



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2014 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes), Nico HULKENBERG (Force India), Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes), Sebastian VETTEL (Red Bull Racing), Fernando ALONSO (Ferrari), Jenson BUTTON (McLaren)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Lewis, you're guaranteed the title on Sunday if you finish in the top two, something that you have done for the last six races. It's your fourth final day title showdown, how are you feeling before this duel in the desert?

Lewis HAMILTON: Yeah, I think it generally feels quite cool to be here, obviously the weather is great, the track's fantastic, it's a beautiful place, so, yeah, excited for the weekend.

Nico, it's your first final day title showdown, how much confidence are you carrying into this weekend from the way you performed last time out in Brazil?

Nico ROSBERG: Yeah, of course it's great coming into this weekend, the way Brazil went for sure, that I was able to progress after Austin, that gives me a lot of confidence going into this weekend, definitely.

Lewis, back to you, you've had two poles and a win here. You also retired twice while leading. Does the fact that the showdown is happening at a track where you have a strong record make any difference?

LH: I'm sure there are positives with it. It's a great circuit, it's generally suited the car that I had when I was back in McLaren years ago and it's definitely a track that has suited my driving style in the past, but every year is different. I hope to take that positivity into this weekend.

Back to you Nico. You qualified ahead of Lewis here last year and you have done so overall in this 2014 season, how much satisfaction do you derive from that?

NR: At the moment I'm not really thinking about that. At the moment I'm focused on trying to win this race. But of course, yes, knowing that helps and gives me a good opportunity this weekend knowing that my qualifying form has been really good, so that should be another plus going into this race here.

Fernando, coming to you, it's been announced today that you're leaving Ferrari after five seasons. Tell us why and your thoughts on those five years with the team?

Fernando ALONSO: Yeah, obviously, you know, it's a new chapter in my career. I felt it was the time to find new projects, new motivation. It was not an easy decision to make. I was in talks, even last year to be honest, and we wait for this year, for the new car, the new turbo era etc. This year I felt around summertime, September, it was time to move and I take the decision. Only time will

tell if it's a good one or a bad one. But what is for sure is that it has been an amazing experience. So, so happy, so proud to have had those five years with an amazing team, amazing brand like Ferrari. I grew up as a driver, as a person, only good feelings and good words. Obviously we missed the championship, came three times second, but I am extremely proud of those second places and the work we did in those years. Now it is time to close one door, to open a new one and we'll see how it goes.

In terms of opening that new door, McLaren says it will announce its drivers on December 1st. How much bearing does the test next week with Honda and McLaren have on what you do next?
FA: Zero.

OK. Moving on to Sebastian then. In many ways the destinies of you, Fernando and Jenson have all been interlinked over the last few weeks and months. You've signed to replace him [Alonso] on the three-year deal. How are you feeling about that and why is this the right move for you now?

Sebastian VETTEL: I think it felt like the right time. I think it's not an easy decision to make. Obviously I've been with Red Bull for more or less my entire life, since I was 12 years old I've been supported by them and obviously I have a very, very strong link to all the people in Austria. Later on obviously I had the opportunity to race for both of their Formula One teams, which we couldn't see coming once we were starting and part of the Red Bull Junior Team but in terms of timing obviously it worked out brilliantly and the success we've had in Formula One, especially with Red Bull Racing over the last four years I think has been an incredible journey. But I think at some stage you feel that you want to take on a new challenge and do something different. I think I don't have to mention the history of Ferrari in the sport and it's probably the greatest team to driver for. I'm very excited and very motivated to try to do my best, to put my heart in it and yeah, obviously be successful, that's target.

You're a three-time winner of this race here in Abu Dhabi and the outgoing world champion – next year you'll hand your number one plate to either Lewis or Nico. What's your commentary on the title battle that those two have fought throughout this year?

SV: Well, I think Mercedes made it very boring this year, so I think it's good to see that they were battling very closely, they had great races, battling for the lead, which is obviously the most interesting position in the race for the people to watch. Remembering races like Bahrain, I think they put on a great show for the fans and took it to the last race, so I think both of them deserve to win after such a great season but I'm sure if you ask either one of them, they will give you plenty of reasons why each one is deserving more than the other.

Thank you. Coming to you Jenson. Your destiny has been linked to the two gentlemen to your right and their moves. What's your feeling now on the way things are panning out?

Jenson BUTTON: Nothing has changed for me, for the last two months. So I've got nothing else to add, apart from that I go into this weekend looking forward to it. I've learned to live in the moment a lot more this year and that's exactly what I'm going to do. I've got my family here this weekend, so looking forward to the weekend and hopefully we can have a good result.

It's worth noting that you've had the third longest career in Formula One history, how do you look back on it at this point?

JB: At this point? It's everything I set out to achieve. I think when you're a kid your dream is to get to Formula One, your next dream is to win a race and then win the world championship. I've achieved all three of those. Is that enough for a driver? Every driver is different. But I love racing and that's why, as I said, living in the moment is key right now, not thinking about the future too much and hopefully we can have some good fights this weekend.

OK, thank you for that. Coming to you Nico. You scored points in the first 10 grands prix this year but only four times in the last eight races. What's been going on there?

Nico HULKENBERG: The second half wasn't as flawless and as smooth as the first half I'm afraid and on top of that also we seemed to be a lot more competitive initially in the year. We've slipped back a bit in terms of development and, you know, Formula One is a fast-moving business and if you don't put the upgrades on the car you get overtaken and I think that's what happened to us.

There's a lot of focus on the midfield teams at the moment. From a driver's point of view, what's your take on the situation with Force India, Sauber and Lotus?

NH: In terms of what?

Sustainability, the future, the outlook?

NH: Well, obviously we're here, we're fighting for points and obviously the target is to beat McLaren in the Constructors' Championship, which is very ambitious, they are quite far ahead now. We'll give our best, as every weekend, and give our all and see if we can do it. Otherwise, everything is OK.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Frederic Ferret – l'Equipe) A question to Fernando and Sebastian. You are used to having last grand prix pressure to deal with the title. Can you explain how do you feel at that point and how you dealt with it during the race?

FA: I think every situation is different. I've been a couple of times, five times in that situation. All five were different. It depends on whether you are in front, behind, with who you are battling, with which mood you arrive to the race. It depends on the circuit; it depends on anything. I remember Brazil, for example 2012, it was raining on Sunday morning, there are different factors around the race itself that it can change your approach or can change your feelings. I think it's a very unique thing on those moments and it will be an interesting weekend for Nico, Lewis, wishing them the best of luck because they deserve it after a super championship and, you know, only one can win but let's see a good race on Sunday.

SV: Well, it's what you're working for all year, to arrive at the last race and still have the opportunity to become world champion. I think that's ultimately what drives all of us. So, yeah, I think the most important thing is to enjoy.

Q: (Ralf Bach – Sport Bild) The first question is: did you make any practice to handle the pressure you have. Everybody expects you will win the title, so you're the guy who has to lose anything. Second, is it your turn to take it easy and just be second on Sunday or will you demonstrate to the whole world that you will win the title with a victory here?

LH: To the second question, I come into the race weekend to try to win, as I do every race weekend, so nothing changes there. And in terms of the pressure, I don't particularly feel any. I think I've had plenty of experience through my racing career – 15 or 20 years I would say, actually it might be 20 years of racing – to be prepared for today. There's no special recipe for it.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere dello Sport) To Fernando: having the possibility to change something in your relationship, in your history with Ferrari, what would you do?

FA: I don't know really. I enjoyed the experience, as I said before, and I feel very privileged of what we achieved and lived in those years. The group of people I worked with, it was amazing. I learned so many things in those five years. I'm not the same driver as in 2009, when I arrived. I think I'm more prepared now. I'm better in all the aspects of the driving skills. I think it was a very, very important step in my career. You need to feel the moment when it's time to move. As I said, I felt it was time for me to find new things. I expressed my wish to the team in September. They

understand; they were very helpful on that because obviously I had two more years contract. But they understand my position, they listen and I think it's the best for both parts and now hopefully we can battle for better positions and wins in the future.

Q: (Haoran Zhou – F1 Express) Jenson, would a good race result for you change anything in terms of the future, because you've had a good string of results recently?

JB: Personally, I would hope not. I would hope that a result this weekend would not change my fate for the future. I feel that I bring a lot more to a team than just one race but hope that my career would speak a lot louder than one individual race.

Q: (Haoran Zhou – F1 Express) Fernando, you spent the whole of the 2010 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix behind Vitaly Petrov. If one of the championship contenders needs to overtake, do you have any suggestions for them?

FA: Not really. I didn't succeed, so try not to repeat what we did in that race, that will be the best solution for them. These days, there are many tools that we can play with, with electric motor, DRS, things that probably could help in a situation like that. But the best thing is not to stop behind anyone.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Sebastian, how do you see the co-operation with Kimi? Will it be easier for you than with anybody else?

SV: Yes. I think he would probably reply the same if you asked him. That's what he told me, just before! I think, yes. Why? Because Kimi is probably the least complicated driver on the grid so in terms of performance on the track, when we talk about the skills Kimi has, I don't think there is a single person in the paddock who doubts his skills, including myself, but from a personal point of view, on a personal level, very straightforward. I don't expect any complications because I think we have a good relationship but more so, I think we have great respect for each other which I think is always very healthy to deal with in these sorts of situations coming up.

Q: (Walter Koster – Saabrucker Zeitung) Quite another question: gentlemen, a short view back to the past. Thirty years ago, Niki Lauda told us 'take a monkey, place him into the cockpit and he is able to drive the car.' Thirty years later, Sebastian told us 'I had to start my car like a computer, it's very complicated.' And Nico Rosberg said that during the race – I don't remember what race - he pressed the wrong button on the wheel. Question for you both: is Formula One driving today too complicated with twenty and more buttons on the wheel, are you too much under effort, under pressure? What are your wishes for the future concerning the technical programme during the race? Less buttons, more? Or less and more communication with your engineers?

SV: Can you repeat the question?! Yeah, I remember the question. I think it depends all on how the monkey grows up these days. I think it's a different generation of monkeys that Niki was talking about probably compared to monkeys we have today. Obviously there's a lot of buttons on

the steering wheel, probably too many but I think for us, we grow up like that, it's a different generation. I think if you put a modern phone in Niki's hands, I'm not sure he would know what to do – sorry Niki. I think it's what you get used to. For sure, when I started, for example, in Formula One, there were a lot of procedures I had to learn, a lot of buttons I needed to know how to control etc. But it's part of cars nowadays. If you jump into a normal road car, there's also plenty of buttons but in the end the most important bit is the steering wheel, turning the car left and right and the accelerator at the bottom. I think the basics haven't changed and that's the important thing, that the sport remains as it has been many many years ago despite how many buttons you have on the steering wheel.

NR: I'll make this a bit shorter. I think we need to just make sure that the sport stays simple for the fans, that's the most important thing. The direction, it's all great, technology fantastic, hybrid power, buttons, everything, that's all great but we need to make sure that for the fans it stays simple enough. That's something for the medium term future, that we need to keep an eye on. That's it.

Q: (Daniel Johnson – The Telegraph) Lewis, there's been points this year, I think it's fair to say, when you haven't felt that the fight between you and Nico has been a totally clean fight. Are you totally confident that it will be this weekend?

LH: Yeah. I don't really know what else to say. That how it's been. You have to go into the race weekends believing that's going to be the case, yeah.

Q: (Daniel Johnson – The Telegraph) Is there anything that you can do to make sure it will be?

LH: Don't think so.

Q: (Jon McEvoy – Daily Mail) Lewis, will you speak together before the race to ensure that there's no argy-bargy out there?

LH: No.

Q: (Jon McEvoy – Daily Mail) You don't need to or you have an understanding already....

LH: We don't need to. It's already been discussed at the beginning of the season and several times through the season and particularly after Spa, so there's no reason to revisit it. We're not children, we should know what is wrong and what is right.

Q: Nico, do you have anything to add?

NR: No, just that yes, Lewis can do something to keep it clean which is drive cleanly himself. So it's not like he can't do anything.

Q: (Abhishek Takle – Midday) Question to both Lewis and Nico: it was 14 years ago that you fought for the championship in go-karting. How does the dynamic change when you're fighting for a Formula One World Championship? How has it changed for the two of you, because obviously the stakes are a lot higher?

NR: Yeah, it's quite amazing to think now that 15 years later we're actually in that position which we used to dream about, to be in the best F1 team, fighting for the championship, fighting for race wins. It's really amazing. Of course now it's more intense, there's more surrounding it, that's the best way to put it.

LH: I generally feel it's quite similar to back in the karting days. At that age, it was as intense as I had experienced, I wanted to win back then and nothing's changed.

Q: (Haoran Zhou – F1 Express) Lewis, do have any family with you this weekend, because generally you perform better, you smile a lot more when you have family around? That's just a personal observation but I just want to know does the whole family come to Abu Dhabi for this important weekend?

LH: I have a couple of friends and I think one or two cousins in the grandstands and I've got a close friend that's with me in the paddock but otherwise no other family here.

Q: (Christobal Rosaleny – Car and Driver) Fernando, I've seen that you are wearing a new helmet at this Grand Prix; could you tell us its meaning?

FA: Yeah, I wear a helmet with a picture of a pit stop this year on one side, the Italian flag in the middle and the signatures of everybody in the team on the other side. I just told them this morning that it's the last time that I will jump in a Ferrari, so I want to bring all of them with me because they were a part of this fantastic experience and I want to do my last race with them on the track. To be honest, it's been a little bit of tricks because at Sochi, I took all the signatures from everybody but when I arrived here, we were missing 20 or 25 so now the helmet is not as perfect as it should be, because now we have all the 25 signatures everywhere but I'm happy and proud of them and happy to wear them on my helmet.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire - Associated Press) Sebastian, how emotional do you think your first race for Ferrari will be, considering how much of an idol Michael was for you?

SV: Yeah, I think it will be special for sure. Obviously, it's a childhood dream. When I was growing up myself but also for a lot of kids at the go-kart track in Germany, Michael was our hero. And at that time he was obviously still with Benetton but when we grew up, obviously he was still part of us. He moved to Ferrari, took on a massive challenge back then in '96 and got very close the years before but made it happen in 2000. Since then, I think every link that you have or when you think back it's always Michael in the red cars so I think it will be a very special journey and I'm very much looking forward to it. Not only the first race, to be honest with you, but even the first time in winter testing that I will step into the car, I think will be very special and will be something that remains with you probably for the rest of your life so I'm very much looking forward to it, I don't know yet how it feels but I'm very keen to find out.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Fernando, if you have the possibility to chose your teammate for next year, would you chose Jenson?

FA: Hmm.

JB: Take your time!

FA: I don't know where I will be so... We will see.

Ends