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Press Information

2013 Indian Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript 24.10.2013

DRIVERS – Giedo VAN DER GARDE (Caterham), Max CHILTON (Marussia), Daniel RICCIARDO (Toro Rosso), Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes), Mark WEBBER (Red Bull Racing), Kimi RAIKKONEN (Lotus)

PRESS CONFERENCE

I'm going to start with a question for Nico, Mark and Kimi, as, with all due respect to our back row, I think you three gentlemen are best placed to challenge Sebastian Vettel for victory this weekend. He's won the last five races, he's won both Indian Grand Prix from pole position and he's led every lap as well. Simple question Nico: how do you beat a man in such form?

Nico ROSBERG: Well, I'm here to do that, that's for sure and the last couple of races have not really gone to plan, a lot of bad luck also. But, I have a very good car at the moment. I think the Red Bull is a bit quicker than us but you never know, you know. If we really get everything right on a weekend like here in India then it's possible to beat Mark and Sebastian in that car. That's what I'm here to do, so I'll give it everything and we'll see.

What about you Kimi? What have you got up your sleeve?

Kimi RAIKKONEN: I think I have to do a bit better in qualifying. That would help a lot. That would give ourselves a good chance then to try to beat them. It's not just only them though, so we'll see what happens here.

It's tricky Mark, you were on pole in Japan, it didn't quite work out in the race, but what's the secret? Can Sebastian be beaten?

Mark WEBBER: He's on a phenomenal run obviously and as you said his stats here in the last few years he's been pretty strong. It needs a perfect weekend – pole, perfect race, perfect strategy, perfect everything to obviously put him off the top step, so that's got to be the plan.

I wish you all perfection this weekend. Back to you in a few moments. Max, if I can turn to you next. Japan, your fastest qualifying lap there beat both Caterhams and your team-mate Jules Bianchi. Was that your lap of the season?

Max CHILTON: It was one of them. Obviously, it was a bit of a standout performance because we managed to out-qualify both Caterhams and Jules, but I've had good laps in the year and I've been very happy with certain laps but in Japan we just managed to get things right. It was a bit of a manic last lap and I managed to just get enough space and just got the most out of the car and the car performed well. As Nico said earlier, if you get everything right then you get good performances.

I'll ask Giedo about the perspective from the Caterham side of things but Marussia are still hanging on to 10th place in the Constructors' Championship with four races

to go. It's vitally important, financially, for a team to finish in that 10th spot not 11th, so how are things? Nervy, tense, determined, excited?

MC: It's definitely tense but I believe that when you're passionate and working on the best result possible, you get the best out of yourself and the team. At the moment we're doing that. It's definitely going to be tight but we've got 10th at the moment and we're hoping to keep it that way until the end of the season.

What about from the Caterham side, Giedo? Anything can happen I'm sure in the last four races but is there extra pressure given that you're not the team in 10th at the moment?

Giedo VAN DER GARDE: Yeah, a little bit. Of course for us it's very important to get the 10th place back. I think the last few races we've seen that we've always been in front in the race compared with Marussia, so the one thing we need is a little luck and the only thing we can do is maximise ourselves, maximise the car, maximise the team and the rest is luck.

Well, good luck with the luck if it comes your way. Daniel, it's been a few weeks since you were announced as a Red Bull driver for next year and you've had time to come to terms with that announcement. How has life changed? Has the attention grown race by race?

Daniel RICCIARDO: No, not really. I think around the time of the announcement it was pretty hectic with the media and everything but it's nicely calmed down now. It's good. I'm sure once I hop in the car next year it will probably rise again but it's been a quiet few weeks. I had a bit of time to myself, which is good.

Q: Have you started to focus on what you need to do next year against a man who is likely to be a four-time world champion, or is the focus still on this season? How do you cope with that?

DR: Definitely still my main focus is on this year. Obviously aware of the competition I'll be up against next year and slowly employing a few things to help me out for January and to settle in with the team but yeah, still very much focussed on the rest of the year with Toro Rosso. I guess once the season's over after Brazil I'll make the conversion, start getting in the simulator and trying to figure out what makes Seb so quick and try to learn quickly.

Q: Nico, this morning, tell us about your bus journey into the track. Kind of a special bus ride with some under-privileged children, stepping out of the Formula One bubble for a moment.

NR: Yeah, it's nice. I'm involved in the Laureas *Sport for Good* programme, so this morning I took a bus journey to the track with a whole bunch of children from the local community. In the end just trying to be a little bit of an inspiration to them, to show how good sport is for personal development really, to learn about discipline and to learn to be with people and respect other people and things like that. Also, to show them the importance of education. That was the aim – but they also had a great time. We had a good time, we played a bit of soccer together, and showed them the racing car. So, that's good, yeah, a very nice programme.

Q: Brings you down to Earth a little bit, I suppose?

NR: Yeah.

Q: Kimi, this is your second year coming to race in India. Do you notice the popularity that you have? Does it spur you on when you get to the track? Does it give you extra motivation?

KR: I think it's very nice to have it but I mean I've only really seen the hotel this morning, from the airport to the hotel, and the circuit. So, especially today there were not many

people when we came here – so I feel it less than at many other places but I'm happy that there are fans here. This circuit is nice and hopefully we can have a good weekend for all of them.

Q: When you come to what is still a relatively new venue, would you like to take more time out to see a bit of India?

KR: Yeah – but I think it'd be a little nicer if you come when it's not a race weekend, so when you have proper time and not during the weekend. But for sure I'm sure there's a lot of nice places to go and see.

Q: And for Mark, your last time in India in Formula One, four races to go now. Do you relax more as the final race approaches or does the desire to get that one more win – at least – intensify race by race?

MW: My mentality hasn't really changed, mate, from the start of the year. Still enjoying driving the car to a degree and no exception to that. The last grand prix, obviously the best racing track in the world in Suzuka – unfortunately they can't design them like that any more – but it's a beautiful circuit. This is not bad and yeah, some good tracks to look forward to. That's the bit that I still enjoy – to a degree. And... yeah, I think the last four is not really changing how I go about it. It would be nice to get a top result before the year's out but...yeah... it'll be four weeks and that's it.

Q: Would it change your view of Formula One and how you remember the sport if you didn't get one more win?

MW: No, wouldn't change it.

Q: Still look back fondly?

MW: yeah, of course. I would never have thought when I left Australia the results and the career that I've had. So, another win or so, of course it would be nice but it's not going to change my retirement too much.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Abhishek Takle – Richland F1) Mark, following the last race, you said you were surprised at the switch in strategy from a two stop to a three stopper. Having gone over all of the data, do you still feel the two stop was quicker, or are you satisfied with the strategy switch?

MW: I haven't gone over any data whatsoever from the last race. I still stand by what I said at the time but obviously a bit surprised that we elected to do that. Having a three stop, you've got to pass two cars to win the race instead of maybe sticking to a two where we just focused on trying to beat Romain. What I said at the time is still pretty accurate today.

Q: (Sandeep Sikdar – IndoAsian News Service) Nico, Mark and Kimi, we're quite uncertain about the future of Formula One here in India. I wanted to know what exactly is the feeling in the paddock regarding visiting India, coming to India for the Grand Prix?

NR: The track is fantastic to drive, they've done a really good job with that. There's a growing fan base and a lot of fans in India. It's great to be here and it's a pity that there's no Indian Grand Prix next year and I hope that maybe some time in the future we can come back again.

MW: Yeah, Nico's right. Obviously the fan base is certainly growing very very fast. I know cricket is the number one sport here by a long way but they've certainly shown some incredible enthusiasm to try and understand and get some... attract some interest in the sport. They're proud to have a very very high profile sport which Formula One is and the track layout is sensational. The enthusiasm.. they're doing what they can to hold a very

nice event here but it doesn't seem to have been enough for next year. I hope that we can come back in the future.

Q: (Bharat Sharma - IndoAsian News Service) For the front row, if you talk about the track, most drivers have praised the track, they like the layout but as far as overtaking is concerned, there's only the first sector which has a real chance of overtaking, so how do you see the track in terms of overtaking opportunities?

MW: That's generally the case at a lot of circuits actually. There's not any more than one or two chances these days. The second and third sector are quite quick, it's not easy to get a move done there so yeah, most of the focus is on the first sector and the beginning of the sector. But that's not against the circuit, that's how a lot of tracks are and we like the rest of the rhythm and the layout because it's quite challenging, it's quite quick, a little bit of undulation so there's a lot of good qualities inside this circuit. As you said, the racing maybe hasn't been super exciting over the last few years, maybe it's not going to be the same on Sunday but time will tell.

Q: Is that right, Kimi, there's really only the first sector where you can get past?

KR: In a normal situation, yes, but on some of the circuits there's not even one place. You might get a chance in some other places – it depends – but it's a good race circuit. Last year I got stuck behind (another car) but that can happen anywhere.

Q: It rather drives the set-up, Nico, doesn't it? It's a compromise track anyway, but you need to give yourself that chance of getting some overtaking done?

NR: Yeah, but it's OK, the track has what it needs to be able to overtake well and for there to be exciting races. They've extended the DRS zone a bit to try and make it easier to overtake - see how that goes, should be in the right direction.

Q: (Ajay Devadason – Sify.com) Mark, is it a cause for concern that the series that you're moving to recently had a fatality in their event?

MW: At Le Mans? Look, we know motor racing can be dangerous. It was very very tragic, obviously, that they had a fatality this year and they've certainly learned from that accident, I believe. Every time we step into a racing car there's obviously risk; I accept those risks as we all do and they are always going to try and find ways to improve motor sport to a degree which is finding the levels of safety and risk-taking to the right levels. I'm certainly very comfortable with my decision, what I'm doing in the future and looking forward to it.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Kimi, in the last few races, Lotus seem to have been the second team after Red Bull. Do you think that you have the chance to try to grab second place in the Constructors' championship in the last four races and that this could be a place to win?

KR: That's the aim for us but it's hard to say if it's going to happen. It seems that the last races have been strong for our team but I have to qualify better, to put myself up there and maybe try to win some races but it will not be easy.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Max and Giedo, you are the only two men here whose futures aren't yet set for next year, or not so that we know about. Could you both please rate your chances of staying both within Formula One next year and with wearing the same uniforms?

GvdG: Of course I hope to stay in (F1) next year but the management is very busy, talking to some teams, also Caterham. At the moment, they told me to be focused for the last four races and I'm doing that, but hopefully we will have some news soon, but it's still far away.

MC: Yeah, I think my chances are looking good. Nothing's set in stone yet. I've learned in GP2 how much continuity can help. I'd love to stay with Marussia again because you always get more out of yourself when you know the team, it's a natural progression. We have been contacted by other teams but at the moment we know where we want to be and we're not far away from it now.

Q: Do you two both feel you've met your targets and your goals for this year?

GvdG: Yeah, I think so. At the beginning, I struggled a little bit, then in the middle of the season everything fell into place and since then I've got good speed, still have to improve the qualifying a little bit but race pace has been very good.

MC: Yeah, I think to be honest it took me a little bit longer than I was expecting to kind of get up to speed. I think it's hard without the testing, but from the August break, when you have a bit of time to go through everything with the team, we had a really good sit down and picked on key areas where you can really enhance your performance and since then, I think I've proved why I deserve to be here and I'm hoping to keep that on until the end of the year.

Q: (Vinayak Pande – AutoX) Kimi, given the way Lotus is performing towards the end of this season and how Fernando has been struggling recently, how do you feel about your decision going to Ferrari next year?

KR: Good, otherwise I wouldn't have made the decision if I didn't think it was right for myself. It's so competitive... and the rules, nobody really knows how it's going to work out next year.

Q: (Sandeep Sikdar – IndoAsian News Service) Nico and Mark, Pirelli have brought different tyre compounds this year unlike the last two years, how do you think they will affect the lap times?

NR: I'm not sure. The cars are also so much quicker this year. It's been very variable throughout the season. You've never been able to predict how we're going to go, in terms of lap times from one track to another. Sometimes we're faster, sometimes the same, so it changes all the time and I don't know yet for this weekend.

MW: Yeah, very difficult to predict how the tyres will behave. We know how sensitive they are. Even when we had the slight change of construction during the year we see some teams coming forward, some teams going back, some drivers being happy, some drivers less happy. The tyres are super super sensitive. I think we will find out here whether it's... last year was quite easy on the tyres, we had a pretty comfortable one stop. Whether that's possible again, I'm not sure. We will find out on Friday with the long runs, maybe.

Q: (Chetan Narula - Planet F1) Mark, your teammate is going to be a consecutive four time World Champion and obviously you've had your differences with him, you're not the best of friends but as his teammate, and somebody who's worked with him closely for quite a few years now, can you shed some light on Sebastian Vettel, the racer and the four time World Cham... or soon to be four time World Champion?

MW: Yeah, obviously he's had an incredible run. Some of the championships have been tight, some less tight. Obviously '11 and this year have been pretty much a non-event but 2010 and 2012 were up to the last race. I think he's certainly done an incredible job. I think he's been very strong on the Pirellis; obviously (on) the Bridgestones was probably a little bit tighter but on Pirellis he's certainly been very strong and no real weaknesses on those tyres so it's been strong for him. Just super consistent and that's what's made him strong, obviously, and also getting the most out of the package. Obviously the car's been quick and he's capitalised on a lot of venues. He's won with a dominant car but also he's won with a car which some races is probably not... certainly over those four years to win races he probably shouldn't have won races. That's also been a quality of his.

Q: (Unnatee Gidithuri - Auto India Magazine) To you all, what are all of your opinions on the Indian Formula One fans?

DR: I think that as the boys touched on earlier, it's growing each year we come here, there seems to be getting more and more interest. It's good, there are a lot of seats to fill here. Unfortunately they are not always full but they are filling up each year so that's good. I

don't think a sport can grow overnight and it does take time. It's definitely gone in the right direction.

MC: It's obviously got huge possibilities. I think there's over a billion that live in India and that, from my calculations, is a seventh of the world, so it's probably got one of the biggest potential markets anywhere in the world, so it's a shame we're not back here next year but there's a lot of other countries that want a Grand Prix as well. It is a bit of a shame.

GVDG: I think it's good to be back here. It is a special place, especially when you see cows on the street, dogs! It's different to Europe and I have to say I quite like it. It's good to see different environments, the track is very nice. Of course, it's my second time here. Last year I saw some friends in the grandstand and hopefully this year there are going to be more.

Q: I think you tweeted a photo of a cow in the road, Nico.

NR: We had a bit of a close call yesterday because the cow decided it was going to cross the motorway just in front of us but we managed to keep out of its way, let it cross over nicely and then we could continue.

Q: Mark, Kimi's touched on his love of India, what about yourself?

MW: Yeah, you can see the enthusiasm. Again, I don't want to talk about the cricket too much but you see how much they love their sport with the cricket, they are super passionate about it and the same here, they want to understand, they're very willing to understand the sport as quick as they can. It's been a very quick snapshot for them, in terms of coming to the circuit and seeing the cars and maybe having the drivers as heroes for them. What's also been interesting for me in such a short period of time is also the journalists here and the people are making such a good effort. Their questions, even away from the track, and different things... they're quite knowledgeable on our sport, they want to understand which is a big advancement on some of the other fresh countries that we go to which are super super naive. A lot of good positives about it, so it's a shame it's not here again.

Q: Did you watch the one day yesterday?

MW: It was washed out, wasn't it? Not lucky for us: 296 or 293.

Q: (Rachit Thukral – RachF1) Daniel Ricciardo, two years ago you were racing for HRT. At that time, could you imagine that you could be racing for Red Bull one day?

DR: Seemed like a fair way away at the time but I think that going back years before that, since I got Red Bull supporting me and knowing what opportunities I had with them, then I think anything was possible. A lot of it was up to me. With HRT, I knew there was a bit of a road to travel on, but yeah, it's come along quite quickly, obviously to my delight and as I've said, I can't wait but if you would have said, back in 2011, that I would be in a Red Bull seat in 2014 then I would have smiled and said 'beauty.' One other thing I found out, just touching on the cricket, apparently myself and Mark don't come from Australia. We come from Ricky Ponting country! That's what they all say. Nice.

Q: (Vinayak Pande – AutoX) Mark, it's your last season in F1. Do you think the sport is in good shape going into the future with the new regulations? Do you think that's a good direction for F1 to be taking, or are you going to a technologically more sound series, in terms of sports car racing?

MW: Again, pretty good question. To be fair, I think Formula One needed a bit of a facelift in terms of technology, which they're going to get next year. Maybe it's not what we all want in terms of all the electric stuff and those type of things but that's the way all the manufacturing and all those types of things are going in terms of car production, so Formula One should be the benchmark in terms of rolling that stuff out. How it's going to go in terms of a spectacle only time will tell. I'm sure it's going to be good. The main thing with Formula One is the drivers, the drivers are the important thing. You can have what cars you want but if you've still got the best drivers out there then that's the most important thing. But in terms of sports cars and Formula One, obviously the technology is going to be

very similar. Sports cars now are super technical as well as Formula One will be next year. As long as the smaller teams can have a chance, I think that whenever you make a big regulation change like we are going to do next year, the midfield and the smaller teams are really going to be stretched, so I think that the gap between Mercedes, Red Bull, Ferrari, McLaren maybe is probably going to be bigger.

Ends