitted, I suppose, because I wasn't their opponent. They assumed I was too quick anyway – rightly so – and then, yeah, I had a clear path in front, chased down Lewis. I was always coming closer except for this one phase in the second stint, towards the end where Lewis pulled away. So that definitely cost me a bit. Then on the Option felt great again. I was qualifying lap every lap trying to hunt Lewis down but he did a great job and it wasn't enough.

**Q: Romain, welcome back. 31 races since we last had you here, Austin 2013 when you had that big Stetson on as I recall. Lots of great overtakes today, I want you to pick out a few of your favourites. I know you were building to a pass on Vettel at the end when he had the tyre go. Obviously he changed his strategy. What were your thoughts around that final period of the grand prix? What was going through your head?**

**RG:** I was really closing the gap on Seb. It's very unfortunate he had that puncture and it was a bit of a scary moment just being behind. I think we got everything we could get today, starting from P4 on the grid I'm sure we would have had a much easier race but it was really good fun. All the overtaking into Turn Five, I was really taking it as hard as I could on brake. Probably one of my best races ever. I remember Austin, a long time ago, but I still remember I was a bit drunk at the press conference! A little bit too much champagne on the podium with Seb. It has been up and down here for me. Of course Spa 2012 with Lewis was a bit of a tough time but on the other side it's helped me because who I am today and being able to be on the podium with how we are during the weekend shows how strong our guys, and how strong we're capable of building a car and be there. It was a great race, I enjoyed every minute and if we can do it again, let's go.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action / Speedsport magazines) Nico, talk us through that start. Was that a direct consequence of the new clutch rules?**

**NR:** It was more a consequence of... well, yes, for sure but mostly also because we did another formation lap and that always puts more temperature in everything and then things change. But eventually it's my job to do it well and I didn't do a good job.

**Q: (Frédéric Ferret – L'Equipe) Question for Romain Grosjean. Was it your call to pit during the virtual safety car and can you explain how do you gain the speed this weekend with your car?**

**RG:** I unfortunately cannot explain the gain of speed – but the call on the safety car, I went through Eau Rouge on that lap and they just told me on the radio “safety car window is open” and I did finish the lap and ‘safety car’ came up on the steering wheel and we pitted as planned. We needed to fit the prime tyre for the end of the race. I think then I lost a position to Seb, they stayed on the one-stop strategy which was quite aggressive and we didn’t think we’d be able to do it. I knew the safety car window was open, and if the safety car, the virtual safety car, was lasting long enough for me to rejoin the pit or get in the pit before it ended, it was the strategy for me to stop, yeah.

**Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Sera) To Romain, we know there are some issues in the team in this period. I would like to know how tough is it to deal with this situation and try to be focused only on the race.**

**RG:** I think engineers, driver, mechanics, we are focusing more on the racing side and I’m probably not aware of everything going around but I didn’t want to neither, I think. I’m here to race as hard as I can, to give it 100 per cent all of the time. I think driving around Spa, every time you go through Eau Rouge and Pouhon, Turn 10-11, it’s a special feeling and I think you just enjoy it. I don’t really care about what’s going around. The only thing I want is to do my best to give the guys who are really working hard a good reward.

**Q: (Angelique Belokopytov – Auto Digest) My question is for you Romain. Since a moment the future of Lotus was unknown and last days we’ve heard a lot about the potential comeback of Renault. So, did it give you motivation to step up on the podium?**

**RG:** No. I think, as a racing driver in general, every time we start a race the idea is to try to win it. You know what you have in your hands and you know that sometimes it is not possible but as long as you do everything with 100 per cent of your performance you can fly home in the evening being proud of what you did. That’s what I want to achieve. Sometimes there’s been times in the past year where you score one point or two points and it has been an incredible performance, probably you can’t see it on TV because it’s hidden by the fact that the car is not as good – but every time I just in the car it’s to give my best. It’s cost me a little bit in the past but putting things in the right order makes it good today.

**Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) Lewis, Nico just mentioned that he might have been caught out by the second formation lap. I think you had a similar drama in Budapest. Did the experience from Budapest help you to overcome that?**

**LH:** I don’t think so. I think, of course we were wary of it but going into the weekend we knew that that may be a scenario and we prepared for it. So, when it came to doing the start, I was very much prepared for it. The engineers prepared me for that potential restart, so, yeah, maybe it was a small benefit. I’m happy. My start was really good.

**Q: (Mike Doodson – GP Plus) A question for Romain. You’re a father. My question is – and try to be honest – does becoming a father have an effect on your performance and what advice would you like to offer to Nico and his wife?**

**RG:** Sleep as much as you can while the baby’s not here! It’s going to get bad! I think it helps your life in general. You don’t do things for yourself anymore, you do them for them. They are everything for you. And it’s your blood that goes through their body. When you have a tough weekend – or a tough day – you call then, you Skype then in the evening, you see the face of your son, or your sons, and you just laugh. It probably helps to relax your mind in the evening, to think about something else and come fresh in the morning. Once the helmet is on, visor closed, going flat

out through Eau Rouge. If you think about your family, you're not going to stay flat out. We're racing drivers, we love doing what we do. We know it's dangerous – we had a good example recently. But, it certainly changes your life. And, to be fair, I've never been a world champion, never won a grand prix but the feeling and the emotion I had on the birth of my two sons, has been far better than everything else I've known in the world. I wish Nico the same thing. He'll probably tell us in Monza how it is.

**Q: (Sarah Holt – CNN) Romain, you said that the big crash you had here in 2012 made you stronger. Can you explain in what ways: racecraft, mentally, other things?**

**RG:** Well, I think it's no secret that since that day I've been working with a psychologist specialising in sport and top athletes. There's a lot of people in the sporting world, especially in the Olympic Games or in professional rugby or football teams, that are working with psychologists and they succeed in overcoming their problems, to understand. Being a father is not always easy either, so sometimes we can speak about fatherhood, about being an husband, being a racing driver, having problems at the start, what was the key, what was the problem? Was I focusing on the right way, the wrong way? All of that work, which has not always been nice and easy – you know, you can have a bad night after a good session – but help you to understand things and to be able to pull out some performances as we did today.

**Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and Speedsport Magazines) Lewis, yesterday you said one of your concerns about starting first was that someone might get by you going up the hill and Perez actually got ahead of you; the timing screens showed that at the end of sector one. How did you get back in there and take the lead again?**

**LH:** It was very similar to last year, actually. I think Sebastian had slipstreamed me and was pretty much past but by having the inside line and braking later, I was able to hold the position and that's really what I did with Perez. He braked earlier than me and I outbraked him and managed to get back in the lead after he just took it for a second but he was very fair which was good of him.

**Q: (Barna Zsoldos – Nemzeti Sport) Lewis, you said that it's too early to speak about clinching the World Championship trophy, but yesterday, with your pole position, you already secured the pole trophy. Does that mean anything to you?**

**LH:** The pole trophy is not particularly exciting but getting poles is definitely a great thing. Naturally winning the World Championship is the goal. I would give up everything else, all the poles, the pole position trophy for the - yeah, you can have it, no problem - for the World Championship so that's really the goal but I'm really happy with how the qualifying has gone this year. It's been a huge step for me and today the plan was to try and convert that pole position and the speed that I had in qualifying into the race. I feel like I did that and I'm sure that there will be areas to improve on which I will continue to try and work on.

**NR:** I never got my trophy for last year, so don't expect a trophy coming your way for that. Ask whoever is responsible.

**Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Romain, as Monza is similar to Spa, can you expect the same result in two weeks?**

**RG:** I think Monza is a big difference in a way that there are special aero packages for Monza and it's one race out of 19 where it's always difficult to know exactly what's going to be there. I'm sure in term of pole everything is going to be under control. Hopefully is working as well as it is today but I think right now I'm just thinking about having a good drink tonight!

**Q: (Giusto Ferronato – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Lewis, we remember that in the final part of the last year, I mean from Monza, you started to win a lot of races. Do you feel the same sensations as last year?**

**LH:** At the moment, it's a lot different to last year, obviously at this point. Last year I came away from here... it was a very difficult time but after that, no great pace and great results, so for sure that's the goal, to continue that from here so this has already been a much much better year than last year and the plan is to try and continue with that. I still feel there's improvements to be made, particularly in the race so that's what I will continue to do but I'll definitely take today's result.

Ends