



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

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Monaco Grand Prix

Wednesday Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS – Charles LECLERC (Sauber), Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari), Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes), Romain GROSJEAN (Haas)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Charles, if we can start with you: you're the home town hero and the first Monegasque to race here in Formula 1 since Olivier Beretta in 1994. How excited are you about the weekend ahead?

Charles LECLERC: I am very excited. I mean, I have been waiting for this moment since [I was a] child. I remember watching the grand prix when I was four years old, in the exit of the first corner. I was in my best friend's apartment, watching down the Formula 1, dreaming one day of being part of it and this day has finally happened, so I definitely can't wait to be driving tomorrow here.

Which part of Monaco are you from?

CL: I'm living on the start-finish line, so pretty close to the track.

And what can we expect from you this weekend? You've had points in consecutive races. Just how good is the car and what can you do?

CL: To be honest, I'm a little bit confused with my expectations at the moment, because we expected a very difficult weekend in Barcelona and actually we had a second Q2 in a row, with one point then in the race. So, Baku, we expected to be competitive and of course there has been quite a bit of crashes in the race and we managed to have a good position thanks to that also, but in Barcelona we did not expect that type of performance, so it was definitely good to see that and it was a nice surprise. Hopefully we are also wrong on expectations here. It seems that it might be a little bit of a difficult circuit for us here because we need high downforce and this is a little bit of our weakness at the moment but we'll work on that and hopefully we can get a good result.

Thank you. Romain, clearly you've had a rough start to 2018 and Spain was another example of that. Can you just give us some insight into where you're at the moment, what you're thinking, what you feel you need to do break this run of bad luck?

Romain GROSJEAN: I think you're making a bit bigger a mountain out of a mole... thing, I can't remember the saying. Yeah, the last two races didn't go quite to plan. It happens that sometimes you go through tough times. What happened in Barcelona was just unfortunate that I lost the rear end avoiding a contact with my team-mate and that was it. The performance is there, the car is doing great and the team is doing an amazing job. Yeah, we don't have any points on the board but I'm not too worried.

Tell us a little bit more about the car. Do you feel it suits your driving style as well as you team-mate's for example?

RG: I think it's getting better and better. We've been qualifying, very often, in front of the midfield. It's super tight, so a tenth or two of a second, which doesn't make much difference on the first few rows can lose you two or three positions. You need to get it perfect. I think it's getting there; we're working well, and I think it should be quite nice here and hopefully the next updates coming are going to be pretty competitive.

Best of luck. Thank you Romain. Lewis, we heard from Charles how excited he is to be racing in Monaco. You've won here a couple of times, you've been on pole position, can you just start by giving us an insight into what it is like to race around these tight streets, how crazy it is, how unique this track is?

Lewis HAMILTON: Well firstly I feel like the people who might be watching need to understand why we all had our glasses on. It's so bright. These lights are... when I look at you now, all I see are lights, I can't actually see your face. That's why I've got these on; it's too bright. But, yeah, Monaco, it's such a dream to drive here. Every single year... I'm very fortunate to live here, but the wait you have from one year to the next... it's a shame that we only have one race here, because it's that spectacular to drive. But it's very intense. You have to be more diligent than your perhaps have to be anywhere else. It's the most technical and mentally challenging circuit of the whole season. There's also the heightened aspect of just wanting to shine at a track like this. Sometimes I'm running around or driving around this city in the off-season and it's hard to believe the speeds that we do – up the hill and to Turn 1 and out of the tunnel... Just yesterday I was running through the tunnel and telling my friend who has never been before and saying 'usually we're doing 200mph out of this tunnel', and he was like 'that's crazy'. It's hard for people to get even close to the imagination of what it's like, but it's really something quite special.

You've won the last two races, you're on a roll, but what can we expect from you and Mercedes this weekend, because it wasn't a good race for the team last year, so are you confident that you've ironed out the issues with this year's car?

LH: I think we learned a lot from last year. I think we are confident with our preparation. I think it's definitely been better than ever before. We came from the last race knowing that this is going to be one of the tougher races for us. If you look at the last race and the testing in February and then even in the tests the other day, the Red Bulls were particularly quick in the last sector – that's where they're always very, very strong – and so you can imagine that they will be incredibly quick here this weekend. Which is actually a surprise on previous years, because Ferrari were very strong here last year and for whatever reason Red Bull didn't get it together, but maybe this weekend they will. I do anticipate it's going to be a difficult weekend. Not one that is impossible but it's a lot closer and we may not have the pace of the others but we will find out tomorrow the true pace and identity of what we arrive here with. But I'm excited for that challenge either way. If you look at last year there were overcuts and undercuts, so everything is still possible.

Thank you. Sebastian, thanks for waiting. Can we just reflect on two weeks ago to start with. It was a slightly frustrating weekend for you in Spain. You've tested at Barcelona since the race. How much progress did you make with the car?

Sebastian VETTEL: I think it's fair to summarise that Barcelona was not a strong race for us. I think Saturday was actually pretty good, qualifying was very close, but in the race we fell a little bit behind. It was good that we had the opportunity on Tuesday and Wednesday to get into the race situation again and understand a little bit better with more time and more laps and I think that's what we did. There are a couple of ideas that we have and there are things that we believe may have caused a weak race or weak pace during the race. But for here it's not that relevant as it's a completely different track, but certainly going forward, time will tell whether we found a good direction.

Well, let's look at this weekend. What chance a repeat victory of last year and do you think the longer wheelbase of this year's car will have any impact on the performance?

SV: I don't know. We will see. I think cars with a longer wheelbase, they were still fine here last year. It's not that much different. It's not like all of a sudden you're sitting on a bus. I think the car, we've improved it in general this year throughout the races we've had, the feel that I've had for the car, how responsive it was etc, which should help us for here, but I don't think the wheelbase will play a big difference and if so I think our car is not longer than most of the other cars so it will be fine.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Globoesporte.com) To all drivers. Pirelli are supplying here for the first time the hypersoft tyres. What do you project for the weekend here – would be very interesting?

CL: Yeah, we've had the possibility to try these tyres quite a few times during testing. It's a huge jump from the ultrasoft to hypersoft, a lot bigger than any of the other steps – but it's also quite a solid tyre. I think we will test it during these free practices and then see what to do for the race.

Sebastian, anything to add on the hypersoft?

SV: Well, I think we never had it this year, obviously, during races. Testing was cold – but I think the first glimpse we got last year during the Abu Dhabi test quite interesting. It was faster – so it's always fun when it's faster. I think it doesn't last that long but the stress around Monaco is very low for the tyres, if you compare it to a normal race track. So should be fine and should be faster, so that's why I think a lot of people went mostly for the hypersoft.

Lewis, do you think we could see some records fall this weekend?

LH: I would imagine so, yeah. They're resurfaced some areas of the track. It was already very, very grippy last year and I think the hypersoft is... I've only driven it, I think it was the end of last year maybe, in Abu Dhabi, just one quick run on it, so I don't really know much about it, so I'm excited to get back out on the tyre because I know at that time it felt great after lap whatever-it-was. So, I think around here it'll hopefully be a lot better than all of the other tyres that we've run.

Romain?

RG: Yeah, I tested them in last week's Barcelona testing and they were fast, and I was surprised at how consistent they could be on some occasions. Looking forward to trying them here – but definitely they're the tyres that give the best feeling.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Lewis, you talked a little bit about the difficulties you're expecting here. And the change in process in Spain and how well the test was working. In terms of how transferrable that performance set was in Barcelona for here and at other races, how confident are you that you've made a fundamental gain, either in the setup of the way you're understanding the car?

LH: I feel with the last race, the whole weekend, yeah I think we took a lot of information from there. The whole first five races I think, we've learnt a huge amount, we know what our targets are, we much more understand our issues and we're working hard to address them – and I think we're working in the right direction towards addressing them. I definitely feel more confident moving forward that we are progressing in the right direction. Have we rectified everything? We'll find out. It just feels good, that there's a lot of work been going on: a lot of stress; a lot of strain within everyone's work. Everyone just trying to do their best and get us up front. Obviously our competition has been very, very strong through the first five races – but it is up and down from race to race. But I do think the first five races are always a really... it's always very difficult because it's just a learning curve. A very steep learning curve every year, even though we have that winter test.

I can't tell you what's going to happen moving forwards but I'm confident that we're going to do the best job that we can to maximise our results.

Q: (Giles Richards – The Guardian) A question for all four drivers, two parts. The organisers here have said they're going to use grid girls this weekend. So, first of all I'd like to know where all four of you stand on the original decision to stop using grid girls and what you think about this race's decision to go against that and use them this weekend?

RG: Well... yeah. It's busy on the grid anyway, you won't see much difference. When it was removed, I thought it was a good thing for women in the 21st Century because they were not used as just a board holder. Monaco, always special why not doing something different?

Lewis?

LH: I don't know. I think women are the most beautiful thing in the world, so, I mean there's races where we've had guys standing at the front of the car, and there's been a mixture sometimes at races in the past. I think Monaco is a very elegant grand prix and I don't know how women feel about it. I've not really ever spoken to women how they feel about the whole situation. So I can't really comment. I don't particularly feel any way about it. When we pull up to the grid and there's beautiful women on the grid, that's the Monaco Grand Prix, that's a lovely thing – but I definitely don't think that we should ever be supporting or pushing these women in general to feel uncomfortable. And if they are, then we shouldn't do it, if they're comfortable doing it, I mean I don't really know, I don't really have an answer for you otherwise.

Sebastian?

SV: Well, I think the whole thing has been blown up, probably unnecessary because I don't think any of the grid girls in the past were forced to do it. So, I think they enjoyed what they were doing. I agree with Lewis, I like women, I think they look beautiful, so if there was guys, I was just not interested, nothing against those guys but I just didn't care as much but, bottom line, I think it's too much of a fuss nowadays. I think all the women that took part as a grid girl in the past did it because they want to. I'm sure if you ask any grid girl on Sunday if they're happy to stand there, their answer will be yes. I don't think there's anybody that forces them to do it. So, it speaks a little bit for our times that sometimes there's a lot of noise for nothing.

Charles?

CL: Pretty similar opinion to Seb – but I think it was quite positive to have some girls on the grid to be honest – even though I have a girlfriend so I should not say that maybe, I will get in trouble. But yeah, it's also good to have some kids. Monaco is very small, so they took also my little cousin that will be on the grid with me. So that will be nice, and I've seen how happy he was to be chosen as one of the kids – and it's great to see that. And it's a great idea to have kids on the grid also.

Q: (Craig Slater – Sky Sports News) A question for Lewis. A bit related to that. It was obviously a great time of celebration in Britain last weekend. I wonder what you made of the royal wedding – and if the British royal family can become a bit more diverse, does it give you optimism that Formula One can become more diverse eventually?

LH: I don't really connect the two, to be honest but I watched here at the weekend, just with a smile on my face the whole time. I think it was great to see such a positive change. It was great to see how happy they both were, and I think it was just a really proud day, I think for... for me, for my family, I think for the world. And it's just always great to see positivity and change. The fact that you do have diversity in the royal family today, I think that's a huge thing. People probably don't even realise how important that is. Even to see at the church, you had a mixture with the ministers, in music, with the choir. It was just really, really beautiful to see. I just had the greatest weekend ever just sitting there watching and seeing talented people play music, speak and then see this power couple walk out. It was the greatest wedding that I've ever seen – and I'm not big on weddings at all. I avoid them at all costs – but this one, I wished I was in England to see it. Plus, England on a

sunny day, it's just so beautiful, with the castle and everything. So, I mean it was pretty much a fairytale. I think every kid – and adult today that's particularly not married – dreams of having that kind of weekend.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Seb and Lewis, Charles is up there with you. He comes into F1 this season with a huge amount of expectation and hype, based on his performance in junior formulae. You had exactly the same, the two of you, when you came into F1 first time around. What would your advice be to him about how to handle that pressure of expectation and what do you know and think of him as a driver?

SV: I think I was never that hyped when I came in. I didn't win GP2 and I think the hype is absolutely justified. If there's no hype around him, then I don't understand who should be hyped because you walk through all the categories like that, then you belong here. But I think the advice to him is not to listen, just get on with it and just enjoy it. I think the cars that we're driving are the fastest cars in the world and that's what you should be looking for, not all the noise that sometimes happens around. I think it's important that you're here, you know why you want to be here. You look at what's really important to you. The rest is not that much of your concern.

Q: Do you expect him to be your Ferrari teammate in the coming season?

SV: Well, I don't know. I'm not signing who is sitting next to me but (you should) probably ask Maurizio. Yeah, I don't see why not. Obviously he has more years than all of us here if you look at the passport. I think the races he's had so far, he used his opportunities, he scored points with a car that doesn't belong in the points so he's doing everything he can at the moment.

CL: Thank you.

LH: Charles, are you from Monaco?

CL: Yes, I am.

LH: OK, so you grew up here. I've watched the series, I've been watching him coming through and what he's done in the last couple of years has been great to see. I sit with the team bosses and engineers and we watch the lower categories and always looking out for that shining talent to come through and ultimately Formula One is supposed to be the pinnacle of the sport, which it is, but it's supposed to have the best drivers from around the world and in all honesty, you couldn't say that there's the best drivers – the 100 per cent best drivers – from all the nations around the world so it's just really great to see a really talented kid come through, that's really just earned his way, like he really has the potential to do great things here and you can't say that about every kid that's come through in the past years and ultimately it's very very difficult because it's such an expensive sport. So you don't always have the most talented that have the money but it's great to see a real talented kid come through so I wish him all the best and the most important thing is to try and keep your feet on the ground, keep your family close and just enjoy the ride. Don't take it too seriously. Every experience ahead is going to be a learning curve, good or bad, but that's going to be a part of the making of who you are. I don't really need to say much more.

CL: Thank you.

Q: (Jon McEvoy – Daily Mail) Sebastian, Lewis hasn't yet signed his new deal, though Mercedes say that he probably will. But would you welcome him at Ferrari at all next year?

SV: I don't know. He hasn't asked me!

LH: He has a veto so that wouldn't happen.

SV: I don't. I wouldn't mind. Obviously, to be completely honest, I'm very happy with the relationship I have with Kimi.

LH: I think we have a better relationship, do you not think?

SV: I don't know. Maybe if we get closer. I don't know. Plus, we just spoke about Charles. I don't know, you never know what happens. I'm pretty sure that Lewis's priority lies with Mercedes. Everything else would be a big surprise but you never know, so we will see. Maybe, one day, I don't know, we will both go somewhere else because we're old or... I don't know. Never say never. For me, at the moment, it doesn't really matter, I'm very happy to be where I am for the time that everyone knows. I know and then we will see what happens.

Q: (Phil Duncan – PA) Lewis, we often hear about drivers who want to go up and race against you. Would you want to race Sebastian, be in his team?

LH: I'm down to race with whoever. Ultimately, I mean I'm racing against him in a pretty competitive car which is always exciting but I think for any driver you always want to go up against the best. I think you've seen in history that it can often be difficult when there are two incredibly strong alphas within a team but you've seen that it seems to kind of work with him and Kimi, but then if you really look at... you can honestly say that Kimi can't be too happy because there are certain scenarios that don't necessarily work out for him, so it's just always difficult but I love racing against the best of drivers because it really pushes you to the limit. Racing against Fernando, racing against Jenson, and some of the top drivers that I raced with has just been... it brings the good and bad out of you, it pushes you to the limit but I feel that the set-up, for example, that I have right now within the team... Valtteri is driving exceptionally well, pushing me to the limit, and I'm still getting that but there's a great harmony within the team and there's a respect when one of the drivers does better than the other and it's not necessarily always the same when it's different characters, so it's really dependent on the characters you're with. But I don't anticipate that we will probably be driving together in our time, unless we do, like, Le Mans together one day which we should probably just murder, wouldn't we?

Q: (Ben Hunt – The Sun) Lewis, just about that contract: how come it isn't signed yet? I think the team were quite keen to get it done. Could you tell us what the sticking point seems to be?

LH: There isn't any sticking points. There just hasn't been any rush. I told you at the beginning there's no rush to do it and I would do it in my own time. There's no discussion with anybody else, there's no consideration for anybody else, it's just taking my time. I just don't see any need to rush. I still have a contract in place, I'm enjoying racing, it's nice to keep you guys guessing what's happening. There's not really much more to say really. There's not really much more to say. It's a great process that you go through with a contract but I just tell my people there's no rush. If it's not ready this week, and it's not ready the week after, it's not ready... no stress. I'm not going to stress about it. Yuh.

Ends