



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

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DRIVERS

1 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

2 – Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes)

3 – Valtteri BOTTAS (Williams)

TV UNILATERAL

Lewis, congratulations on a superb pole today. Tell us what you feel about pole position for this race, this first ever Russian Grand Prix and how important is it to be on pole around here?

Lewis HAMILTON: I have no idea in that sense but of course pole is a great place to start. Firstly, an amazing job done by the team; constantly improving and moving forwards this year. Thanks to them we're able to be on the front row quite often. It's great to come here. It's a beautiful place and the weather has been amazing and really enjoying driving this track. It wasn't the easiest session. These guys were looking quite strong. Just hooking up a lap from some reason it wasn't the same as practice. But I'm really grateful that I got the pole here for the first time. It's going to be tough tomorrow. It's a long way down to turn one, so we'll find out how that works out.

What is it about the circuit? A lot of drivers have called it 'cool'.

LH: It is very cool. Yeah, definitely. The track surface is great, it's very smooth but it has a lot of grip. The kerbs are just done really nicely and obviously the surroundings, you know when I landed here seeing the mountains... and also being around where they put the Olympics on, it's quite an incredible place. And today we had a good turn-out as well for the first Saturday of the race here so I hope that tomorrow is even better and that we can put on a good show for them.

Nico, second on the grid. This is an important race, isn't it, to get some points?

Nico ROSBERG: Every race is important at the moment. We have four to go. They are all just as important. Yeah, today Lewis was quicker – all weekend really. So I've been working hard to try to get close but didn't manage to get closer than those two tenths now but that's the way it is. I need to accept that. Also, I had the Williams or Valtteri coming up from behind, going quick, so I needed to keep an eye on that. But front row is OK definitely and from there everything is possible tomorrow. It's going to be an interesting race. It's very unique here because there is hardly any tyre degradation. The track is so smooth on the tyres or I don't know what. It's completely different to everything else we've seen this year and that makes it very unique. It's been a big challenge set-up wise and everything to get to grips with the track this weekend. Yeah, I think it's going to be a good race tomorrow.

Valtteri, so, so close. I think the entire grandstand heaved with excitement when you went off, right at the end on that last corner. Nobody else has been off there either.

Valtteri BOTTAS: Yeah, well I didn't know at that time that it was close to the pole. I only knew how it was compared to my best lap, which was the previous lap, which was not bad. I knew I had one more lap to go. Maybe, looking back I took maybe a bit too much out of the tyres in the beginning of the lap and the last sector became a bit more tricky. As I was gaining time compared to my best towards the end it became more difficult in the last few corners. I risked it a bit too much in the last two corners, went a little bit wide and when you go offline it's really slippery like everyone saw and that was it.

Are you very upset about it?

VB: Of course, yeah. It's not nice to make a mistake. I think in the end today it maybe cost one place maximum. Anyway, I think the mistake was taking a bit too much out of the tyres in the beginning of the lap, that's what made me struggle a bit more in the end of the lap. The lap before, I'm quite happy about that.

Lewis, some of the corners around here seem to invite errors. What kind of race are we going to see tomorrow?

LH: I don't necessarily think they invite errors. At the end of the day we're pushing all the time so you're going to see those mistakes or hiccups occur all the time but they're generally easy to recover from. It's a very fast, flowing or medium to high-speed, fast, flowing circuit. I really think that tomorrow is going to be a good race for people to watch. You've got the long straight that you can follow on, the DRS. It's nice and wide so hopefully you should be able to follow quite nicely. It could be one of the better races we've had for a long time.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Lewis, an interesting message from your engineer saying he thought the track was slowing and then you go and pop it on pole.

LH: Was I not on pole at that point?

You were, but you improved.

LH: Yeah, I improved, absolutely. He said that the track looked like it was getting slower. To be honest I couldn't really hear the message that clear but I kind of worked out what he was saying. But I was up on the next lap. It wasn't a perfect lap. I think there was more time in it. It's a fine line obviously; we're all pushing out there. As I said, it didn't feel as good as the P3 session but hopefully tomorrow should be good.

This morning we saw you had a rather strange incident. What happened there?

LH: I just basically made a mistake. I had the brake bias set the wrong way, forgot to reset it, had it too far rearwards and as soon as I touched the brakes I just locked the rears. Fortunately, I got away with it without damaging the car.

And we mentioned a moment that it invite mistakes but we see a lot of people going off that corner, Turn 17. There are certain corners where people do go off – Turn Two, Turn Four as well. What is it about those corners?

LH: I would say probably the exit of Turn Four... when you're going into it it's very wide and all of a sudden it gets quite narrow on the exit, so it's very misleading when you go into that corners. For 17, it's very hard to find the braking point and know how much speed [you can carry through]... the car is at the end of the lap, the tyres are overheating, it's hard to know how much speed you can take through there. Plus, if you've had a good lap, you don't want to lose it, so it's a real fine line at those two places.

Nico, tomorrow, how important is DRS going to be?

NR: Hopefully very important! We'll see. I think the start will be important of course, there's a great opportunity there. Been having some very good starts lately, so quite confident for that. After that, race pace of course.

What's the most significant part around this circuit? What's that long, long left-hander like?

NR: It's very unique. So long, full lateral G, so it's quite exciting in an F1 car for sure.

Any other specific points on the circuit?

NR: It's really a good track because it's a big challenge to get it right. All those medium-speed corners, the way the asphalt is it doesn't work the tyres very hard, it's completely different scenario to everything else we've had this year. So we've had to adapt to this track and asphalt and the way the tyres are here. That made it a big engineering challenge this weekend. And also driving-wise it's a difficult track.

Thank you very much. Valtteri, can you take the fight to Mercedes tomorrow?

VB: I really hope so. It's never easy. They are really quick and you never know how more pace they have than what they showed in the long runs on Friday. So we will see tomorrow. As team we made a really good job this weekend in getting the car set up for this unique track and unique surface of the tarmac. It's feeling good and I think the car should be a bit better in the long runs than it was in the qualifying.

It has been another good fight-back from Williams. We've seen it quite a few times, that Friday hasn't been so good but you've come through on Saturday.

VB: On the Friday we're always just focusing on our test programme, we're not really looking in detail about the lap times. We're doing our thing, doing it all weekend, to improve the car, make the most out of the tyres and the package we have and then, yeah, Saturday is the time when you show what you have. Sunday, in the end, is the day that matters but I'm feeling good for tomorrow.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, after getting so close to the pole, they say you are very critical on yourself. How critical are you today?

VB: Well, of course, very. I don't know if it was possible to be on pole today, it looked like the Mercedes has been all weekend really quick in the last sector, so difficult to say how much we lost there. Maybe one position could have been better – but obviously when you haven't done a perfect job, you are disappointed – but in the end the race is tomorrow and I'm starting on the clean side, second row, which is not bad at all. I'll learn from this and we go forward.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) Valtteri, after two sectors you were in the lead. Where in the third sector did you lose it. Only in the last corner or already before a little bit?

VB: Well, compared to my previous best lap, I started to lose already a little bit in the beginning of the third sector and, yeah, then I lost it completely in the last sector. But I mean the whole weekend and the whole qualifying, Mercedes was really quick in the last sector, so I think they are, in general, still quicker in the corners than us. So, I think anyway with a good lap it would have been difficult to be on pole. But for sure I lost the end of the lap and I think I was a bit more than two-tenths ahead of my best before going into the last two corners so... yeah, it is what it is and we'll see tomorrow.

Q: (Vladimir Rogovets – Sb Belarus) My question to Lewis. This weekend we have the first race, the Formula One in Sochi, and today you are in the pole position here. Is this, have you feelings of love for Russia?

LH: It equals my love for Russia. Really, growing up, I've said before in interviews, but growing up seeing footage of Russia in movies and in pictures. It was one of the countries that I'd never really been to. We travel all the time, always get to go and see new places but it was one that I hadn't really seen. Just the four or five days we've been here, to see the beauty of this place is really pleasing. Moscow is a beautiful place, really enjoyed it there seeing these old, beautiful buildings and then landing here was like landing in a real nice holiday destination – with mountains that I hear in the winter you can ski on, which I had no idea you could ski over here. Yeah, so, hopefully this is the beginning of a real positive relationship Formula One has with Russia. And definitely now for me I know it's only a couple of hours flight from where I live so I think I'll be hoping over more often for some good weekends.

Q: (Autosport es Formula Magazin – Balazs Vajta) This is a question for Lewis. This track is also new and a couple of years ago we went to the first time to Valencia, which was also new and, even though the two tracks are not really similar, they do have some similarities. Everybody's very enthusiastic about the race tomorrow, it will be exciting – my question is what makes you think the race will be exciting because Valencia used to be a kind of boring race usually. What makes you think different this time?

LH: I don't know for sure but I personally wasn't a big fan of the Valencia circuit. I liked the race track they have which is outside the city but the actually street one wasn't very exciting. This one is definitely better for me. Whether or not we can follow... we were just discussing,

who knows. They're quite... they're medium to fast kind of sweeping corners where you need maximum downforce, so tomorrow will be a true showing of whether or not you can follow. But you've got the long straights and, for example, Turn 10, you're coming onto a corner which you should be able to follow through there for example, and then you have the DRS straight. Then you have a slower sector with the last sector which then goes onto the long pit straight, which again is very, very long, should enable people to be close and overtake. That's why I think, when you were racing in Valencia it was very hard to follow and then when you did get to those long straights, or the couple of longer straights you had, you couldn't get close enough. So fingers crossed.

Q: (La Gazzetta dello Sport – Andrea Cremonesi) A question for Lewis and Nico. Tomorrow Mercedes can win the World Constructors' Championship. Does it change something in the process of the race or it doesn't matter in your mind this target?

LH: For me it doesn't change much in the race but it's quite a historic moment, it will be a historic moment for us and for me to be a part of this team and see its success and be a part of its success. And also, Mercedes-Benz, having never won a Constructors' Championship, it's going to be the first time so it's going to be historic for the team, very special moment when we get there.

NR: Yes it is. It's the big, one of the two big targets for the team since five years now. I've been there since day one and it's very, very exciting to think that we're so close to that now. That would be a really, really fantastic feat for us. I hope we manage to do it tomorrow and then maybe we're able to celebrate it a little bit.

Q: (Haoran Zhou – F1 Express) Two questions, one to Nico, how are you finding the DRS zone on the pit straight because it's a bit like in Shanghai, it's in the middle of the straight and the case in Shanghai is that the DRS isn't that powerful. How are you finding that in the simulation? And a question to Lewis is – or perhaps to both of you – you are in a chance to win for Mercedes again, one century later after the 1914 Grand Prix – it's not Formula One but Benz also won that. Is that in your target to win a hat-trick for Benz anyway, tomorrow.

LH: Where was that race?

1914. There was two Russian Grands Prix, one in 1913, one in 1914, both won by Benz cars. Not Mercedes-Benz back then.

NR: That's a nice statistic. Obviously it would be very special to do it 100 years after again. And it's always great to hear these legendary stories of the Silver Arrows, y'know? And then with the DRS, it's always calculated perfectly by the FIA to make sure that the overtaking is not too easy and not too difficult. They try to always get it right. So, I'm confident they've done a good job with it and they've got it exactly right.

LH: I already kind of said it but it's special to... it shows to Russia that Mercedes is the best. So hopefully tomorrow we'll stamp that onto the first grand prix here in Russia.

Ends