



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2015 United States Grand Prix Sunday Race Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS

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PODIUM INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Sir Elton John)

Lewis, amazing. For me to be English and to be here today is an amazing feeling. Congratulations on everything.

Lewis HAMILTON: I can't believe you're here. It's Elton John!

No, there you go, I am! What a wonderful crowd, what a great support, you guys – thank you. What a race! How are you feeling?

LH: Amazing! Firstly, thank you so much for coming up here today and being here. I want to say a huge thank you to the whole crowd, for coming out and staying through the rain and staying with us. I hope we put on a good show for you today. But I can't really find the right words right this second to tell you how amazing this feels. I couldn't have done it without this team who have empowered me for the last three years and really taken me on board and really helped nurture me with the car and just faultless. I love you guys, thank you so much for everything you do for me. And all the guys back at home. And then, my family who are watching. I love you all. And team LH – still I rise.

Nico, congratulations, but you must be disappointed though right?

LH: yeah, for sure, very disappointed with that, unbelievable. I don't know what happened. But anyway, you've been great. Thank you so much, you've been awesome this weekend, with all this bad weather... to come out here so numerously, thanks a lot for that. Yeah, just very disappointed.

Sebastian, you started off 14th [13th] on the grid – congratulations – and finished third. You drove an amazing race. And at one point you were going faster than anyone else. Does that give you encouragement for the rest of the grands prix and for next season?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, it does. We have a great car; we have exceeded all expectations. But yeah, it doesn't feel great when you cross the line and you know that you can't fight for the championship anymore, so congratulations to Lewis, he did a superb job all year round. Congratulations to his team as well, but we are getting closer and hopefully next year we can give them a very, very hard time.

I think you are getting closer and it's going to be very exciting, congratulations. And Lewis, celebrations tonight?

LH: Are you throwing a party?

I'm going to party; I'm playing tonight later.

LH: I'm going to be here, I wouldn't miss it for the world.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Lewis, many congratulations, a classic grand prix, one of those days when you're up, you're down, you're never quite sure which way it's all going to end. I'm sure for you personally a day of great emotion, given the journey you've made and I guess the best way to sum it up is: is this a boyhood dream fulfilled?

LH: It really is. I'm just overwhelmed at the moment. It's difficult really to find the words. I'm just sitting here thinking about... I remember my first British championship where my dad and I drove home singing 'We are the Champions' – at the time of Great Britain – and you know it's just crazy to think that now I'm a three-time Formula One world champion. I owe it all to my dad, to my family who supported me all these years and sacrificed so much for me to be here. And then the really positive energy I get from my fans who travel around the world to see, that is, I get messages... I really do realise that whilst I get to enjoy driving a Formula One car this is really a platform for me to inspire young people and I hope that if there is any inspiring from today it's just that: never give up on your dreams, on your hopes and on your desires. Just keep working at it. Today, there were so many times I thought I'd lost the race. I'd fallen back and then Nico pitted under the safety car and he was really quick at one stage but I never for one second believed that I couldn't second and then we pushed and pushed... You know, Nico drove a fantastic race, he really has done.... since I've been with this team he's been driving fantastic well. So mad respect for him as my team-mate and otherwise, as I said, a very humbling experience, especially to equal Ayrton Senna who meant so much to me and still does today. So, yeah, I feel very, very blessed today.

Very well done. Nico, as we said, a crazy race. You seemed to have the advantage when you went onto slick tyres initially and then at restarts and after stops you seemed to have great performance in that condition, you seemed to have the race under control. But it looks like one slip got it away from you. Tell us about that but also about the start.

NR: Yeah, I just got wheels pin. It's never happened to me, ever. Not even in testing or racing, never, ever something like that. I can't explain it; it's unbelievable. I don't know. Just need to look into it afterwards but obviously that was really, really tough at the time, to lose the lead like that and to lose the win, because I was feeling really good at that point and it just went wrong. Turn One for sure was very aggressive... What am I going to say? I haven't seen it again, so how the hell... I can't comment yet. I need to see it, as always. For sure it was extremely aggressive, we hit each other, or I would say Lewis came into me, so obviously that's not good. I can't say more than that.

Thanks for that. Sebastian, this is one of those races... I've seen you sitting here and I can tell you're thinking about all the things you've been through in the last few hours. There's so much to go through and analyse and understand from a race like that, but basically you took a gamble at the safety car to go onto the medium tyres, intending to go to the finish, and it looked like it might work, except that then there was another Virtual Safety Car and then another Safety Car. Did you believe it was one and that without those two events you might have won this grand prix? Were you feeling good about your gamble?

SV: Yeah, I think it was the right thing to do, given where we were, given that we wanted to make our chance last as long as possible and I think there was a chance definitely to do it. Obviously when the safety car came that was gone, because we've seen that with the option tyre everyone one of us was in the same boat with a lot of graining. First laps amazing and then the laps after that falling off quite dramatically. With a green track that's what happens. So I think I had a good chance. Already after four or five laps on the medium tyre, six laps, I don't know how much it was, I was doing more or less the same pace as the guys in front. A shame to lose out, but on the other hand in a race like this I think all three of us in a way at some point in the race we got lucky with timings, because it can also work against you. But yeah, a bit mixed. Thinking a lot about the season, what we could have done better here and there to squeeze even more out. I think we did a fantastic job, much better than everyone expected, but still it's not great when you lose the fight for the world championship. But, as I said, this is Lewis' day, congrats to him, he deserves to win the championship. The race we had, there's not much to add. It was every exciting – I started 14th, had an average start and then we had a very, very good opening lap and after that we did the right things. Amazing pace when we switched to dry tyres, closing to the field. And then I think it was very close with Nico in the end but not close enough, so that was it.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Dan Knutson – Honorary) For Lewis and Seb. You've both won multiple world championships – but what does it signify for any driver to win even one world championship? What does it mean?

SV: It's your day...

LH: For any driver I think it's the pinnacle. There's no further you can go. Your ultimate goal is to win in everything you compete in. It's to perform at your best and hopefully better than everyone else, so when you do win a world championship it signifies at that particular time your greatness and the people around you. The whole unit. The teamwork. The greatness of that partnership as well. I remember when I got my first one. I was just grateful for the first one. I told Ron when I was ten that I wanted to be world champion in his car and it's kinda crazy to think that ten years after he signed me I was. Yeah.

SV: One thing is to be able to perform on that level, that's a big achievement already if you're in a position to be able to win races. Then obviously if you can crown that with winning the championship... it's very difficult to describe. I think the first championship is probably the most powerful. But then it's not like you have a head start for the next year's. It all starts from zero again. In the end I think you have something inside you that drives you to keep doing it. As long as you have that hunger, you're into probably fight for it again. And if you manage to do it more than one time, obviously that's a big bonus. So, it's an incredible feeling. And that's why I can only underline, this is Lewis' day and obviously I've been in his seat before. It's a great feeling. Especially the nights after you win the championship. They're quite good!

...but you have to be generous buying everybody drinks.

LH: No problem man! No problem.

Q: (Seff Harding – Xiro Xone Radio) This question's for Lewis, first off, congratulations for winning the championship – and thanks for winning it here in the US. Last year when you won this championship you talked about the Hamilton legacy and what you're doing, what your brother's doing. Now having won a third world championship, how does it feel continuing to add to that legacy?

LH: Yeah. As I said, I'm not the only one who's been achieving great things in the family. Firstly my Dad, coming from nowhere, he never wanted his kids to struggle the way he did, so the effort that he put in was just remarkable. I've got my younger brother who's seven years younger than me who's one of the first disabled individuals to be racing cars and again his motivation is to inspire. He never wants anything coming off my success, he wants to do it all on his own, and he's inspiring young kids also to exceed expectations – that's his hashtag, #ExceedExpectations – and so hopefully I can be a mascot for my brother Nick. To be able to add to that, to know that our Hamilton name will be here past our lives. I'm super, super proud about it. And, as I said, while I'm standing here, and I'm here in front of the cameras, I'm a small link in a much, much larger chain which is pretty strong.

Q: (Graham Harris – Motorsport Monday) Congratulations Lewis. Between Lewis and Sebastian you have seven world drivers' titles, emulating Michael Schumacher. Question to both of you: do either of you ever see yourselves emulating Michael's total or, if not, do you think it's just not possible anymore?

SV: If we managed together it's a good thing already! That's how big Michael is.

LH: For Sebastian, being from the same country I think that would be, for sure, I would imagine, Sebastian's target. As for me, as I said, it was always to get the three that Ayrton had. Of course, he wasn't from the same country as me but he was the guy that inspired me as a youngster. Now I'm like... I don't know where it's going next. There is no-one else I look to, that I want to equal or emulate now. I'm just going to start... as I said one race ago or something like that, I feel like I've got the baton now for myself and Ayrton and I'm going to carry it as far as I can, as strong as I can and keep building and see where I take it.

Sebastian?

LH: I'm going to do everything to stop you getting seven, don't worry!

SV: Yeah, you can try!

SV: To be honest, no, it's not really part of my thinking. I think it's because, the way I think of Michael is with massive respect for what he has achieved. He is my childhood hero. In many ways still my hero. Especially since the day I joined Ferrari – to know what he did with the team and what especially he did to be that successful makes me respect him even more. So, yeah, I don't really want to go near... I think I'm very, very happy to be in the position that I am – and of course my

target is to win the championship with Ferrari – but I haven't, y'know put a number to it and I wouldn't dare to think about equalising Michael.

Q: (Jonathan Green – Speed City Radio / COTA) Lewis, just go through the gamut of emotions you must be going through because this morning after qualifying – or the lack of – we almost had a washout here. There was hardly anybody here and then at the end the British flags, the American fans celebrating a world championship. It could have been so different. Just describe your emotions on that last lap.

LH: The last 10 – 15 laps were the tough ones. What an extraordinary race. I just started out well, very, very close obviously with Nico at the beginning and that wasn't intentional, we both broke very deep into it and I understood he was on the outside and in the wet that's where the grip is, so he was turning and I wasn't turning so we touched. After that just fighting for position, trying to stay ahead. Emotions were just up and down through the race because at one point I was in the lead but I knew I didn't have it in the car. I was struggling and sliding all over the place and then I fell to fourth and the track was drying and just the most... the trickiest conditions for us. And these guys were all driving fantastically well. And then, as I said, the last ten laps really... I was behind the Safety Car and think 'OK, I've got ten laps, the world championship is right there – how am I going to get it?' And then I was just head down, everything that I've got from all these years. Everything that I've built up, everything that I've learnt comes into this. This is the defining moment really. Of course I could have gone on to other races but for me, I'm kind of like 'now!' It's so close that I could smell it. I was pushing and I was looking forward to a race with Nico of course. I had the same issue as he did. Obviously I didn't go off but I had a similar issue of wheelspin at that one point where I was changing a switch out, that same corner, and nearly lost it so I understand and sympathise with him but the emotions... I just can't believe it. Honestly, I really, really can't believe. It's very, very strange sitting here after nine years and I'm... it's not even the end of the season yet and I can't believe how well this year's gone; how amazing my team has been. Sitting in front of you guys for, God knows how many times I've been up here, but it never gets old and I just feel incredibly grateful right now and extremely humbled and excited. I have no idea what I'm doing next. I'm going out of here, I know I have to stand in front of some cameras, I'm going to hug lots of people, I definitely need to have a drink after that race. Yeah, just continue to enjoy this life and the many blessings that are around me.

Q: (Kwane Lillard - Tennessee Tribune) Winning today in the US, will that encourage more excitement about Grand Prix racing in this country? And with the new team coming from Haas, will that excite more people about Grand Prix racing in the US?

LH: I hope so, I hope the more and more we come here, the more it excites people. It's such an exciting sport and for some reason at this track we always have good races. I can only imagine that it was an exciting race for you guys to watch because I saw the screens a couple of times and it looked... for me it was one of the most exciting races that I've had for a while and yeah, while we only have one race here, we've had an amazing turn-out with lots of Americans, people from different parts of the world have come here to enjoy Austin to see the town, great food, great ambience, great atmosphere. So hopefully every single person that comes here will infect someone else here, particularly in the States, whether they're going to the airport, through the petrol station or wherever it is: 'hey, did you see the race? You should watch it.' Hopefully one by one, by word of mouth, it will catch on because it is an incredible sport and I think today maybe was a good race? Yeah, today it was one of the best so that's a great. This track really is amazing and it's enabled us to race which is what we all want.

I feel like I'm trying to compete with Sebastian when for all those years he was up here, Nico or whoever was up here with me, sitting here and it was again it was your day so we just sat there and enjoyed it, so I'm trying to exceed the length of time you were talking back then.

SV: You're still behind.

LH: Yeah, I think I'm still behind.

Q: (Ted Kravitz – Sky Sports) Nico, I just wanted to ask: did you seem to feel that something went wrong on the car that made you go off the track like that and I know emotions were high in the cool-down room but why did you throw the hat back at Lewis?

NR: No, for sure I'm not saying there was something wrong with the car. For now, I'm assuming that it's a mistake that I made, just getting too much wheelspin, going away on the cold tyres, the tyres weren't fully up to temperature yet but it felt very very strange and it has never happened to me before like that, so it really is something that I definitely want to look into and try and understand. And that was just some games so nothing much, nothing more into that.

Q: (Tony DiZinno – NBC Sports) Lewis, how different does it feel to clinch a World Championship with multiple races remaining as opposed to doing so in the final race of the season?

LH: To be honest, last year or the last two times obviously was really climatic in the last race. One was 17 seconds before the end of the race, I think it was something like that, and obviously last year it was amazing but it took a lot out of us, that race, because obviously it was double points, anything could have happened. This one still feels just as special, if not more special. I think this has to have topped last year for me, being as it's equalling Ayrton, as I said before. Of course, I drive every year and I believe that I have the ability to win but with the way life goes, sometimes you have the luck with you, sometimes it's not. Sometimes you have a good car, sometimes you don't. I really didn't think a few years ago that I would be sitting here. I thought that I would win championships at this team and as I said, that is why I moved here. It was never 'I'm just going to take a chance.' I don't think I really... I did my due diligence and I believed it was the right choice. As a kid, I just wanted to be World Champion and so it's kind of crazy to think that me and Ayrton, in terms of championships, stand on the same line which is just the greatest.

Q: (Kirk Bohls – Austin American-Statesman) Lewis, you mentioned the popularity of the sport, I'm curious, football is on a pedestal in this country. What can Formula One do to enhance the appeal for the population in the US?

LH: I really don't know what we need to do. I think lots of brain-storming and really just conversation with perhaps new people's ideas. I'm assuming – because I don't really know who makes the decisions – that it's a group of people who have been there for some time, so always introducing new blood and new ideas and interacting with – I think they should really interact with people here in the States and try and figure out whether there's something... Because for some reason, whatever it is, the Americans put on the greatest shows, whether it's music, sports, games, whether it be basketball, NFL, they have the best games, the atmosphere, the way they put on the show is just outstanding and there's something definitely that Formula One can learn from that. So as I said, maybe we need to hire some new people, I don't know, but any ideas you guys have... I speak to Bernie and he's like 'yeah, any ideas you have' so...

Q: (Kirk Bohls – Austin American-Statesman) Will having an American team help?

LH: I don't really know. I definitely think it will and having an American driver would be good but I think having more races here. It's such a big country, I think we have to have more races here. There's no reason why we shouldn't have at least two races here, it's such a big place.

Q: (Graham Harris – Motorsport Monday) Nico, this is the second time in two years that you’ve sat where you are sitting. You’ve beaten Lewis on a number of occasions, you’re in a winning car, where do you go next? Back to the planning board, what do you do for next year, where are you going to get your motivation from?

NR: I haven’t thought about that yet. I’m still in today and today’s a disappointment. I don’t know. What am I going to say to that? Whatever happens in the past doesn’t change me going forward. It’s always full attack, big push, that’s the way I am.

Q: (Christopher Joseph – Chicane) Lewis, you speak a lot about being inspired by Ayrton, not only as a childhood hero but in terms of driving style etc etc and he spoke often of the zone and being in that zone driving-wise. Over the past couple of years you seem to have gone into another zone, a more spiritual zone with your driving and your outside life. Do you feel that way now?

LH: Definitely. I think I’ve always had that but I think I express it a little bit more and I think having that freedom to be able to express myself in the way I want to and be who I want to be and who I am I think enables me to drive better than ever, than I have ever driven. It’s difficult to describe, the power that you feel from within, because it all comes from within in that belief and yeah, I think today is... I’m very very blessed to be able to do what I do and in the way I do it and to be here today, to have the experiences and opportunities that I’ve had in my life - you know, have my Dad stay around, good Mum, good friends. Yeah, very very very blessed.

Q: (Joseph D. Love - Tennessee Tribune) Once again I’d like to congratulate you on your third Formula One victory. You’ve broken all barriers...

LH: Would you just say that again? Sorry, I didn’t hear you!

Q: (Joseph D. Love - Tennessee Tribune) Congratulations, Lewis, on your third Formula One World Championship...

LH: Sounds good!

Q: (Joseph D. Love - Tennessee Tribune) Absolutely, absolutely. My question to you is: you’ve broken barriers, you done amazing things. Do you see yourself as a Formula One team owner in the future? Or as a musician?

LH: You know what, I don’t have any desires to be a team boss. I’ve witnessed great team bosses in Ron, in Martin Whitmarsh, in Ross Brawn and in Niki and Toto. And I think I will stick to what I do best. Would I like to be a part of a team in the future? I’m sure that at some stage when I stop I’m going to have massive withdrawal symptoms because I’ve been doing it pretty much my whole life so there’s going to be that desire to be around racing in some capacity. So I do know that it’s not behind a camera, that’s what I definitely definitely know but never say never, as I said. I hope that...

SV: In front of the camera!

LH: Music I will continue to do for as long as I live because it’s just fun and enjoyable but there are so many other things I can do, I think, outside of racing and beyond what I do today so I think it’s just going to be finding that next path, when the time comes, hopefully it’s a long long time away from now. Don’t know what else to say.

Q: (Adam Tate – tributeracing.com) Sebastian, Lewis was talking about all the times we were sitting here watching when it was your day. You’ve each publicly stated you want a showdown with the other next year; is Ferrari ready to make that step? How badly do you want it to be your day again this time next year?

SV: Well, on days like this, very badly. It's a long way, for sure today it doesn't feel as good as probably it should after a great race to be honest. When you start 14th and you finish on the podium that's a pretty good. Equally, let's not forget the targets that we set out in the beginning... it's a new start for the entire team, with a lot of things changing. I think we've exceeded expectations this year by quite a lot so yeah, the target is to do better next year and to keep fighting until the end and be in a better position. Equally we have to be patient because it's a big project, there's a lot of effort that's going in in Maranello and the people are really hungry and I think that probably the whole factory, the whole team here feels similar to me today whereas it's great to know that we had a fantastic recovery and another strong race but equally it's not so nice if you lose out on the championship, so the target is definitely to come back stronger next year and just to keep making progress. I think that's the best medicine that we need to prescribe to us.

Ends