



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2017 FIA Formula One World Championship
Malaysian Grand Prix
Post-Race Press Conference Transcript

DRIVERS

1 – Max VERSTAPPEN (Red Bull Racing)

2 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

3 – Daniel RICCIARDO (Red Bull Racing)

PODIUM INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Mark Webber)

Max, what a special day, buddy. Second victory; yesterday you turned 20. The previous win was not a gift, but this was... you had to work so hard for it, but what were the main points and how did you get the job done today.

Max VERSTAPPEN: I think in the beginning, straight away the car felt good and I saw Lewis struggling a bit with traction and he was clipping a bit more than me, so I used my battery as much as I could and of course he has more to lose than me in the championship so I went for it in Turn 1 and from there I could my own race. The car was unbelievable. I had pace. If I needed to speed up I sped up. Yeah, it's amazing. It's a very tough race but of course incredible to win.

I saw the neck a little bit. How does it feel at the end there – a little bit tight?

MV: Of course. You get a bit tired. I thought maybe let's rest a bit, maybe I need it in the end of the race.

Incredible victory. Lewis, no one has stood on this podium more than you. Six times up on this podium, you have such a great affinity with Malaysia. It's the last time we're going to race here, a 34-point lead now in the championship. This was a very important second place, right?

LH: Yeah, absolutely. A big congratulations to Max and a happy birthday. He did a fantastic job today. And a big thank you to all the crowd here. This is the biggest crowd we've ever had here in Malaysia. We needed that. It's been such a great for us for so many years, we appreciate you guys having us and all the support you give us. So, thank you so much. The race was a tough one. Obviously they just had the upper hand on us today. But we love driving this track. It is the most difficult circuit; you are the most depleted afterwards and that's a great thing.

Well done buddy. Obviously, Sebastian did get back into fourth place but championship-wise, where's your head at now and how do you go to bed tonight?

LH: I feel good, but I think we have some work to do with the car. Obviously we didn't have the pace today, this weekend, so there's still work to do, there are still races ahead and there are some we can for sure win but we just have to keep pushing.

Well done. Over to Danny Ric – well done buddy. Fantastic podium. It was a pretty hot afternoon for you; pretty boring in a ways, but that's sometimes how those races go. But when Sebastian arrived

you fought him off really well. So run us through the race and tactically how you had to deal with Sebastian at the end of it?

Daniel RICCIARDO: Yeah, at the start it looked like Mercedes were struggling, so I was behind Bottas for a few laps. Obviously tried to get him as soon as possible, but he defended well. Seb came so quick at the end. I thought I was going to have a handful, but he only really had one strong attack and then we were able to pull away. I guess pretty lonely, but it was hot, it was physical, so nice to get a podium. Congrats to Max. Second win, he drove well all weekend, so good race for the team. Thanks to all the Aussies, appreciate it.

Beautiful double podium for Red Bull, good to see you guys back on form. Max, your dad is down here and when the national anthem was going I think your father's bottom lip was on the edge, I could see a bit of emotion from Jos the Boss. Run us through your emotions, what this means to get these victories at this level is just phenomenal...

MV: You know, especially after the season I've had, I think this victory came at a very good time, so I was very happy when I crossed the line and together with my dad I got this far and of course I got the great help from Red Bull.

Q: Max, you said yesterday, right here, that you would love to win a grand prix on merit. You fought-off Bottas at the start, you overtook Lewis, and you won by 12 seconds. Is that what you would call 'on merit'?

MV: Yeah, I think the whole race went well. Once I got past Lewis I could basically just focus on my pace and look after the tyres and when I needed to speed up I had the pace to do it. So, that was, of course, very pleasing. I think the first time I've had that in my career so far and I've won. So, to do something like that was, of course, great. The car had a great balance in the second sector and, yeah, I just had to stay very focussed, of course, because with the backmarkers you could easily lose a lot of lap time so you had to be focussed on that. Almost got taken out in Turn One when I passed two backmarkers but from there onwards, yeah, I could control everything, so of course very happy with that.

And the detail on the overtake on Lewis.

MV: I had a good run out of the last corner and then yeah, I opted to go for the inside. Of course I know that Lewis has more to lose because he's fighting for the championship, so maybe I look a bit of extra risk because of it – but it was my only chance, I think, because that was one of the laps I could see he was clipping a bit more than I was, so I used the battery I had. Of course, very happy I got past.

Q: Lewis, second place and extending championship lead. The risk/reward profile from your side when Max came through. What was going through your head?

LH: yeah, I didn't really know how close Max was and, yeah, I was having some problems with de-rates at the beginning of the race so, yeah, just struggling with battery power. I went to defend but didn't really want to risk it, so I left enough room, didn't completely close the door and be too aggressive. At the end of the day Max had more pace than me and it would have been a struggle anyway, even if he hadn't got past at that point. Perhaps it would have happened somewhere else. It was going to be a real struggle but I did everything I could after that just to maintain position and, yeah, good to still get second.

Q: It was a little bit reminiscent of Bahrain, the Mercedes seemed to struggle particularly on the supersoft tyre. Would that be accurate?

LH: Yes. To be honest I struggled on both sets, a little bit less on the soft. But yeah, the car's... the car's good obviously in some places and in some others the issues that we have with the car are magnified, so we do have some big problems with it. It wasn't... we struggled with pace, as you can see but still, it was good enough to get second. There's still work to do to try and fix it but I think it's a fundamental issue with this year's car, so we've just got to try and work on improving it for next year.

Q: Daniel, thrills at either end of the race for you. Obviously, the pass on Bottas early on and then the defence from Vettel at the end. Extremely robust defence, it must be said, into Turn One. Give us the detail on that, and obviously you had the time to think about him coming through, you were kept informed of his progress, so did you have a plan, or was it pure instinct.

DR: The plan was to keep him behind. My engineer kept telling me he was catching me, and I like, 'right... thanks... I know', so I didn't get to a point where I told him to... yeah, I wasn't giving much feedback on the radio so I think he got the picture but yeah, I defended a bit and I saw Seb was still coming, so I closed the

door a bit later towards the apex, I don't know how it looked from the outside. I don't know if he was unhappy about it, or whatever, but it didn't seem over-aggressive from my side. It didn't feel like I did a really late move or anything, so from there I expected him to attack to the end but I was going to do all I could to keep him behind but I expected him to keep coming, keep coming and I guess maybe he killed the tyres trying to chase me and then getting close to me. And then, yeah, with Bottas, off the start I chose to go to the inside, obviously in the end he had a better run on the outside, so that was not the best line, I guess, from me. I had a couple of goes at him, he defended pretty well initially and then finally got around him – but by then Max and Lewis had obviously taken off. I think towards the end of that first stint, the end of the supersoft, I was keeping pretty good times on them, finally bringing some laptime back – but then they all pitted before and pulled away again, and on the soft I wouldn't say I was as strong as probably the end of that first stint. It was, for the most part, a lonely race but yeah, obviously congrats to Max. He was strong all weekend. I think it's our first double podium of the year so it's a good result.

Q: Finally, when the rules came out to make these cars a lot faster in 2017, this would have been the race that you'd have thought about and thought how tough it was going to be. Just a quick snapshot from each of you. How do you feel now? How hard was it?

DR: Better that we've had some fluids. Yeah, it's quick. Already last year it was probably the most physical race. This and Singapore. Singapore, we got given an easier time this year with the wet conditions. It made the race less physical because of the pace. So yeah, this I'd say was the toughest race and, yeah, you feel it. I think having a battle, having Seb catch me and keeping me on my toes, actually made it a bit easier.

And Max, how do you feel?

MV: Yeah, of course it was a very tough race but the whole week already I was not feeling too well, so that also doesn't help in the toughest race of the season but luckily I managed to hold on so that was all good.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriera della Sera) Lewis, you gained six more points on Sebastian; how do you rate the importance (of that)?

LH: Of gaining six more points? How do I rate it? Any points are important, so I don't really know how to answer that. It's a step towards trying to win this World Championship so every point counts.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) Max, was that a clear sign that the Red Bull can now be strong on any type of circuit which still follows in the calendar?

MV: I hope so. I didn't expect to win here and be faster than the Mercedes but I think the whole weekend we looked pretty decent. Of course in qualifying, I think it's a bit more tricky for us to be in front of them but we know that in the race normally our car is a bit stronger and we can look after our tyres quite well, so hopefully that's a benefit maybe for some upcoming races but we have to wait and see. Every single weekend you have to set up the car well. You can say, yeah, here we were really quick so now we should be quick on every track but you are never 100 percent sure.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and Speedsport) Lewis, you gained six points but Seb came from last to fourth; what concerns you about the Ferrari pace in the remaining races?

LH: What concerns me? Yeah, when we went into the race we knew that they had something like eight tenths on us so it was no surprise. Going on towards the next races, I have no idea how it will work out but the others have generally picked up a bit more pace I would say than us. And as I said, circuits like this there are corners that really magnify the issues we have with the car, so that's something which we struggled with here. Whether or not that will be the same at the next races we go to we will see.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Max, congratulations. Did it make it any easier for you when Kimi was taken away before the start?

MV: It's always easier, yeah, it's one competitor less. If you look at the performance of Sebastian, for sure they would have been really strong. It's of course a bit of a gift in that way, that it's one less competitor but we never know how quick he was in the race.

Q : (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) Lewis, you must be very happy because Friday you had a difficult car, just one hour on Saturday to test a new set-up. You were surprised by that as you said,

and now in the race also, in spite of a difficult car, you finished second and your rival is in the back. If you can comment on that please?

LH: Yeah, definitely, a much better weekend that we had anticipated after our Friday. Still, as I said, we've got a lot of work to do with this car so considering the issues we did have with the car, I think this is a good result. I think Valtteri obviously seemed to struggle a lot more and I was able to just pull a little bit more out of it, I guess, but these next races are going to be crucial in terms of finding out whether we can iron out some of the creases that we have with the car but yeah, who would have thought that the Ferraris would have had a problem? All we can do is try and capitalise as much on those. Naturally, I wanted to win the race and so Max did a fantastic job today, but obviously winning the race is still the goal so even if I get second it's not that satisfying.

Q : (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) And Max, you said that you enjoyed the car in the sector two here which is very similar to what we will find in Suzuka, no?

MV: Yeah, but like I said before, it's easy to say, yes now we will be good on every track. We just have to wait and see when we go to Suzuka. I think it's a bit too early to say that we will be really competitive there. We were not too bad last year but we still have to find a good set-up.

Q: (Arjan Schouten – AD Sportwereld) Max, could you compare this one to your first victory in Spain?

MV: No, because there we definitely normally didn't have the pace to win. Today we had and I had to really fight to overtake, and then look after the tyres so it was for me a bit different and it actually feels better.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – Associated Press) Max, you got a podium in China and then I think twelve races until this one and then seven DNFs. How much of a relief is it that luck has finally turned your way, not that it was a lucky win but that luck has finally turned in your favour a bit?

MV: Yeah, of course it's been a dramatic season so far so of course I'm very happy then to win this race and hopefully from now onwards it will be OK. I'm not saying we're going to win every race but at least score some good points. Up until now, it was really a season to forget.

Q: (Lennart Bloemhof – De Volkskrant) Max, yesterday you said becoming World Champion in karting was the best victory you ever experienced in your career...

MV: It still is.

Q: (Lennart Bloemhof – De Volkskrant) It still is? This one doesn't feel better?

MV: No. Because it doesn't feel like that.

Ends