



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2013 Hungarian Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript 25.07.2013

DRIVERS – Esteban GUTIERREZ (Sauber), Paul DI RESTA (Force India), Valtteri BOTTAS (Williams), Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes), Kimi RAIKKONEN (Lotus), Pastor MALDONADO (Williams)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Good afternoon. We'll start with Lewis Hamilton. As a three-time winner here and a two-time pole-sitter, I think the heat is on, literally, here this weekend for you to try to make it four wins. Forty degrees ambient expected on Sunday, how much is that going to be a disadvantage to you and Mercedes?

Lewis HAMILTON: It's good to see everyone again. It's going to be tough this weekend definitely – the conditions will not help. Plus, we haven't driven the tyres as everyone else has. We've got a bit of catching up to do, but that's what we do best and we just have to work as hard as we can this weekend to try to understand the tyres and put ourselves in the best position possible. We have a lot of work to do to continue to improve our race pace, but I anticipate it will be a difficult weekend.

Do you think you are at more of a disadvantage, are you worse off, or is every team in the same boat with the temperatures this weekend?

LH: I'm sure everyone is going to have to open up their cars, so everyone is in the same boat in terms of car packaging and the heat that the cars are absorbing. Tyre-wise, of course there are teams that will deal with it slightly better than us, just naturally, and there are some people that will deal with it the same as us.

Nine races into your Mercedes career and we're almost at the half-way point of the season. Do you see still yourself as a championship contender?

LH: I don't really look at myself as a championship contender at the moment. Of course, we're fourth, we're second as a team in the Constructors' Championship, so... just at the beginning of the season everyone was writing me off and then all of a sudden they changed their opinions and we've had some really good results. That's just due to all the hard work the team are putting in and we're not giving up. We're going to keep pushing. We hope that we're going to get some wins in the future races coming. It's going to be tough but I'm really happy with how the season has gone so far, especially compared to where the team was last year, it's a massive step.

Let's turn to Pastor Maldonado next. Can we start with a comment about Williams' appointment in the last few days of Pat Symonds, who comes in as technical director. From a driver's perspective, how welcome is that and how necessary do you think it was that the team have a new technical director and new leadership in that part of the company?

Pastor MALDONADO: We had a hard beginning to the season with the car, fighting a lot to improve and develop the conditions and the performance. It's quite tough for us, still. We try to put everything together in the past races. Some races we were a bit better, some others not. Especially the consistency and the race pace is quite good on our car, just missing a lot of performance in quali which is penalising us a lot. Starting from the back is not the best for us. Yeah, I think we need some change. The way, how we've been working, trying to improve our performance was not the best and for sure any change in a good way is very welcome.

What about yourself at the moment? I think 'silly season' is very much upon us, a few rumours in the press about your future career. Did you take much notice of that? Can it be a destabilising factor for a driver?

PM: No, I'm still full focused on the season. I think we can still improve. We are a strong team. Last year we were fighting for good places, sometimes even fighting for the podium and this year, some years you miss the pace. We just need to be together as a team, work harder than before, try to fix the problem and to be there again. I think we have all the tools to become again very competitive.

Thanks Pastor. Esteban, let's turn to you next. Looking at the championship table, you're the leading rookie, how do you assess your performance in the first half of your first Formula One season?

Esteban GUTIERREZ: It's been very challenging. Obviously I'm not completely happy with how the first part of the season went. But again, being a rookie I've been focusing a lot on gaining a lot of experience to improve every part I can. I think what matters is the second half of the season, Everything will be judged on how the second half goes and I'm full focused on what is happening from now on.

What areas have you been focusing on most? Where do you think improvements need to be made?

EG: I think qualifying can be improved a lot. There's obviously a lot of variable playing into account on performance, sometimes different car set-ups, different things, trying to experiment with new things. Obviously this puts the situation a little bit more difficult. The team's situation is not the best. We were expecting a lot better performance from the car. But we are close as a team and we are working ourselves to get all these things right.

Q: Because of that situation you mentioned with the team, do you feel you haven't had the full opportunity to show exactly what you can do?

EG: Well, definitely it's affecting that, but as I said the second part of the season there is a good chance to show what is really our performance, our capabilities and obviously to put everything together, to reflect everything in the results.

Q: Valtteri, if we could turn to you, the other rookie amongst us this afternoon. Did you feel you've had the opportunity to fully show your ability behind the wheel or is the performance of the car not helping you?

Valtteri BOTTAS: I think for sure it's not helping. Also we expected a much better start for the season. If you would be consistently fighting in the top ten, everyone would see maybe a bit more of what you can do. It's not easy but I'm trying my best and I think still improving a lot all the time. I think the first half of the season hasn't been too bad for me. Of course when I look back there's always things you could have done better. You learn all the time, that's how it is.

Q: With Pat Symonds arrival, is it too much to expect results will turn around this year, very quickly? As a driver is that something you will be looking for?

VB: Of course you would hope so but I think the fact is it's not a quick fix. It's still going to take time and we need to keep working on the areas where we need to improve and I think it's more about the future, not necessarily the end of the year. Of course we try to improve. Any improvement would be nice because it's so close at the moment. For me it's a positive thing. It was good to work with Mike before but I think at this stage maybe we just need some new ideas and new opinions.

Q: Paul, a change to the tyres again this weekend. 2012 construction, 2013 compounds, you had a chance to drive with them at Silverstone. Force India, some say, might be disadvantages by these tyre changes. How fearful are you that this could be proved true?

Paul DI RESTA: It's a hard one. Obviously we got a little bit of an impression at Silverstone but I think it was directed to enable Pirelli to understand their tyre more, that they're bringing for the rest of the season. Tomorrow's going to be busy, it's the first time that we get to try some setup things and actually understand them but yes, we did have a good idea of where the tyres were working and how to use them over a race distance. That's not to say that this won't continue and, on the flip side, it may suit the car better. It's completely unknown. All we can do is do what we can and the team is working hard to try and score some points because we missed them in the Nürburgring.

Q: In terms of this season, it's been a successful season for yourself and for Force India but with resources tight at the team and the concentration having to come on 2014 eventually. As a driver, how difficult is that balancing act going to be? I'm sure you want to fully focus on 2013 and not so much on 2014 at the moment.

PDR: It's certainly a harder balance this year, I think, with the new regs for next year. I think everybody at the factory is probably focussed on next year whereas we as a race team are focussed on this year. Just a lot of racing, a lot of points and a lot of laps that we need to be on top of our game. Ultimately where we reward ourselves, this will help the team next year in terms of Constructors' position. That's why I think everybody here is trying to stay on top of McLaren if we can. We can't underestimate what they are and what they do. Up until the last weekend of racing we were having a damn good season and there's no reason why we can't get our elbows out and fight even harder.

Q: Kimi, like Lewis you've had plenty of success in Hungary. I think one more podium and you equal the record for the most about of podiums for a driver here. With the high temperatures, does that play into your hands a little bit on Sunday? If we go on the form of Germany, we assume it should do.

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: I think we've always been a bit more happy when it's more warm. Now it's a bit difficult to say with the new – or different – tyres than we raced at the beginning of the year but last year helped us and the tyres should be a mix of this year and last year so let's hope that it works well for us.

Q: You didn't go to Silverstone. Did you think twice that maybe you should?

KR: No. The decision was made with the team that there was not really so much... it was better for the team to put a young driver in it because we were not allowed to do any changes as a race driver, so with that sort of rules you don't really learn much. We would only have had one set of tyres or so, and so it was overall better for the team to use our test drivers.

Q: Red Bull? Lotus? Maybe somewhere else? It's silly season and you seem to be, you appear to be if the stories are true, very much a man in demand. When you look at next season and where you may or may not be driving, what are the factors that go through your mind in helping you make that decision?

KR: There's not really one thing. I think there is going to be an overall package and whatever feels right for me. Whatever the decision will be it might feel stupid to somebody else but then it might feel right for me. I have no idea what will happen. We have to wait and see what will come but hopefully whatever it will be, it will be the right choice.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Gerhard Potochnik - Kleine Zeitung) We are talking about the future; a few days ago Red Bull and Bernie Ecclestone announced that there would be an Austrian Grand Prix next July. Can you tell us your thoughts about this?

KR: I was there maybe two years ago or something the last time. It looks slightly different. The circuit is exactly the same, I think. It's a nice place to go, I think. It's not a very difficult circuit because it hasn't got many corners, but it usually produces very good racing because of the layout of the straights and the tight corners. I'm more than happy to go back there.

Q: Paul, a new venue on the calendar, does that excite you?

PdiR: A new event, yeah. I've never been there so I don't know what to expect but it looks a very good track from what Kimi said.

EG: It looks interesting, obviously another track, hard to know what to expect but it's always interesting to go to a new place.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Kimi, if it's really going to be 40 degrees for the race, is that really going to be too hot for you and your car? Is it a big risk for your record of finishing races?

KR: It's the same for everybody, obviously. It will be a bit more tricky for cars and everything, brakes, everything for the drivers, but it's not the first time that it will be hot when we are racing. If it's going to be that hot we will see what happens. It was meant to be hot today and it was raining. Things change quickly.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action/National Speedsport News) Kimi, following on from the earlier question about Red Bull; you don't like to do PR, Red Bull likes its drivers to do a lot of PR. How much PR work would you put up with if it means you have a winning car?

KR: Obviously you can't have a guarantee what will happen next year with any team or any cars. There are a lot of rumours about PR days but we have ten and some other teams have a hundred. I've been in most of the top teams and I know exactly how it goes and if you count things that you do during the week and during a weekend and you put everything together, everybody has a different way of counting the days. I'm sure it's not – at least in my knowledge – the difference between the teams is in days and it's not a deciding factor.

Q: (Michael Noir Trawniczek - Rally and More) Kimi, when you are choosing the package and the right team, what sort of questions do you ask, how technical is it, do you visit the factory, things like that? How do you make your choice?

KR: I think it's like I said earlier, it's a combination of things and it has to be right on racing and outside of racing. Basically everything just has to feel right and I think in the end it comes down to whatever I think is the right choice and there will be no guarantee that the choice will be the good one in the long run but I'm fine with it, whatever the outcome will be; you live with the choices.

Q: Is any choice for next year complicated by the fact that the engine regulations, the rule regulations have changed quite drastically?

KR: Obviously it would be much easier for everybody to more or less get an idea what will happen next year without those big changes but that's how it is. It really depends on

whether one engine manufacturer gets it right and one wrong, then it might be a long season for some teams and an easier one for others but I don't know. You hear rumours but that's all I know about it.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Lewis, your team didn't take part in the Silverstone test; how does it affect your team and you and Nico from a driver's point of view?

LH: To be honest, it doesn't really faze me. I think it would have definitely helped if we were there and we have an understanding of how to set up the car with the new tyres and to see what kind of characteristics they have and how they behave on long runs and all those kind of things but we will try and find that out this weekend. At the end of the day, it is what it is and we will just try to do the best with what we've got. It's a great team, I have no doubt that we will make up for the lost time.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Gentlemen, you may have seen the story last week that Sauber are due to fast track a young Russian by the name of Sergey Sirotkin into Formula One. If he is on the grid at the start of next season, and he gains the necessary super licence, he will be 18-years old. Is 18 too young to be racing a Formula One car?

PM: It's a difficult one because I don't know the driver very well. It's difficult to say. I think it's more up to the team and not to us.

VB: Yeah, I don't really know the background of this driver so it's difficult to say.

PdiR: It's unfair to say anything. I don't think anybody knows too much about him because he's not been in racing cars too long.

Q: But is 18 too young to be a Formula One driver, if you take away the individual concerned?

PdiR: You can never say never, can you? People surprise you with what they're doing. If that's a decision I'm sure there's a reason behind it.

LH: I wasn't ready at 18. I was pretty good at 18, so...

KR: I'm sure there will be and has also been an 18-year old, I guess. For sure they will take him if they feel it's the right thing, so I don't see that age will be the problem. It's about experience and that. He might be ready, he might not. Time will tell.

Q: He might need a good teammate to look after him, Esteban.

EG: Well, very difficult to judge. What Kimi said comes down to experience, results. I think all of that should be taken into account.

Q: (Jose Maria Moreira – Organizacion Editorial Mexicana) Esteban, will Sergey Sirotkin and the Russian backers affect your future at Sauber?

EG: Well, that doesn't really make a difference to my current season so to be honest, my focus is here, it's on this season and I know very well what I have with the team, what has been my path with them over the last few years and what we're looking into in the future.

Q: (Gergely Denes – F1-Live.hu) Kimi, last week there was some Twitter chat between Lewis and your team, a photo postcard of you and Roscoe, Lewis's dog. Are you aware of that and what is your opinion of it?

KR: It's the first I've heard of it. I don't have a Twitter account, I don't have any other things. I don't really have a comment.

Q: You weren't the man putting #where'sRoscoe on the side of the car?

KR: (Sighs and points to the team's PR man)

Q: (Peter Vamosi – Vas Népe) Lewis, what is the difference between Nico Rosberg as a teammate in GP2 and Formula One?

LH: I wasn't his teammate in GP2. I was his teammate in go-karts. It was more fun when we were in go-karts, that's about it. We're both older and wiser and yeah, we don't play as many games and kid games and all the silly things you do as a kid. He's more competitive now than he was back then.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Lewis, if Kimi goes to Red Bull, would he be an even harder competitor for you than he is now?

LH: I think Kimi will always be one of the hardest competitors here. He's a fantastic driver, he's got great experience and he's constantly proving his abilities and I think whatever car you put him in he's going to be a fighting force in the field and of course he's doing a great job at Lotus, they've done a great job this year and over the last couple of years. I think whatever he decides either way, he will have a strong car and I just hope that we're competing with them.

Q: (Joo Gabor - Index) Kimi, we can divide your Formula One career into two; which one have you enjoyed most, the first one to 2009 or the second one now?

KR: I don't really count it as two. I did something else that I wanted to do between them and then obviously I wanted to race again. It hasn't really changed much. Obviously the team's different but I've been in different teams in the past and every team has a good side and some things that you are probably finding not that much fun. Obviously when you have decent results you have more fun than if you have bad years. I would say that is very similar, more or less the same people, same stuff. I have no real difference between earlier teams and how it is now.

Ends