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Press Information

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PRESS CONFERENCE

A very important weekend for everybody, the final weekend of the championship and lots of pressure all round, apart, perhaps, from Michael Schumacher. You've been here before Michael, you have an extraordinary record at this race and you're finally ending your championship bid after many, many years, after many seasons. What are your feelings coming into this weekend?

Michael SCHUMACHER: I guess I have some experience and that's why, probably, I'm rather relaxed about the happenings. On top [of that] we are not in any championship fight compared to last time that happened to me, obviously. Well, I'll just take the best out of it and enjoy it as much as I can.

Is there a certain sadness?

MS: Probably not, no.

Quite happy to leave it.

MS: Yeah, I have tried that mission to end successful. It didn't work this time but I'm quite happy to finish from here and go for a different life again.

Felipe, if we can come to you. You've won here twice before, what can you do to help Fernando win the championship.

Felipe MASSA: Well, first of all I'll try to win a third time. That's always the right direction to think about racing – always thinking about victory. Here is a very special place for me and I'm going to try to win and hopefully Fernando can finish second without any problems to win the championship.

Just give us a bit of a summary of your season so far. What are your thoughts on the season?

FM: I think it was a very difficult season until August. So, struggling... in some of the races I was not struggling but I could not put together the result. Always happened something in the race that I couldn't finish in the right position. I would say after August everything was better and we were able to put together the right... almost the right result at every race. It was a very good second part of the season and very good preparation for next year.

Lewis, we saw what you can do in this championship last weekend, a fantastic race, and of course you won the championship here; you know what it's all about this final race of the series. For you, you've been with McLaren for many years, it's your final race for McLaren. How do you approach this weekend?

Lewis HAMILTON: Good morning everyone. It's quite a unique experience for me. I've obviously never been in the situation I'm in this weekend, where it's my last race for the team I grew up in. It's going to be a tough one. Nonetheless, we're going to push as hard as we can, as we did in the last race, and try to win. I've never won here before. So I'm going to have to try and beat Felipe, as he wants to win it. It's such a beautiful race here so hopefully the weather will hold up for us.

After so many years with McLaren what are your feelings leaving the team?

LH: I only have good memories. I leave with just the greatest memories, the best experiences and hopefully a lot of good friends I will continue to be friends with throughout the future. I was just saying to them that even though I'll be with Mercedes, I'll probably keep coming back to have lunch and dinner back at the hospitality because the food's great there. So, I hope Mercedes' hospitality lives up to the one we have.

Bruno, a summary of your season so far.

Bruno SENNA: It's been a very challenging season, lots of learning. We got some very good results and some tough races as well. Considering it was my first full year in Formula One, and with the small handicap of not doing free practice on Fridays, I think it's been a pretty good year. In the end most of my races have been very strong. Just starting from a different position from where I should be starting has made me score less points than I could have had. In the end of the day it's learning and you normally do much better on the second attempt at the same thing, so for sure there will be a lot of improvement to be done for next year.

Are you confident there will be a next year? The future seems to be undecided at the moment.

BS: Yeah it's undecided and I think we will have to wait until after the season to see what's going to happen. Let's hope it comes in a good way and we can be in a competitive car for next season.

Sebastian to some extent we look at an unpredictable weekend, in that the weather seems to be unpredictable and there's a little bit of a question mark over the reliability. To what extent are you nervous about this weekend?

Sebastian VETTEL: In terms of general preparation we do what we can. Weather-wise, it's Sao Paulo. It's the same as if you go to Spa, you know, things can happen quickly and the weather can change a lot here, so... yeah, I spoke to some locals and I think there was a big rain two days ago which wasn't expected. Probably for Saturday, Sunday there's some rain on the way, but then again you don't know how much and when so I think I asked Pirelli yesterday if they have all the containers here with the rain tyres, and that's the case, so I don't think we have to be concerned.

At the same time you can be confident: 13-point lead in the championship, you've had excellent results here, Red Bull have had excellent results here.

SV: Yeah, I think the circuit seemed to suit our car in previous years. I think we need to confirm it. So all eyes on Friday, to start the weekend, to get into the groove, but I think we can be as confident as we could in this stage. Obviously we know there is a lot ahead but we are in a great position.

Michael, we'll come back to you again. It's been 20 years of grand prix racing. How can you sum it up?

MS: Well, I don't think we have long enough here to sum it up, but let's put it that way: It was mostly 20 good years and lots of fun and lots of excitement.

You'd recommend it to Sebastian would you?

MS: Well, I just remember when I was in the early days, I said if you're going to do this four or five years that's going to be probably most of it, and then I will be tired and I can't see myself longer than this. Obviously it became almost 21 years. I'm pretty sure it's difficult for those guys to imagine that longer time ahead, but let's see.

Fernando, it's quite difficult for you from where you are, 13 points behind in the championship. What are the chances this weekend?

FA: Well, I think we need to try to do a normal weekend, try to score as many points as we can, obvious it will be good to be in the podium and score a minimum 15 points and then when we cross the line we see where Sebastian is and we try to do some numbers after that. The first priority for us is to be in the podium, let's say, which give us the possible to score more than 13 points and then we need to wait obviously for the results from Red Bull because we have not... it is not in our hands, we have not much to lose, we have only the possibility to win something and we will try to do our best.

Regardless of what happens this weekend, what do Ferrari need to do to be in a better position for next year?

FA: Well, we are working hard, it was a tough season for us, the first couple of months were not as we expected. When we put the car on the circuit the first time in Jerez we were two seconds off the pace and we didn't understand how was the car working so we changed many things. There was a lot of work going on in the wind tunnel in Maranello, in the car itself and after some understanding of the car we were a little bit more in the pace and we were able to fight for podiums more or less constantly all the season and that gave the possibility to be right now fighting for the World Championship. But we are not totally happy with the performance of the car all through the season and many changes will be for next year and hopefully we can recover a little bit of the gap we have now. In winter we will have to do an extra job compared to the other teams to recover this gap.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

(Kate Walker – Girl Racer) Seb, despite your enviable record in this sport, quite often people say... or they may not give you the credit that you might feel you deserve because you've always had such a strong car. How does it feel for you hearing people say 'oh, I'd like to see him in a different car, I'd like to see him in a worse car'? Does that demotivate you or motivate you to just prove everybody wrong?

SV: Well I think if you look back, I don't know how far, but as far as I can look back, I think there was never people, y'know, really, really successful in a really bad car. I think you always... I think it's a natural thing to happen that one day you have strong drivers in a strong team so you end up with a strong combination and then obviously that is difficult to beat. I think it's natural to start in a weaker car, I think we have all been in that situation. Michael started in a Jordan which wasn't competitive but he set some highlights, Fernando I think started in a Minardi, set some highlights. Obviously in my case I started with the BMW, replacing Robert for one race, which was a great chance and then afterwards I got the seat in Toro Rosso, which at the time was not a very competitive car but I think we did a very good job and even won a race. Obviously with the circumstances allowing us to close the gap back then but... yeah, nevertheless I think we had a great season, finishing in the points a couple of times and obviously after that to step up to Red Bull Racing and 2009 was a great and fantastic season for myself, for the team, for the first time to be competitive, finishing on the podiums, win races, so I think it was a fairly normal way that I

went.

(Simon Cass – Daily Mail) Another one for Seb, would you like to have a team-mate like Felipe Massa? And you were very cool about the situation last weekend: will you be just as cool about the situation last weekend if you're not World Champion on Sunday?

SV: Well what they do is not in our hands. I didn't follow up if Felipe had a real trouble with the gearbox or not but as I said it's not our job to focus on these things. After seeing Felipe on Sunday night in Austin I'm not sure whether he would be a good team-mate! No, I'm joking. I think obviously it is a different approach compared to my team but that's how life is. I think everyone handles certain situations in a different way.

(Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Michael, you know both of the contenders for a long time, what kind of memory will you give us for Seb and for Fernando? And question for Seb and Fernando, what kind of memory will you keep from Michael?

MS: Well, I mean obviously with Fernando I have had quite a few more years together competing and fighting championships. Obviously that is slightly different in this respect, it was tough moments. I mean, he was unfortunately in quite a few moments looking very strong and doing too good a job honestly – should have taken it easy and looked after the old man! But on Seb's side, we've been friends for a long time and I sort of follow his career into Formula One and seeing him doing so well, obviously makes me proud. We've both grown up on my home track in Kerpen and to see from where he started to end up and kind of being dominant for quite a while recently, that's quite an achievement.

And you two on Michael.

FA: I think we will always remember the privilege to race and compete with someone like Michael that will be record in history of Formula One, maybe for a very long time and we've been there, we've been in the grid close to him. As Michael said, some good fights and great respect on the circuit and always constantly learning with someone that changed a little bit this sport.

SV: I think it's a little bit different for Fernando than it is for me because obviously I had the privilege to meet Michael when I was a small kid. He was my childhood hero. Maybe he can close his ears or shut his ears now, but he was a true inspiration back then, for me and for many other kids, as he mentioned, in Kerpen. He was our hero. Obviously we had the honour to meet him. He was taking care of the championship held in Kerpen and came to the last race, gave all the trophies to everyone, every child, more than 100 at the time, so he was very patient and now, obviously, we understand that the busy schedule that he had, taking that extra time for the fans but especially for us, for the kids who were racing, was something very special, a very special memory. When I met him the first time, obviously I didn't know what to say because I didn't want to ask something stupid but for sure, I remember these moments and then later on. Today I think it's a little bit different because you are more grown up, you have a normal relationship so when I talk to him now, it doesn't feel like talking to my childhood hero, it feels like talking to Michael so I see the person rather than what he has achieved but obviously, if you remind yourself of that and the fact that I was racing against him for the last couple of years, unfortunately not as close as he probably shared with Fernando, but still that thought or that image was very very far away when I was a small kid, because obviously he was already in Formula One but for me it was a dream so very far away but very special for the last couple of years, very special the relationship we share and I think he will always be an inspiration for myself.

Q : (Marco dell'Innocenti - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sebastian, Bernie Ecclestone said to the German Bild Zeitung that despite you already having won two titles and

maybe now a third, you miss out on charisma, compared to former drivers such as Hunt, Senna, Lauda. And he also said that not only you but all the drivers of your generation are more or less in the same situation, because, he said, teams pampered you too much and the FIA put muscle to you, so you are not free to explain yourselves. What do you think about that? Maybe this is also a general question; if somebody else would like to answer, I would appreciate it.

SV: Well, I think it's a difficult question. I don't know exactly what he said but maybe he was just taking the piss out of... sorry, maybe he was just taking the mickey out of the newspaper which is very possible with Bernie, but given what he said what you just said, I think generally it's difficult. Hopefully I have a little bit left in the sport so I can make up a little bit but also I think these days are very different to the previous days in terms of the freedom that we have. To give you an example, imagine that you find all of us, sitting here on Saturday night having a beer, even if it's just one beer, it would be a massive scene on Sunday. Yeah, unfortunately it's not that easy as maybe it used to be in the past. Last race we were in Austin, in Texas. The last winner in Texas was Keke Rosberg in 1984, I think, and he was having a smoke on the podium. I'm not sure whether people would be too happy with that when they already get excited when sometimes the language is not appropriate after just getting out of the car.

Q: (Paul Weaver - The Guardian) Fernando, if win the championship, people will recall some great driving from you, but do you think your achievement will be damaged by the memory of what Ferrari did to your teammate's gearbox in the last race in Texas?

FA: Funny. I think we've seen so many scenes coming from the teams, not only this year but in the past in Formula One; we don't need to go too far this year with some of the races that we had some doubts - even Saturday night - of which teams and from which position they will start, depending on some decisions or some limits that they were finding in the regulations which we saw this year from many teams. I'm proud of my team, it was a strategic decision, to start on the clean side with both cars, also fighting for the Constructors championship that is one of the targets that we have, beating McLaren and it worked quite well. Because it worked quite well, maybe the people were not very happy but I'm proud of my team, more than anything it's because they said the truth when we changed the gearbox. Not many teams are able to say the truth when they make a strategic decision.

Q: (Andy Benson - BBC Sport) Fernando, Lewis is moving teams next year. You've been his teammate, what can Nico expect? What's it like having Lewis as a teammate?

FA: I think it will be fine for him, it will be a good challenge at Mercedes, and as a teammate, I think he will be very strong, so Nico will have some extra work to do. After three years with Michael, I think Nico keeps learning many things and another tough challenge with Lewis will arrive. I think they will be very strong. I think Nico and Lewis together, with the Mercedes, they can be serious contenders for next year. In the future, who knows, but I have a lot of respect for Lewis. I always said that he's probably the best or one of the best here. I shared a year with him, it didn't work too well because maybe we were not sharing the same philosophy but without McLaren, why not?

Q: (Ian Parkes - Press Association) Fernando and Sebastian; two years ago in Abu Dhabi, Fernando you had a 15 point lead over Sebastian going into the very last race. Sebastian went and won the title. Does what happened then - although the track and circumstances are a bit different - does that give you belief as to what can be achieved? And Sebastian, does that make you fearful as to what could happen?

FA: I think these are different circumstances from Abu Dhabi. Now we have DRS, KERS so it (was) a little bit more difficult to pass (then) and maybe the rule was also introduced

because of that race. I think even if you find yourself at the back of the grid, you're still able to recover positions as we saw in Abu Dhabi this year. Even if Seb started last, he finished on the podium, so we will see what we have in mind, that this is Formula One. This is a sport and anything can happen until the chequered flag so we will try to do the best race we can and, as I said, cross the line on the podium which gives us more than 13 points and see where Sebastian crosses the line. If we win, we will be very happy but we know that we need some strange combination of results; if we don't win, we will congratulate him and we will try next year. Nothing really surprising.

SV: I think we're very happy in the position that we are in. I think two years back we would have loved to have been in Fernando's position. If you could chose, I think it's clear but as Fernando said, in sport anything can happen so we need look after ourselves. The weekend starts tomorrow morning and not on Sunday, so really we have to go step by step, trying to do everything to ensure that we get the maximum result. Historically we've been very quick here, historically we know also it's quite a place where a lot of things can happen so we need to be sharp in the moment and see what we can get.

Q: (Ian Parkes - Press Association) Lewis, what memories will you be taking away from McLaren? I presume here, four years ago, will be your greatest one.

LH: I think I'll take away only the positive memories of our journey together. Obviously winning the World Championship, winning my first Grand Prix, starting out together and I guess this weekend.

Q: (Carlos Miguel – La Gaceta) Sebastian, is there extra pressure that a lot of people think that you must win this championship?

SV: Yeah, I think it's obviously normal if you're in that position. I think we fight all year, some ups, some downs. I think everyone had the same to be in that position so now there's no reason to complain or not to be happy. Obviously there's one thing that the people expect, but another thing what we expect. All year we've been trying to push very hard and trying to put ourselves in a very strong position, to fight for the championship, ideally until the last race and be in the best possible place. Now we arrive in the last race, we are in a strong position so I think we can be happy with that but nevertheless, there's one more race to go, and as I said, we have to make sure that we focus on every single step to get the job done here.

Q: (Carlos Miguel – La Gaceta) Fernando, is there less pressure in that you have nothing to lose?

FA: Well, I think in Formula One there's always pressure but definitely we have less than on some other occasions and maybe less than probably if we were leading the championship, because as you said, we have nothing really to lose. We are arriving in second position, we are arriving after two qualifyings dominated by Red Bull - well not two qualifyings, five or six - and then we were around positions seventh, eighth in the last couple of Grands Prix so recovered 13 points, it looks like a very difficult achievement and I think, as I said, if everything goes normally, we should finish second. If something happens, maybe we will win the championship so, because it's probably not in our hands, the pressure is much less.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Fernando, do you think you will have another possibility in future, if not this year?

FA: I hope so. I think I'm 31 and I still feel that I will have some more possibilities. I'm at Ferrari for the next four or five years, minimum, so I think that will always give you the possibility to fight for World Championships. In three years at Ferrari, I arrive two times already fighting for the championship at the last race: 2010 in Abu Dhabi and now in Brazil, even with so many difficulties and chaotic years, let's say, for us, in terms of performance, in terms of problems and we were not dominant in any part of those championships, so

even with those problems we are fighting for two or three years at Ferrari, so I have no doubts that in the next four or five years there will be more fights and more championships, but let's concentrate on this one.

Q: (Rodrigo Gini – Estados de Minas) Fernando, you said about the qualifying position, as you said in Austin, you said you would start in sixth, seventh. Do you think it will be the same, the gap will remain in Brazil?

SV: Yeah, I think so. I think there's no magic part that you can put on the car in five days. We were seventh in Abu Dhabi, we were ninth in Austin so I think around those positions should be the normal for here but hopefully we can do a better job.

Q: (Rodrigo Gini – Estado de Minas) Sebastian, in 2010 you needed to attack to win the championship and last year it was so easy, perhaps one can say. This year, you have an advantage to defend. Does it change your mental approach to the race, or will you take it as any other?

SV: I think the secret is to take it as any other. If you look in the calendar, Brazil is a race like every other one. You get the same amount of points and I think we are here to attack. Obviously we know that we are in a good position. Obviously, as I said, it's something we know but still we have to be - as I said before - sharp and ready to attack.

Q: (Manuel Franco Pernal – Diario AS) Fernando and Seb, if you finally win this title, will it be the most simple for you?

FA: Not really. I think winning the championship is always winning the championship. They all feel different, they all can feel special but I don't think there is one that becomes more important for you, or more special so I think it will be nice but nothing bigger than the other two.

SV: I think the man to ask sits in the middle. He has won more than two times. For us, for Fernando and me, it's the same with two championships and maybe a third, so we will see after this weekend but I don't think it makes sense to talk about it now and therefore, as I said, maybe Michael is the one to ask. He can choose from a variation of titles.

MS: I think the question was slightly different: whether this is the important one? Whichever one you win the latest one is the most sweet one.

Q: (Toni Lopez Jorda - La Vanguardia) One question for Sebastian and Fernando: at this point of the championship, looking at the whole season, do you feel that you had good luck or bad luck to arrive in this situation, with a gap of ten points?

SV: Well I think we have so many races this year, 20 races, some of them you might have a bit of luck; others you might have bad luck but I think it's the same probably for all of us, if you look over the course of 20 races. Sometimes it might feel this way or that way, but I think it evens out until the end.

FA: Yeah, it's up and downs for everyone. We have more or less two or three retirements for each of us, fighting for the championship until the end and those retirements were sometimes for mechanical problems, sometimes for accidents, sometimes they were bad luck but at the end of the day this is normal and we see what happens here.

Ends