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2018 FIA Formula One World Championship

Mexican Grand Prix

Post-Race Press Conference Transcript

28.10.2018

WORLD CHAMPION

Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

TOP THREE DRIVERS

1 – Max VERSTAPPEN (Red Bull Racing)

2 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

3 – Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN (Ferrari)

TRACK INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by David Coulthard)

Q: Max, Mexico loves you; you must love Mexico – your second straight win here.

Max VERSTAPPEN: Yeah, amazing. The start was the key. To be honest with you, I didn't sleep very well last night, so I was really determined to win today and luckily we did that. Yeah, amazing job by the team as well. We had the right tyres available and the car was working brilliantly.

Q: You didn't sleep well but you made up for it with that great drive. We saw your team-mate pull out with some issue. We heard you on the radio saying "what do I need to do, do I turn it down?" Nervous moments for you towards the end.

MV: Yeah, of course, it was a shame to lose Daniel. I think we could have had a one-two, or at least two cars on the podium and of course then afterwards you want to make sure yours doesn't retire.

Q: A bit of a party tonight?

MV: I'm going home, so really happy about that.

Q: Well done, congratulations. Sebastian, congratulations on your podium, your first podium here, but I guess this is a reflective moment as we see Lewis Hamilton celebrating his championship. You pushed him hard all year but in the end it just didn't work out.

Sebastian VETTEL: No. Yeah, obviously not an easy day, but well deserved, congrats to him and his team, they did a superb job all year, so I think we need to stand there, accept that and say congratulations. Obviously I would love to hang in there in a little bit longer, but it wasn't the case.

Q: You had the car at various points this year; you had some fantastic victories, where do you think championship started to slip away?

SV: Oh David, I don't know if I answer that question now. Let me say congratulations to Lewis.

Q: Beautiful moment here between two great champions. We're going to hear from our five-time world champion. Lewis, beautiful moment there, great respect between you two guys, you are a five-time world champion. You've had some time to think about it. That was a tough race, but you've just equalled Fangio and it's only Michael Schumacher with more world titles.

Lewis HAMILTON: Yeah, it's a very strange feeling right now, but I think I firstly want to say a big thank you to all the fans here, really for making the Mexico Grand Prix as special as it is. So a big, big thank you there. Secondly I want to say a big thank you to my team. You know, Bonno said on the radio it wasn't won here, it was won through a lot of hard work throughout the races. I'm so grateful for all the hard work back home. To Petronas, Epson, to Bose, everyone that has been part of it and ultimately to Mercedes. I've been with Mercedes since I was 13, so to complete this when Fangio had done it with Mercedes, you know, it's just an incredible feeling and very, very surreal at the moment.

Q: Do you want to talk about the difficult race you had this afternoon with the tyres or do you just want to keep talking about this amazing achievement? Where does this rate with your other four titles?

LH: It was a horrible race! I got a great start and really was working my way up. I really don't know what happened after that. We were struggling, both Valtteri and I, but I was just trying to hold, just trying to bring the car home. Honestly, I'm just so grateful to God today, to my family back home – I love you, thank you for all the support. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for all the hard work my dad did, all my family. Yeah, a humbling experience.

Q: Enjoy the moment. And then finally, Kimi Räikkönen. Congratulations. One stop. That would prove quite tricky for you, but was that the best strategy for your car this afternoon.

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Yeah, I think from where we started. I think the tyres lasted pretty OK, obviously not the fastest anymore, but there were times that was the best in the position were were.

Q: This trip to the Americas has been quite consistent for you though, winning last time out in Austin, third place here.

KR: Yeah, I mean it's good. Obviously we always want to more, but I cannot complain too much. We have two more races to go and we'll try to do better.

PRESS CONFERENCE – TOP THREE DRIVERS

Q: (Francisco Alcalá – Global Com Group) What did you say to Lewis after the race?

SV: I'm not a big sharing person. I congratulated him, I think he drove superbly all year and was the better one of us two. So I told him well deserved and to enjoy it – number five is something incredible. Mainly congratulated him and asked him to keep pushing for next year, I need him at his best to fight him again

Q: (Christian Menath – Motorsport-Magazin.com) A question for Seb. If I remember correctly last year, after the championship was decided here, you were really down, and today again, even if it was for us all a bit expected it was going to happen. Can you explain why you are down when the championship is decided?

SV: It's a horrible moment. You put a lot of work in and OK, I get your point that you saw it coming. I did pay attention in maths so I could make the numbers, but still, you hang in there as long as you can. I've had three times now in my life that sort of disappointment, where you realise that you can't win the

championship any more and those are not happy days. You reflect not on one moment but the whole year: the work that goes in, the effort that goes in from the end of the last year until now and yeah, I think we had our chances. We used most of them, some we did not. But in the end we were not good enough.

Q: (Arjan Schouten – AD Sportswereld) A question for Max, about your frustration yesterday. Was that only because of missing the pole or was it also because of missing the record from Sebastian?

MV: No, the frustration was that I didn't have an optimum package to fight for pole, because we had the same problem as in the second practice, so I never felt comfortable because of the problems and that's why I was frustrated. In qualifying everything needs to come together and you try to optimise everything and clearly it was not optimised. I'm not there to be second or third. I want to win; I want to be on pole. At the end of the day the record for me is not a big deal, because the points and stuff are always on Sunday and that's the most important thing.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Max, a win today is another peak in a brilliant run for you from Canada onwards. What would you say is the main difference with you now as a driver compared with the start of the year and how fine a line is it between maybe overtaking or being caught in scrapes and the level of performance you're at now?

MV: The difference is I just listen to myself. I do my own thing, even if there are a lot of things written, I really don't care. My dad always told me in go-karting, back in the day, if I was maybe overdriving or something, he would always tell me "Max, even if you think you are not going fast enough, it's still fast enough". So basically, for my feeling, I just backed it out a little bit and that seems to make me a bit faster.

Q: (Jens Nagler – Bild) A question for Seb. Is this a moment to let sink in the disappointment or is it already the first moment to bounce back?

SV: No. I don't want to make a big deal about today. As with the question before, you could see it sort of coming, but for sure it's different. I focus on my own, I focus on my car. It's what you work for the whole year and when you are not anymore in control, it's obviously not a great moment but I think it's normal as well to have that moment of disappointment and that you are a bit down but I think I will be as strong as I can be in two weeks' time heading to Brazil. Because that's what my team deserves and that's what all the guys at home in Maranello deserve and all on top all the people that have supported me, Kimi, myself and the whole team, all the tifosi all year. Maybe for now I'm not the happiest guy, but in two weeks' time I'm allowed to step into the car that I always dreamt of driving, so plenty of things to be happy about.

Q: (Julien Billotte – AutoHebdo) Question to both Ferrari drivers. You're still in for the Constructors' Championship. Could it help you make up for the loss of the drivers title?

KR: I was hoping nobody was asking! Obviously that's our aim, as it has been all year – but I don't know what the points are and we can only do our best and hopefully we'll say in the fight and can catch up. Two races to go, so we'll do our best.

SV: Yeah, as I said, I think in two weeks time we have the possibility to show once again what we can do and obviously we race for the team and as long we keep on catching, that's good. We need some more points but I think last weekend was good for us, this weekend was good for us – so hopefully we can continue the last two races like that.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) Kimi – you answered one question, might as well answer two – you lost a position to Sainz in the beginning, that sort of compromised you a bit

and you lost contact, and your first stint wasn't very good and then you have just the one stop race. How was it from your point of view?

KR: Yeah, I think on the start, the initial start was OK, I was following Seb and then somehow that side of the road slowed down in the middle of the straight. I went on the other side but obviously I was behind Seb going through the first corner, and didn't really want to get involved. I lost one place and got it back the next time around on the straight, so it wasn't a big deal. It was tricky with them. I think I had more speed than the Mercedes in front of me, but tried to get past but just didn't have enough of a good run on the straight and then yeah, my tyres basically gave up. The front tyres. It was tricky. We were planning to come in but yeah, then Mercedes came and we decided to do the opposite. Yeah, I knew that we were going to go for one stop from that point and I think the tyres, the second set was very good but obviously we needed to look after them a bit too, to make it to the end. Not an awful lot happened after that. Obviously I caught up with the Mercedes, past him, locked up at the same time and went straight and then obviously I think it was Ricciardo had some issue and stopped. Good end result, not the most exciting race but that's how it goes.

Q: (Arturo Lopez Escalona – El Sol de Mexico) Question for Max, what represents for you to win here at the Mexican Grand Prix for the second year?

MV: What it means. It's of course great. We knew last year we were strong and then coming into this event we had the same hopes – but of course it's never easy to win a race. Yeah, of course, very happy to win it for the second time in a row, and yeah, it's a special track with the fans, they're very passionate and the stadium section as well. I think anywhere if you win a race it's always positive.

Q: (Jaap de Groot – De Telegraaf) For Max. You just said you were mainly disappointed yesterday because the car didn't deliver in the way you wanted...

MV: ...no, the car did. The engine didn't.

OK. But today, how were you balancing between the doubt and the focus to win. I notice you were fine-tuning the state of the tyres and the engine constantly.

MV: The only option was to win today for me. That was in my head and, of course, that's why I was very disappointed yesterday but we made it up today, so of course I'm very happy with that.

Q: (Louis Dekker – NOS) Also for Max. Does this make... this victory also a bit a Renault victory, a revenge? Because it's better than yesterday. The engine also gave you the victory?

MV: How do you know it's better?

I don't know, I'm asking.

MV: No.

Q: (Fernando Alonso – Motorlat) We here that maybe the tyres are not giving enough chances to have open races. I see this weekend all words about the perfect point in the degradation and everything. Max or Sebastian, tell us this could be a constant thing in the next races?

MV: I think it was a bit unexpected how the tyres behaved. Maybe with the hyper, yes but with the ultra, I think nobody really expected it to be like this. We came into this event with a few different tyre strategies but normally you always end up on the same tyres, more or less, for the race. But very quickly, in the weekend I think that we saw that the supersoft was quite a strong tyre and luckily I had two. I didn't use any in practice, I just saved them for the race in case we needed it and clearly we needed it. So, it's a bit of a guess.

Q: (Carlos Alberto Velazquez - Reforma) Max, is the second time you win here. You're the fourth driver that makes that accomplishment. What does the Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez give

you to have such success – and will you be prepared next year to come here and run for the Championship maybe?

MV: That's a very far ahead thought so I don't want to speak about that yet – but what's good for us, at this track, it's a lot about mechanical grip and the aero is a little bit less important but also the top speed is not that important compared to other tracks, so we are not losing out that much on the straight, and yeah, it suits our car much better. We make up a lot of time through the corners. That makes us competitive. I enjoy driving here but I don't really think this track is a particular favourite of mine in terms of my driving style or whatever. Of course, when your car works well, you can have a good result.

Q: (Alfredo Lopez Ledesma - MomentoGP) Question for Seb. This 2018 has been your most difficult year in Formula One?

SV: Maybe. I don't know. I need to think about it but in some regards, definitely yes. Yes it was definitely different to other years but nevertheless I think we shouldn't neglect the fact that we had a very strong package, we were able to win races, we're not in contention any more for the Drivers' Championship but we can fight for the Constructors'. So, even if it has been a difficult year, I think still it's been a good year for us as a team. We're still improving – but certainly there were also things that became apparent, needs addressing, needs fixing in order to do that final step that we are looking for.

Q: (Victor Macin Serrano - ESPN) Question for Seb. Germany or Monza? Which moment is, in your opinion, is the defining moment of the season?

SV: None of the two, to be honest. For me it was more Singapore. I think, yeah, from Singapore onwards we just didn't have the pace to keep up with Mercedes for a couple of races and then obviously some other things happened on top that didn't help and we couldn't score the points due to mistakes that we did, mistakes that I did. So it didn't help. I can't be too hard on myself with what happened in Germany because it's not like... I've done much bigger mistakes this year but obviously it was the most costly one. Unfortunately it's part of racing: when you push you might be sometimes pushing a little bit too hard. I chose the wrong corner as well. But anyway, it's behind me and I'm not really thinking about that too much. I consider it part of racing and it happens to others as well. So, but yeah, seeing that struggled in the last couple of weeks, just for pace and speed was probably more defining than that.

QUESTIONS TO LEWIS HAMILTON

Q: (Henry Bonilla – F1Latam.com) Lewis, once again, here in Mexico, in Latin America. What are you feeling?

LH: Right now, it just doesn't feel real. I feel like I'm going to wake up in a matter of moments. It's been such a difficult year and such a great battle but a lot of work, like a lot of word and to try and raise the bar this year has been such a huge challenge and naturally... you know I've trained myself this year, I prepare myself mentally, don't believe in mind coaches and all those kind of things and so, I really work hard to make sure I've got the right energy, the right balance in my life and this year, working on all these different aspects to enable myself to perform better. I think I had a great year last year and I was thinking to myself how can I raise the bar, how can I squeeze some more out of myself? And honestly, you never know what the formula is and there is no secret formula but somehow I managed to find that balance and that flow and I've had some of my best races of my career and I think that's ultimately why I'm sitting here. But it doesn't even register at the moment, being number five. Just getting my first was amazing and the third was incredible. People are mentioning Fangio so I think right it's just kind of... it's very very humbling as well because I'm conflicted emotionally, right now, because I've had this tough race which I wanted to win, got a great start and then it went from good to bad but we still finished fourth. It's not a bad finish and ultimately it's what we needed but in my mind, we've still got a team

championship to win and today we lost some points to Ferrari and I really want to deliver for the team, so I've still got two races to win.

Q: (Fernando Alonso – Motorlat) The question...

LH: Your name is Fernando Alonso.

Q: (Fernando Alonso – Motorlat) Yeah. A little longer but I shortened it.

LH: I never thought Fernando would be asking me questions!

Q: (Fernando Alonso – Motorlat) A pleasure for myself.

LH: Can you drive?

Q: (Fernando Alonso – Motorlat) Not that fast but I think I can drive. I have been in conference in Valencia in the test and you said you played many games and you are training like you said before, but you delivered this like one of your best years in formula One. What do you think is your best skill that you have developed this year?

LH: Honestly, it was all round. I've obviously had the ability since I was very young. Since I've been in Formula One I've had the ability to drive like I do today but naturally I think every year you are always trying to raise the bar and when I say raise the bar, you're trying to work on all areas, how you prepared, how you get yourself in the right mindset, how you deliver in the car with your feel. How you learn to balance the car and risk versus reward. How you communicate with the guys who you work closely with, to extract the best from them. All those areas are so important, even things like... I've got certain people who work very closely to me, I've got to make sure I keep... how do I keep their spirits up, how do I keep them driven? If they seem me at a weekend and they know that I'm here to win – which, you know, sometimes you can arrive in a bad head space, we're only human – but if you can try and focus on doing that each weekend it can really make a big difference to your weekend, so there are so many areas and I think for me, just being... the most personally in the car, I've been the most centred this year, been the healthiest I've ever been and I've had more energy than I've ever had. Part of that, I'm sure, is being on a vegan diet. It's been fantastic and I'm so happy that I went that way. I wish I went there a long long time ago.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Lewis, there have been lots of time this year when Ferrari and Seb probably had the faster package overall. You've won a lot of races but arguably they may be should have. The battle was so to and fro for the first half of the year. The fact that you've wrapped it up comprehensively with two races to go, how much of a surprise is that and how does that feel?

LH: Yeah, absolutely. Through the year there were a lot of testing times for us. Even on weekends where we didn't have the package and we were on the back foot but then came away with that belief within the team, still, that we could come away with something good, we'd come away with wins, even though we weren't the quickest. It took some special laps, it took some special moments in the car and I honestly could just re-live those moments all the time. Some of those experiences I had in the car were really magical. I truly believed that we could win this championship but it has been the toughest battle that we've had collectively as a team. So much work has gone on in the background. These guys in the garage have just been flawless every single weekend, with our pit stops, with our decision-making in the background, strategy and set-up. That's been key to... ultimately, for me, I feel like I can drive anything and I feel I can take the car to places that nobody else can. But to do that, you have to get the car in the right place and so that means ultimately you've got to work with the team, to help unleash what's great within them so that you can unleash the greatness in yourself.

Q: (Ben Hunt – The Sun) Could you identify a turning point, perhaps, this season, whether it was the German Grand Prix and winning that, and following it up with that qualifying lap in Budapest? Was it round that sort of time?

LH: What was before Hockenheim? Silverstone? Before that? Austria. France was good. There have been so many races that I don't remember them all. I think naturally at the beginning of the year, we

started out great in the first race and then we had that fall back and then we had some testing races after that. Then we had that DNF when I think we were leading the Grand Prix or at least one-two or whatever it was in Austria and then we the difficult collision at Silverstone but came back. I think when I came back at Silverstone, firstly being on your home circuit is always something so special and when you see that crowd that really lifts you up, they just... Ever since my first Grand Prix there but most importantly, the second one, 2008, I could see the guys in the grandstand. That's probably the first time I started noticing people standing up and cheering me on. And that has never faded, all these years being going to the British Grand Prix. So coming back from last to second, for me, in my mind, was like OK, I think that might have been quite a confidence boost, but then of course we went on to some great races after that. Budapest, obviously, going into the break, it's great going into the break with a win, particularly when we knew that we weren't quickest at that point of the season. And we knew that that was more a confidence blow to the other team. And then Hockenheim, Monza... I think we just went from strength to strength after that and we just kept taking a step up. But look, we're still here in Mexico and it was a tough race for us today and the Ferraris were quickest than us again. I think undeniably, we've been very very close on performance through the year and I think it's still arguable whether or not we've had the perfect package but I think, as a team, we've operated better than any other.

Q: (Rebecca Clancy – The Times) What are your plans now, how will you celebrate, what happens between here and Brazil?

LH: You know it's going to sound really boring – which it is, probably – because I just feel very content right now. I just feel very happy. Jeez, I'm looking forward to going to sleep, honestly, but I'm really trying to cherish this moment because I know this moment will only last for a period of time and then you're moving on to the next thing. Time is just so precious, this is a precious moment for me so I'm just to absorb it and really cherish it. I still have work to do. I've still got to get back to the factory and rally the troops next week to figure out how we can come back and win these next races. I have no idea why I struggled so much in these last two and we all feel the pain of not winning those races and we still have the Constructors championship to win, which I know will mean even more to all the guys back at the factory. So that's the focus. But right now, I think tonight, I'll leave this beautiful country, Mexico and Mexico City has always been good to me and the people here... the food has been great, the hospitality has been exceptional so I always enjoy my time here and looking forward to coming back. I'm probably going to come back some time in January to train and surf and enjoy myself but until then, I think... I'm looking forward to seeing my dogs, I'm going to go and see my dogs tonight, the unconditional love of a pet is something quite special. I think I've got a lot of friends around me so I'm sure we'll come together and really try to embrace the moment but yeah, as I've said, I've still got races I want to win so a little bit conflicted.

Q: (Phil Duncan – PA) There are lots of people, who now you've got your fifth title will say you're the greatest of all time or you're up there, given that you've won so many races, so many poles, five championships. You've never resorted to any dirty tactics. Do you think you're Formula One's GOAT (greatest of all time)?

LH: No, I think, honestly I would prefer that term but I do when I look at other people that I admire who are doing great in whatever field they're working in. Right now, I've still got things to achieve, there are so many targets, so many things ahead. Now I can tick off, I can strike out one of the things that I put on my list of the year. It's always at the top: win the World title, do everything for that. I think it's impossible to say whether or not... firstly I could never ever personally classify myself as the best. Obviously, within myself, I know of my abilities and where I stand but ultimately... My Dad always told me, since I was eight years old, he said 'do your talking on the track.' So I just try to let my results and the results from the things that I do outside of my sport, hopefully, also contribute to that, so that people can hopefully create a decent opinion. But there's still Michael's... Michael's still quite far ahead in race wins so you can have to say he is still the GOAT. Fangio, I think, is the godfather and always will be,

from a driver's perspective. To do what he did at that time when everything was so dangerous... my respect is so high for him. I feel very honoured to have my name alongside his, that's for sure and naturally just every proud to have the Hamilton name up there. If I stopped today, the Hamilton name will always be there. If you could see how tough it was for us from the beginning and even this year, you know, there's still fighting with those obstacles and still coming stronger and stronger each year. I feel like I'm still driving with that fierce fire that I had when I was eight years old which I love. So I'll keep going until that goes, which I don't think it's ever going to go but I will just... my bodyclock will run out at some stage.

Q: (Luke Smith – Crash.net) Lewis, following on from that, how much of your outside activities from Formula One this year really empowered you and helped you on track this year? You seem to be in a very very happy place right now.

LH: Definitely, definitely. It's been a special year in the sense of... I think for everyone and I guess I can only really talk for myself but I think being able to tap into your creativity is only a positive, there's no negatives about that. Naturally people will have opinions for and against things that you do but one thing for me is that all of you will know – and I don't do everything perfectly and I don't always say the right things – but one thing I do do is I do me. Only I can live my life the way I live it and it can't be steered by anyone else and I try to do the right things in order to be my best. Having these opportunities to do these other things, tapping into a different part of the mind, naturally doing these things outside a race and it has nothing to do with being a racing driver, but I think it's keeping the brain stimulated and knowledge is power, so naturally when you're learning new things, when you're experiencing new things you're gaining knowledge as you travel the world and I only see that as a positive so I try and be a sponge and absorb from people like Tommy, who has built an incredible brand. Ultimately, on my list, there's a new dream there, to do something like he's done within that business. So we will see how it is ten years from now.

Q: (Arturo Lopez – El Sol de Mexico) What does it represent to you to be Formula One World Champion? And here in Mexico?

LH: I couldn't have bet and told you it would have happened here in Mexico. It's been strange because the first race I didn't win, I think I came second and then I had a win in 2016 here which felt incredible. Did I win last year? No, we didn't win last year, we finished eighth last year which was disastrous but what it's proved to be, it's such a difficult Grand Prix for so many reasons. One is the altitude, one is the traffic – you could easily miss the race with the traffic that's here! You've got some good drivers here in the city, that's for sure. But I always have such a great stay here, it's been such a peaceful stay. I've been really really well looked after. It's interesting, I was just outside doing the TV pen and everyone was smiley but the Mexicans were, like, bubbly and there's a different spirit, there's a great spirit within the culture of the Mexican people, as you can hear with the music. They're celebrating and partying outside. I appreciate that and I respect that and look forward to coming back, hopefully, for many more years.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines, Racefans.net) Lewis, obviously matching Fangio's record is a massive achievement but he did it with a variety of different teams, whereas you've done all your five with Mercedes power. Michael had two teams to get to seven. Could you imagine doing it with any team other than Mercedes?

LH: Well, naturally I did it with McLaren which was obviously a different team so I have one it with two different teams. Michael had five with one team? He had two with Renault and then five with Ferrari, right? Renault, Benetton. So ultimately we've both done it with two teams, just he's had two different power units. Three? What was the third one? (Voice off: Ford, Renault, Ferrari) At the moment, it's very very difficult to imagine, envisage myself anywhere else. This is my family, this is where I grew up but I said the same thing when I was at McLaren. I think one of the reasons I wanted to move was to go somewhere else and see if you could do something special somewhere else. I knew I could but I

needed to prove it to everyone else. Right now, I don't feel like I need to go and be in another team to win a title in another team but you can never say never.

Q: (Victor Macin Serrano - ESPN) Can you share with us, what you told to Sebastian Vettel after the race?

LH: I didn't really say anything to him. He came over and, the one thing he said was, 'just don't let off – I need you fighting with me next year' – which I respect, naturally. I think for me, I just said, thank you so much for being such a strong competitor this year. But it happens so fast so I don't remember everything we said but ultimately it was a true showing of great sportsmanship and respect between us, as I think has been there all year long. So, I think that's great to have in multiple world champions, two competitors who've gone head-to-head. It's been a hard year. He's fought so well this year and I know he drove fantastically well today and I know he'd going to go from strength to strength so I've got to keep... stay on my toes and make sure I keep trying to come back with a good blow in the future.

Q: (Lawrence Barretto – F1.com) Congratulations Lewis. You've obviously competed against many guys for the world title. Where does Sebastian rank – or how does he compare as a rival?

LH: Y'know, it's very difficult to... it's never a great thing to try to compare people because everyone's unique in their own way. If you try to do that, then naturally that becomes headlines and it can be taken negatively. He is a deserving four-times World Champion and this year, the pressure he would be under in Ferrari who've not won a championship for many, many years... it's a lot to ride on one's shoulders. I think this year he's... even though he's had some difficult times, he's still bounced back, like today, and that's the true showing of a champion. I've been very fortunate to race against a lot of drivers and it's all small percentages that separate us all. And that's the great thing about this sport.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Lewis, congratulations. Same sort of question. Do you think that Michael is beatable with seven titles and 91 victories?

LH: It honestly feels... I've not really put any thought towards getting to that number – just because I've been trying to focus on getting this one. And even this morning, I woke up very relaxed but I didn't know whether or not it was going to happen today. Lots of things could have happened. Engine could have blown up. Seb could have won the race. We could have gone to the next one. You could see it's getting tough for us, these last few races. It's not been great for us, so I was just really not trying to take anything for granted. So, the way I've always approached it, is I've just been really thankful for the ones you have. I've very, very fortunate to be up here now, obviously with more than most people have, and I don't take that for granted. Whether or not I'm going to have the chance to win more, who knows – but I'm going to give it everything to do so – but I think just one step at a time. The 91 wins that he has, for example, that's a lot of wins. But naturally... I don't know how much I'm away? I guess 20 away now, aren't I? There's still a long way to go but I'm here for a few more years, so I'm hoping that I can at least get close. But even so, Michael was just such a genius in how he implemented himself into Ferrari and what he did with that team and yeah, I will always be a fan of him.

Q: (Masahiro Owari – Formula Owari Masahiro) Last year and this year you are fighting the same driver and deciding the championship at the same Mexico Grand Prix. What is the biggest difference between last year and this year?

LH: I think we had some strong races last year but I really wanted to, personally wanted to see how I could raise the bar, because each year you have to expect your opponents are going to do the same. Ferrari really picked up the pace this year and ultimately I think we've always... most of the time we've been trailing them slightly. Even if it's only by a tenth or two, and do I've had to try and bring something extra, to dig so deep to another level, so that I could pull those performances out where we weren't quickest but we won the race. Whether it's through mental preparation or strength or whether it's just a unified great job from the team. Strategy, all these different things. I think ultimately on the drivers' side

I am very, very happy and, within myself, I'm very proud of how I've delivered – but I'm really, really proud of how everyone around me has also raised their bar, raised their game. That's been key.

Q: (Jonathan McEvoy – Daily Mail) Lewis, it would be a great honour for any sportsman to go to the palace to be knighted. How would you feel if it 'arise Sir Lewis'. Does that sound good.

LH: Well, firstly welcome back. I think it's the first time we've spoken for years. So firstly, let me acknowledge that I've seen some of the stories that you've written this year and I just want to say thank you for it, and I appreciate the great work that you've done. Y'know, we had some difficult years for sure. In terms of... honestly that is really not something that is on my mind, and not something I'm even contemplating. I've been very fortunately and very grateful to have met the Queen on a couple of occasions, which I'm just grateful for. I'm very proud, I don't know if you notice that sometimes, when I'm on the podium I look back and see the Union Jack and I'm very proud to raise that flag, and which I'll continue to do so. And hopefully try to make more and more Brits proud. And yeah, at the moment, A German has the most titles but I think I'm quite grateful and quite proud of the ones that we have as Brits and yeah, going to continue to try to raise the game.

Q: (Rosa Torres – The Paddock Magazine) Congratulations. Of course every championship is different – but which one was your favourite and also how to you compare this championship with the others?

LH: I don't have the greatest memory, so remembering what happened in every single year and what happened in every single year is... it's always been different. Winning the first world title in Brazil, and the last corner, I mean, that was something I wouldn't... that was so special in its own way. They've all required different bits of input. They've all required different manoeuvrability, different agility, different approaches, so they've all been unique, and I've been faced with different things. Stuff behind the scenes which no-one will never know about, just like for all of you sitting here, I'm sure there's so many thing that you go through that no-one around you would really understand – but those challenges, I would say the biggest forces outside are the ones that can really impact. I would say this year, for me, from memory, this feels the proudest. This is definitely the proudest moment because there's been a year when we've not had the fastest car at the majority of the races. And yet we've come away with more wins that I could have hoped for, more pole positions, and... ah jeez, I love driving and I've really enjoyed driving this year even more, and I think each year, being that I'm getting older and I'm getting to really enjoy more my work, the things I do. I worry about things less. I'm able to let things go quicker and move forwards and grow faster. I think that just comes with being old – which I'm sure many of you would know what that's like.

Q: (Yesme Cortez – El Economista) How would you like to be defined in the future?

LH: How would I like to be defined in the future? I have so many things that I want to do, so many things. The racing is at the core of everything that I do and naturally I am always going to be remembered as a racing driver, but this great sport and this great opportunity that I have had has created a great foundation and an opportunity for me to do other things. I've always been one to want to have some positive impact; I don't want to be just taking, taking, taking. I want to be doing some positive things for the future. So, if I want to be remembered for anything it's by... whether it's helping some kids getting through school, getting through difficult times. Whether it's building a school, whether it's encouraging education, whether it's just helping people get through difficult times. It's kind of difficult to put it into words but naturally I don't want my time on earth to mean nothing. I'm sure that you all feel that way. You all want to know that your time was spent well and you didn't squander it. And that's my goal.

Q: (Maria Jimenez – Record) Felicidades, Lewis. I think that throughout your career you have said how hard it has been to get you to a racing career for you and for your family, and now you are a role model for the new generation – a five-time world champion. What does that mean for

you, and what responsibility do you think you have to this new generation of drivers as a five-time world champion?

LH: It's been a long, long journey and one that I'm really proud of and it's not been perfect along the way. There have been many pitfalls and many mistakes made. But that's ultimately enabled me to be where I am today. But it's awesome to see young kids. I invited this one young female racing driver from Mexico this weekend. I had her come when she didn't have tickets to come. It's crazy for me to see this little sparkle in these young people's eyes, who look at me as I once looked at several of the drivers when I was young – when I had the chance to meet Mika, when I had the chance to meet David, and Damon Hill and Nigel, and all these guys, and I was this kid, I imagine with this sparkle, saying “one day, I want to do what you guys do”. It's a very, very humbling experience and it's a beautiful privilege to have. I just want to keep on driving hard and keep encouraging kids. I really do still feel that within Formula 1, with the FIA, for example, hopefully I'm going to meet with Jean at some stage, because I feel there is some positive impact that we can have on young kids that are at school for example. Because a lot of kids that are racing don't have an education, don't get an education. I would say it's over 50% probably. I'm just guessing there, but parents take the kids out of school to focus on trying to get that ultimate and then when it doesn't happen you fall flat on your back. If I have any impact on this sport – obviously winning a championship is a great thing – but hopefully I can work on that with Jean, so that with these kids, even if they don't make it to Formula 1, or as another racing driver, they can be an engineer. There are thousands of people within these teams, there are so many opportunities within all these organisations, so that's something I want to get involved in. But it is really cool when I see these young... at this point in my career I feel like I have the most respect I've ever had from my peers and my respect for them has never wavered and that's a great position to be in.

Q: (Oliver Brown – The Telegraph) Lewis, many congratulations. Five is a monumental feat and I was touched by how on track you mentioned your father. In the emotions of the moment, how much do you think of him – he's clearly watching – and of the struggles the two of you once faced and how impossible a dream this once seemed?

LH: It's a good question. You know, this has actually been a really difficult weekend, because my grandfather died on Friday, was it Friday... Thursday morning. Naturally, when someone passes away, it brings the whole family together, but he was the godfather of the family and so it just brought... my dad and me were already quite close, but it naturally brought us a little bit closer and I will always remember and I never will forget the things that he did in order for me to be here today and for our family to thrive. I really do aspire to be like him, as a strong, black man and as a father and as a human being for doing what he did in the difficult times the little that he had. I think that's testament to where we are. I think all that work that he put in, my grandfather would be so proud of him, so proud of us and grateful that the Hamilton is there and established and will now go down in history, which is kind of crazy to think. Honestly, at the centre of who I am, I always remember driving around Rye House and my dad was the only father that would go out on the track and he would go and stand, when I was eight years old, he would go and stand where the quickest kid was sitting, and at the time it was a kid called Nicky Richardson. As an eight-year-old I looked up to Nicky. He was so quick and I was like “I've got to be better than him somehow”. My dad would go and stand where he was braking and he would move several metres down and say “this is where you have to brake”. No other father was doing that. I would go around and try to brake at that point and I would spin off and crash and spin off and crash. Eventually I could do it and that's been at the core of... I've always been known as a late braker. Today, I didn't utilise that, because I didn't need to. Those core moments, those special moments are what I fight with today and are at the core of who I am.

Q: (Francisco Alcalá – Global Com Group) Lewis, first of all congratulations. I think it's really amazing you have won your fifth championship. How thankful or what do you think about Valtteri right now as he had some involvement in order for you to get the championship today and maybe not in Brazil?

LH: Absolutely. One of the most difficult moments of the year was in Russia for me. Being at the core of me I want to win the race, by winning the race. Being let by in Russia was a horrible feeling for, I would say. I think everyone in the team felt it. I think also for Valtteri it was not a great feeling. He just came up to me now, and we have such a huge respect for each other. I see how hard he works, he sees how hard I work, we don't play games in between to try to throw off the guy. In actual fact, we work together. There are times were I've figured something out in my set-up and I'll tell me and there are times that I can talk to him and be open. It's the greatest partnership in terms of respect and teamwork from drivers that I'm sure has ever existed in Formula 1 probably. This year definitely there have been times when he has been fundamental in us winning races. Ultimately, the team don't care which driver wins, so there are scenarios where he could have been up ahead and I'm the second driver and I needed to play my role. My goal, in my mind, was "OK, I've got to make sure I'm always ahead". If it comes to a point that you need someone to support, it's Valtteri. This year, he started out really strong and then he had some really difficult races. I think Baku, for example, was a huge hit for him. He deserved that win and then he got that tyre blow up. Yes, I'm very, very grateful to him as a team-mate and for the help that he has given me in achieving this incredible dream so a big, big thank you to him.

Ends