



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2018 FIA Formula One World Championship

French Grand Prix

Post-Race Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS

- 1 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)
- 2 – Max VERSTAPPEN (Red Bull Racing)
- 3 – Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN (Ferrari)

TRACK INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Franck Montagny and Jean Alesi)

Franck MONTAGNY: Lewis, congratulations for this beautiful win. How was it for you, because you were clear from every problem, so how was it for you?

Lewis HAMILTON: I feel very grateful. Just grateful for a solid weekend. My guys, I've been with them for six years and they are just continually pushing the boundaries and never giving up, so I'm just forever grateful for all their work, here at the track and back at the factory. This is a great day, really. I enjoyed the race. The weather was good and the fans have been crazy today. It's been really good to see so many people here for the French Grand Prix. So for me personally, this is the best French Grand Prix I've ever had.

FM: Happy to take the lead again, of the championship?

LH: I hadn't really thought about it, but that's where I want to be.

Jean ALESI: Hey Max, a happy Sunday?

Max VERSTAPPEN: Yeah, it was good. I tried to follow Lewis, of course he was controlling the pace. Yeah, I had a good race. I enjoyed that. Of course, I didn't really have to work very hard for it but it's always good to be on the podium

JA: Did you see something at the start? Can you explain something?

MV: At the end of the day everybody was trying to go, to try and get a position and at the end of the day, you know, people can make mistakes. So, yeah, that happened.

FM: Kimi, fantastic race for you also. You finished on the podium. What is your feeling after this crazy start?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Yeah, I think everybody more or less got similar starts and it felt quite slippery in the first corner. I chose to go outside but it was the wrong side in the end, I should have slowed down a bit and cut in on the inside, so I got a bit blocked with all the mayhem that happened. Then we did a decent recovery in the long stint and things worked well and in the end we had a lot of speed and I managed to get on the podium

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: (Ben Hunt – The Sun) Congratulations, Lewis. I just wondered if you did get to see the England before the race and what your thoughts were?

LH: Honestly, I didn't get to see the game. When I walked into the garage to put my helmet on, I saw it was 6-0 at the time. And then when I went out and did the three laps of the grid and came back to go to the toilet and as I went to the toilet I got to see it again and it was 6-1. I mean, jeez, that's a mighty score. What a great result for England.

MV: They're going to bring it home, right?

LH: Jeez, I hope so, if they're playing like that. They need to keep opening the can of whoop-ass on everyone and that could be frickin' awesome. I don't know how England would be able to take it though if we did win the World Cup. It's been such a long, long time...

MV: Earthquake?

LH: Yeah, probably!

Q: (Aurelien Attard – Le Mag Sport Auto) Lewis, you just won your 23rd grand prix in a different country and you've now beaten Michael Schumacher's record?

LH: I didn't know that. It's news to me. Every time I'm told of these records I'm blown away by Michael, even more and more. He had obviously a long career and incredible statistics, and did a... it just brings me back to watching him as a kid. I was actually just sitting here thinking, and I don't know if Kimi knows, I remember growing up wanting to be in Formula 1 and obviously I was at McLaren since I was 13 and I used to play F1 on the Playstation all the time and I was always Kimi, which is kind of crazy. I wasn't Montoya, I was always Kimi in his car and I always wanted to race against him. It's just crazy how life works and how you get the opportunity to work with some of these legends. I don't know if they realise the respect that the younger generation will have for them. Maybe you do, maybe you don't but... yeah.

Q: (Joe van Burik – Autocar.nl) Question to Max. Max, when did you realise during this weekend that the soft was the best tyre for your second stint? How do you feel about the fact Lewis was able to hold back, ahead of you?

MV: I think quite quickly we realised the soft was a good tyre already from the start of the weekend. And yeah, Lewis was just doing his race and I was doing mine and he was just controlling the gap. So, not much you can do. You just then have to focus on yourself to just drive a clean race.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Question for all three drivers. Wanted to get your thoughts on the first corner incident between Seb and Valtteri and the fact Seb got a five-second penalty but was able to come back to fifth. Do you think that was a bit too lenient? Lewis, I know you were in front at the time but I think you've seen a replay since.

LH: I've not seen it in detail but they quickly played something back there. I saw an image of it on-screen. For me it's disappointing because for the team we had the chance to get a one-two, and I think that would have been a... it's always an incredible feeling to get a one-two, that's the ultimate goal within the team. Valtteri had really done a solid job all weekend, as he has really been doing this year. I mean, we're all going into Turn One as hard as we could – but yeah, ultimately when someone destroys your race through an error and it's only kind-of a tap on the hand really, and just allowed to come back and still finish ahead of that person that they took out, it doesn't weigh up, y'know? Ultimately, he shouldn't really be able to finish ahead of him, because he took him out of the race. But, yeah... that's the call they made.

Q: Kimi, what's your thoughts on Seb's penalty, you had to avoid that incident at the start?

KR: I didn't even know that he got a penalty. I saw quickly kind-of what happened but I only see the part when they touched. Things happen, y'know, and obviously, there is stewards, they give penalties if they feel it is the right thing, sometimes they think not for others and we live with it. Is it fair sometimes? Maybe not – but y'know, I think it's balancing out in the long run between all of us. So, yeah, unfortunate for both of them – but that's what happens sometimes.

Max, anything to add on five-seconds penalty for that incident?

MV: Yeah. I think next time you see Seb you should ask him to change his style, y'know? Because honestly, it's not acceptable. That's what they said to me at the beginning of the season, so I think they should do the same! And then, of course, Seb shouldn't do anything, and just drive again and learn from this and go on. That's my advice to everyone in this room.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Globoesporte.com) To all drivers. Three different teams on the podium, like the last race. The next grand prix is a completely different scenario to this one. What can you project for the Austrian Grand Prix?

KR: Hopefully good things. Impossible to really say. It's a slightly different circuit. We need to make a good weekend out of it. It's going to be pretty close. I don't see massive difference between the top three times – but I might be wrong.

Lewis, are you expecting Mercedes to go well next weekend in Austria?

LH: I think Austria should be a fairly decent track. It's been a decent track for us in the past, so I don't see why it should be any different now. I think the car should be good there. I think the Red Bulls have been particularly quick there in the past because it's quite a good downforce circuit, so it'll be interesting. As you're seeing, the cars... it's great that we are close in qualifying nowadays, but positioning is everything really in qualifying, and you can't overtake. At that track you can't really overtake... even though you've got those long straights, very, very difficult to overtake. You can't follow through Turn One. It's going to be about who qualifies where at that track, isn't it?

Another part of that question was that the tyres will be different next weekend. Does that make any difference to the pecking order, do you think?

LH: Jeez, we'll see. The tyres felt the same to me this weekend. Are we having the soft...?

I think it's the tread-depth compared to here.

LH: yeah, but we'll still have the soft, supersoft and ultra, I'd imagine. Should be OK.

Q: And Max, how do you see Red Bull going next weekend at the home race?

MV: I think, yeah, Red Bull has been on the podium for the last two races out there. We are a bit compromised on the straights but somehow it was always not too bad. I'm also looking forward to the weekend because I think a lot of Dutch fans are coming out so a lot of orange around, so that's always good.

Q: (Phil Duncan – PA) Congratulations, Lewis. Just on Seb, we've seen him make a number of high profile errors as Max alluded to, in the last 12 months. Maybe last year, Baku, Baku again this year, Singapore at the back end of last year, today. There's been a few. Does it surprise you that someone of his level keeps making what are proving to be costly errors?

LH: I'm not really going to get into that. Honestly, I know what you're saying but it is really a racing incident in turn one and those things can happen. We're all going into that first corner at great speeds, it's not always easy to... I mean I went deep and wide because I saw them really close to me so I thought I was going to get rear-ended, to be honest, so I went quite deep. No, I don't feel that he's particularly made more mistakes than... we're all on the edge, we're fighting for the World Championships, we're not pootling around, we're out there putting our lives on the line, we're out there putting the cars as far beyond the edge as we can in the safest manner. It's not like a train track, you don't just stay on the rails. Sometimes you can go off. We're only human.

Q: (Laurent Seguin – Nice Matin) Lewis, you have said that you didn't like this track before. Do you like it now?

LH: I'm not going to answer that the way you want me to answer it. No, it's still not my favourite. The location is one of my favourites. I think it's really so beautiful down here and I've really enjoyed my week. I stay right close to the track and earlier in the week the weather was particularly spectacular but it was really great. It felt like... particularly when we did the drivers' parade today it felt like an older day race, when there were people everywhere, just surrounding the whole track. There are a lot of tracks we go to and the grandstands are not even half full, there's massive long banks that are just empty. Today there was a lot of people here which is great. What I dislike is that they are so far away from the track, like you go to turn eleven and they're like a mile away from... They must all have binoculars. Next year I'm going to bring a binocular stand 'cos I'll probably make a lot of money on it so people can watch. But no, there are a couple of bits on the track that I really like, like the more and more I drive it the more I was enjoying it, particularly like sector one, like turns one and two, when the wind is with you, it's ***kin' awesome. It's hard to see the corners and obviously the back straight is not the greatest, the chicane, and it's not that easy to follow here so maybe for next year they can make an alteration of some sort, maybe, so there can be more overtaking maybe? But ultimately I think it's the fundamental issue of the cars. We shouldn't have to have... I think it's a 1.5 second delta: Max has to be 1.5s faster than me to overtake me today or more. Anything less than that and he's got no hope. I think people... I want to see more closer racing, not just at the start of the race, so I hope in the future they are able to somehow figure that out. But I'm glad we had the race here and this is, for sure, my best race weekend in France. I did have some really great weekends in France when I was in karting and as I mentioned earlier on in the weekend, I was... the last two corners really reminded... did you (Max) do karting in France?

MV: I did a few tracks.

LH: There was a really cool track that I went to, I think it was Val d'Argent or something like that, might be Val d'Argent or...

MV: Val d'Argenton?

LH: Maybe. It was a really really cool track and the last two corners are exactly the same as it is here. We used to take it flat, the left hander, and come up on two wheels and you kind of had to lean to keep the kart down. It was sick.

MV: I never ran with that much grip. We were already sliding because the tyres changed.

LH: Ah, OK, OK. We had like supersoft Bridgestones which were sick. Miss those days.

Q: (Arjan Schouten – AD Sportswereld) Max, Christian talked after your third place in Canada about a slightly different approach, that weekend. You did something different here also or have you found the perfect approach now?

MV: I didn't change anything since the beginning of the year. I'm the same person.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Max, this is the second weekend now that you and Red Bull have been able to evaluate the upgraded Renault engine. They think it's worth 0.3s, based on what you've seen in qualifying and the race here; do you think you're getting that full amount?

MV: Ah, it's not 0.3s, but let them be optimistic. No but it's not 0.3s but every little step, every little gain is of course positive. I wish it was 0.3s but hopefully later on this season we get a bit more. We have to keep pushing.

Q: (Panagiotis Seitanidis – Proto Thema Newspaper) Lewis, first of all congratulations; the first thing you mentioned on the team radio was the people back home, after a great win in football also, now in Formula One. Given the fact that McLaren, Williams are not in the best period, do you still feel affected and overwhelmed when you represent in a race and win, not only for yourself and Mercedes but also for Great Britain and your compatriots?

LH: No, definitely. A lot of the teams are obviously in the UK so yeah, there are a lot of British teams but ultimately, individually, we are all holding our own flag, representing our own countries, so yeah, when I have a day like today I look up and I see the Union Jack above me it's honestly such a great feeling and on top of that to know... Honestly, I grew up playing football, it was something that I was massively into and I had to stop really because I was in a team where these players were... hacking was crazy and I didn't want to get injured so I couldn't race. But to watch England every year, and I used to collect the cards and I was always hoping that we were going to get a World Cup and year in year in year in year we didn't, didn't get it and it's just great to see the success, you know, because there's so much talent in the UK and I can't get it round my mind why we haven't won more. So to have the result today, it's a great day for the UK and I hope that I've contributed in a positive way to that.

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