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Press Information
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DRIVERS – Esteban GUTIERREZ (Sauber), Sergio PEREZ (Force India), Valtteri BOTTAS (Williams), Romain GROSJEAN (Lotus), Daniel RICCIARDO (Red Bull Racing), Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Let's start with the world championship leader. Lewis, 17 points ahead, the biggest lead you've had this year so far, which poses the greater threat do you think: Nico or reliability from here on?

Lewis HAMILTON: It's a good question. I don't know, I think they are both relatively decent threats. But the guys have worked very hard to eradicate those through the year so I hope that we can all go through these next races together as a team, without any of those issues.

Do you feel a bit more in control of things now, though?

LH: It doesn't really feel any different to several races ago really. As I keep saying: just fighting and chasing the ultimate goal.

You've won twice here in the US, once in Indianapolis and then the first race here at COTA. You have a great affinity for this country, how do you see the potential for Formula One here in the US?

LH: I think there is a huge market for Formula One. I think if you watch all the different sports here the people in this country are so passionate about sports in general, whether it be basketball, baseball or NFL or even NASCAR and IndyCar, so they are extremely enthusiastic about competition and wheel-to-wheel racing or just real out and out heart racing or competition. Whilst we only have one race here, there's lots of opportunity here for it to grow. I've just definitely seen from 2007, even though we missed out quite a few years, there's still quite a lot of growth here. I was in New York yesterday for example and there were people waiting outside this building, with signs and just Formula One fans with our team tops on, which was huge.

Thank you for that. Daniel, coming to you, nice look you're sporting this weekend. Third in the drivers' championship, you're 10-6 against Sebastian in qualifying, which means that whatever happens from here to the end of the season in the head-to-head he can't beat you. How does that feel?

Daniel RICCIARDO: Yeah, I've said it I think before that I've been really happy with the season. Yeah, I guess it's exceeded my expectations and probably everyone else's as well. A few more races left, I would love to get another... or at least a few more top results. I think Austin is a good chance for us. A circuit I've personally enjoyed a lot the last few years. I think it's not only fun to drive but for

racing it provides... I honestly think it's the best circuit on the calendar for overtaking. I think there are more spots around the lap here for overtaking opportunities than any other, so that's always exciting. Yeah, so we'll see how we go. I think we should be alright here.

Well, the Red Bull boss has obviously spelled out that you're the new team leader of Red Bull Racing for 2015. The target then is now on your back. How big a threat do you see Kvyat being to you, to do to you what you have done to Sebastian this year?

DR: I feel a bit still young to the team but yeah I guess I will be the old guy next year. But yeah, I know Dani, I know him pretty well from a few years already. I definitely won't take him lightly. I know he's very quick and just because he's still inexperienced in Formula One I'm sure he's going to bring a lot to the team and a lot to the table. I'll keep working on myself, try to keep improving. I feel I'm not at my peak yet, so I'll try and get there personally first and then see where Dani fits in. I'm sure we'll have a good working relationship, we joke around a bit already now, so I think that light sort of humour will remain in the team.

Valtteri, coming to you, you scored your first ever Formula One points here at the Circuit of the Americas 12 months ago, and what a 12 months it's been since then for you, five podiums and now you're fourth in the drivers' championship. Is it realistic to think that you can improve on this for next year, which are the areas?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Yeah, I have really good memories from here, it's so good to be back. It's a nice circuit, everyone really likes to drive here. The atmosphere, everything is great. And like you said: what a 12 months it's been. It's been really good for us, we've been improving step by step, we made a big step in the winter and now we are in a really good position. But I do think we can still improve next year; that's the goal. We aim to do better than this season and I'm sure it is possible.

Looking at the characteristics of this Austin circuit, it looks like a track that should suit the Williams, like a number of places we've been this year. Is that the way you guys are reading it too? Do you think you can be a bit of a threat this weekend?

VB: Yeah, I think it should be not bad. I think we can be strong here. It could be difficult to be close to the Mercedes as we were in Sochi but still I think it should be good and we're going to have a good fight with Red Bull and Ferrari for sure.

Romain, coming to you, you finished second here last year, great memories there, but you've only had two points finishes since that fantastic result. Are you committing your future to Lotus? Can you tell us any more about that and whether Lotus is the right team for you?

Romain GROSJEAN: Yeah, very good memories from last year, not so good to remind me that I only scored two times this year. For a long time I've said that Lotus will be much better next year than they are this year, for a few reasons. There's been a lot of work at the factory and the fact that the team brings a new nose here just to try to prepare for 2015 is a strong sign. I have a contract with the team. I have the option to leave if I want to – this is from some performance clause. So far there are still places available at top teams or they haven't been

confirmed and that's there where I want to be in the near future and that's what we try to do.

It sounds like the ball is in your court. In terms of news, of course you've got some good news. I understand you're going to have another. So at the end of a difficult year a nice bit of news for you and your wife.

RG: At least that worked! So, pretty good timing as well for next year. I think personally I had a tough season with the results but outside the track I lost four people that were very close to me, the next one being the boss of Total, Christophe de Margerie, last week or the week before. So I thought it was important to announce good news. We have support in tough times but now we have support in good times and I am glad to be the father of a family of almost four people.

Many congratulations to you. Staying on the theme of next year, Sergio, if we could come to you, your team-mate, Nico Hulkenberg, has confirmed for 2015 with Force India, where are you with the process? Is the deal almost done?

Sergio PEREZ: Yes, it's getting very close. Obviously it's getting close to the end of the season, so things are getting very close to sort out the deal for the team. I definitely want to stay longer in the team. I want to establish myself in the team. I'm four years in Formula One and I've been moving around probably too many times. So I want to do a second year with the team and that's my target. So hopefully everything goes right and we can announce things soon.

Obviously we're very close to Mexico here and presumably you've been back home in the past couple of weeks or so. Can you give us any updates on how the track is coming on, what the mood is like, what the expectation is for next year?

SP: It's really high. There are a lot of enthusiasts back home and the people are really excited to have the grand prix back home. I know the circuit is getting rebuilt; there was an event a couple of weeks ago. So, yeah, things are moving on very quick and Mexico is very excited to have all of you, all the drivers, all the teams all together, so it will be a very nice event.

Staying on that theme, Esteban, obviously next year the US Grand Prix will be paired with Mexico on the calendar. What do you think that will do for the development of Formula One in this region?

Esteban GUTIERREZ: I think it's very positive in many ways to have more and more races in America. So I think now complimented with the Mexican Grand Prix and to have all the Mexican energy and also the American energy, in combination to that, it's, I think, very positive to all of that.

A quick thought on your championship position with Sauber. You're still behind Marussia in the constructors' championship, but they aren't here. How hopeful are you that you will come out ahead at the end in the constructors' championship?

EG: Well, we are fighting all weekend. We've been doing that in the second half of the season, we have been very close to score the points on many occasions. We've had some technical issues which made it very difficult to consolidate those results but we still have three more chances and probably out of those three

maybe only one or two! So we have to get the most out of what comes up as an opportunity and we are fighting all the way and, yeah, let's hope we get the points that we want.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action / National Speedsport News) A question for Lewis and Romain: Lewis, guys like Lauda and Prost took a year or two off, came back, won races and championships. Given how intense F1 is these days, the lack of testing, how much momentum would you lose if you took a year off. And Romain, you did take a year or so off, how much momentum did you lose?

LH: It's not something I'm thinking about. I would imagine, yeah, naturally you would definitely lose some traction and then coming back into testing, you don't have a lot before the season, and particularly with all the controls, the new updates every single year, the technology's constantly evolving, so to be on top of that, I imagine that would definitely take a while to come back into. So it wouldn't be helpful. But perhaps back in the day, there was more running and testing, so perhaps... Niki could tell you more. But I'm sure, perhaps, it was a little bit easier for them to come back in.

Romain?

RG: Yeah, I think there it two ways of seeing things. Of course you do lose some of the confidence that you had in the car and the stuff you could do – but on the other hand, you learn in a tough time. And when your car is not so nice to drive, you learn some new tricks and learn to do around. And the day you jump back in a good car, it may feel very easy and quick.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) With the demise of the two teams, there's been a lot of talk about third cars and teams. For the front running teams that obviously means it could dilute your efforts if the team is running three cars instead of two. And for the mid-grid teams it means you're inevitably going to finish further down the order than you would at the moment. How do you drivers feel about third cars and teams?

DR: I think from our position it's something, if we're requested to have a third car, I think we'll definitely look into it and try to make it happen. From my side, let's say, having another team-mate, I wouldn't see any negatives. I remember 2008, I think I had six team-mates in Formula Renault, so it was like being in a school classroom. I wouldn't see any downside from a driver's point of view.

Lewis?

LH: I haven't really thought about it to be honest but I think, as you said, we would have to expand the team to make sure the efforts aren't diluted, as you said. But yeah, if it's a position for a younger driver, it could be quite good. Especially bringing then on, giving them the best experience and especially putting them alongside top drivers who have the experience. Perhaps they will come along a lot more than they ever have in the past. When I think about the two teams that have dropped out, my biggest concern really is just for all the employees in those teams that have to provide for their families that perhaps don't have a job now. If we do do this perhaps they still have space in other teams.

Valtteri?

VB: Not too much to add really. Just I really think it's an interesting topic. Everyone wants to see more cars on the grid and the more is better, so we just need to find out how soon that would be possible for the teams to make it happen. I think it would be quite interesting. I don't see, as a driver, any downside in it really.

Esteban, does it create opportunities as well?

EG: Yeah, it could bring more opportunities for the drivers and also I think it would be good for the level of competition overall, so, yeah, all in all, it's a positive.

Romain – I'm sure you've thought about this.

RG: Yeah. It really depends where you are. If you are one of the smaller teams, you see it as a non-chance of scoring points and showing what you're capable of. On the other side, if you put it on a good team and you're racing in the same cars as what we call the superstars, then it gives you an opportunity to show how strong you and then get called one of those superstars. I think whoever is doing a good job as a driver, bringing them to the good team, like Daniel, showing that he's capable of winning races. A third car would certainly help some of us to have a good reputation.

Sergio, your thoughts.

SG: I think it will definitely help the opportunities of the drivers. Obviously there will be a bit more of a chance. Formula One is really limited. The spaces where you can go and where you can actually win during a year, so it can create a bit more opportunity to the drivers, as a driver point of view. I think it's also sad to not have so many people set out from Marussia and Caterham – so hopefully they can be in a better position for the future and, if it's good for the sport, why not? I think we should all help this sport to get better.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Very probably we're going to have Sebastian Vettel, who is the World Champion, not taking part in the qualifying on Saturday because of the change of the power unit. Don't you think this is quite bad of the sport to promote? To have the World Champion not taking part, or any of you not be able to take part in a qualifying session just to preserve the engine?

Daniel, can you clarify this? Hasn't there been a question raised about this?

DR: Yeah, he's been asked quite a bit and I don't think anything's 100 per cent yet. I think it's... if he qualifies on pole he still has to start from pitlane so its... why would you put miles on the engine? It's not 100 per cent but that's the thought behind everything. It's... yeah... not ideal for him and for everyone, for the fans if that is the case. You want to be out there. You want to drive. For yourself, you want to learn more, you want to be on track, and yeah, you want to give the fans what they came for, so, yeah, we'll obviously see what happens but that's the rules and the regs for this year, and unfortunately that's a negative from it – if that is the case.

Lewis, do you have a view?

LH: I agree with Daniel.

Q: (Sef Harding – Zero Zone News) This questions for Lewis. Lewis, what is it about new tracks that you enjoy so much, being that you won here back in 2012

for the inaugural race, and you won the inaugural race in Sochi three weeks ago?

LH: I like the fact it's just a new challenge for us, y'know? We get every year... I've been in Formula One now eight years and every year you go to those tracks and you've experience them before. You're always trying to better yourself at the tracks you know but the new circuits, you want to be the one that masters it before everyone else, that kind of thing. Of course, when you get a car that you're able to do that, it's even more exciting. One of the most exciting races for me was here in 2012. Being about to follow... it's very, very difficult to follow in one of these cars but, as Daniel mentioned, this is one of the circuits that enables you to. For whatever reason, it's just the way the corners are laid out, you can follow a Formula One car. And when I was able to follow Sebastian and actually attack a Red Bull – which was the dominant car that year. And also, the amount of people that were here for that race. Sochi, that was a great new circuit again, and to have a car that I was able to fight and obviously be ahead of. In ten years time you'll look back and know that Hamilton was at the forefront of those debut races – that's quite cool for me. I look back at history and at Michael who's got the world record on all the laps on all these previous circuits and also won the first time. Hopefully in the future I'll have a couple of these.

Q: (Livio Oricchio - Universo OnLine) Lewis, your numbers, your statistics are the best this year and maybe, in the last race of the championship something bad happens to you and you lose the World title because of the double points in the last race. First, is it fair for you and do you think it should be re-thought for next year?

LH: I think the question is 'what is fair?' This is the rule that they have brought in for the first time; do I really agree with it? I don't know if any of us agree with it or do not agree with it, but it is the way it is and you just have to deal with it and just hope for the best really. It would suck if that was the case – big time – but I'm not even going to put that negative energy out there. I'm just going to try and do the best job I can with the car that I have and what will be will be, I guess.

For the future, I wouldn't perhaps advise it for the following years but...

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Lewis, you touched earlier on your trip to New York yesterday. What do appearances like that do for Formula One, when you appear on a major American TV programme? And secondly, you're wearing quite an interesting item around your neck, could you give us an insight as to what exactly that is, whether it's got any significance, any special meaning?

LH: New York was just very... it was incredible really. I just remember growing up watching all these movies and you see it in New York, all the cool taxis and then to be in the middle of New York, in the street with the Formula One car and actually people had arrived at 5.30 in the morning for the 8.30 show. There were fans there with team tops and it's just something I just wouldn't have perhaps expected over here. It really was a great buzz these guys had. There's more and more excitement growing here in the States and as I said, they are massive sports fans over here. I really hope that it continues to grow, and obviously with this race, they did such an amazing job from 2012 until now and I hope that continues to grow. Over here, they have a good recipe for good shows. When

you go and watch an NBA game you know you're excited the whole way through. Same with NFL and the same with baseball and so they have a good recipe for entertaining fans and we can perhaps take a bit of that and add it into this race and maybe others and make it even more attractive.

And then just my piece; I'm really into art. I couldn't afford the real Andy Warhol painting so I thought I would get it on a miniature scale so that's what I have, it's the Mercedes 300SL cars.

Q: (Greg Creamer – COTA PA) To all of you – perhaps Lewis, as a former winner here, you will take this first – with the changes this season with less downforce, more weight on the cars, more torque, in the past couple of years you've been able to do this with one stop. You've got these sections from (turns) three to nine and then from 12 through 15, are you seeing anything on the simulator, any kind of indication as to what the toll is going to be on the tyres this year and how they will work?

LH: I personally haven't yet, but I'm going to speak to my engineers shortly after this but I hope that we're doing more than one stop. One stop is not really particularly exciting and I think it's good for the fans to see it all changing. To have degradation... I know in the past we maybe complained about too much degradation but having at least two stops I think would maybe be good for the fans to see. Otherwise it becomes a bit of a procession.

VB: I think it's definitely going to be more difficult to do one stop just because with all the changes from last year and also we have one step softer set of tyres here so I think it's definitely going to be more difficult. Let's hope there's... for the fans more than one is better so we will see.

EG: I agree with both of them. I hope that we can get more than one stop to play a bit more with the strategy and to make it more interesting for everybody.

Q: Sergio, you've done a few strategy things in your time and got good results. Do you see any opportunities here this weekend?

SP: To be honest not. I think it will quite likely be a one stop. The tyres are just too hard. Most probably we will see one stop for many people.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Sticking to the topic of tyres; since Sochi, Pirelli have announced that they've come softer a grade each for Brazil after two drivers had voiced their concerns. Did you people have similar concerns about the choice of tyres for Brazil and are there any other choices in the past where you've had particular concerns?

RG: I think there have been a few places where we knew we could race softer tyres, especially when you have to remember that this year everything is... tyres are one step harder than they were last year. So it just makes things harder and even the rear we have soft and medium whereas last year was medium and hard. At the end of the story, they're exactly the same tyres. Yeah, a few places we knew they were too hard. I think Brazil used to be supersoft, I wasn't racing in Formula One then, it was before I came, it was supersoft down there so when hard and medium came, they were a bit too hard.

DR: Nothing further.

Q: Valtteri, you've been caught out a few times this year.

VB: Yeah, well, not much to add really. I think sometimes there have been races

where they could have been a bit more aggressive but now at least I think Pirelli's reacting, making changes for the rest of the year, so that's a good thing so I think everyone is learning more and more all the time about new compounds and we will see in the future. Possibly there are some things which could have been done better but it's always easy to say afterwards.

Q: Final thoughts on this, Lewis, because the Mercedes has always been able to make the harder tyres work this year, hasn't it?

LH: Yeah, I think I agree with what was just said. I think it's important to remember that Pirelli have actually done a really solid job this year, and OK, whilst the tyres are sometimes a little bit too hard for us, it's what we've asked for and they're learning and they're improving and hopefully these next steps will be... but you know, safety has not been an issue this year which is huge because this last year it was sometimes a concern. Yeah, it would be good to move forward with a tyre that does (not) allow anything worse to happen. A few more problems in terms of pit stops would not be too bad.

Q: (Carlos E. Jalife – Fast Mag, Mexico) You're going to be racing in Mexico in 2015 and Azerbaijan in 2016, yet we do not have a French Grand Prix. What do you think about losing all these traditional sites and yet racing in a place like Azerbaijan – I'm not saying Mexico because Mexico started in 1962 and it's older than everything else except for seven of the other locations, it has an older tradition. What do you think, starting maybe with Romain, about not racing in France which had the first Grand Prix in 1906?

RG: I've missed racing in France; I've never raced Formula One in my own country. I'm sure it's something special so I wish it would come back one day, but there are different... I think it's quite good as well that we discover new places, for example, Austin. Indianapolis was not a very good end and then we came here the first year and I was very surprised to see how many fans came so it's good to see new countries, it's good to see new tracks and it's good to see that fans love it. I think it goes on and off and things change.

DR: I think it's definitely nice having some traditional places. It would definitely be a shame to lose some of the iconic - let's say European – circuits but with that, I also love coming to new places as well. I've been very vocal about Austin, my love for this place, my love for the venue, the circuit, everything. I think it's definitely been one of the (best) if not the best of the new generation circuits in Grand Prix for us. I'm also really excited for Mexico next year. I know Esteban and Sergio are pretty crazy people so I'm sure we'll get a good following there. We definitely have to keep some of the iconic ones in Europe. It would definitely be a shame to lose those. As for moving further away from those and exploring new places, I think that's also great for the sport.

LH: I think it's probably already been said but the old circuits... growing up and seeing the history of Formula One, I remember when I was younger, watching a lap of Senna's, for example, around Monaco and then dreaming of one day driving that track and knowing the history of it, even way before and then driving it for the first time, that feeling was just unreal, I can't really describe it. Obviously you're into a new circuit, there is none of that history, so there is that difference but we're coming to a new age where in fifty years' time people will be talking

about these circuits which are at the beginning of the history here. Inevitably, things are going to change a bit. Something in Paris would be cool.

SP: Obviously I'm a big fan of Formula One for a long time so I love the historical circuits: when we go to Spa, Monza, Silverstone, those kind of races are very special for a driver to live the tradition that those places have but also when we go to new places, for example when we came to Austin, it was great and every time we come here it's fantastic. When we go to Mexico, there are really some special venues coming up but obviously the traditional ones must remain in Formula One, I think.

EG: Yeah, I like exploring new places. I've been enjoying racing on new tracks a lot, ever since I came into Formula One. To get to know a new track is very exciting and as long as the fans love it, I think we're going to be very happy anyway.

VB: Yeah, I also like discovering new places, new tracks, I think it's nice but it's also really good to have the history of Formula One as part of the calendar so it's important to have a good combination of both, I think, which I think, at the moment we more or less have.

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