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Post-Race Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS

WORLD CHAMPION – Lewis HAMILTON

1 – Max VERSTAPPEN (Red Bull Racing)

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PARC FERMÉ INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by David Coulthard)

Lewis, you're a four-time world champion?

Lewis HAMILTON: Viva Mexico!

Lewis we can see some battle scars on your car, you had to fight hard for this one, almost as hard as I'm fighting to get you to say something. Lewis, it wasn't the way you wanted to win the world championship, but you won this world championship. Tell us about the race and tell us about the emotion.

LH: I just want to say a big thank you to everyone that came out to support us. I hope we gave them a great race today. The Mexican fans are, I think, the best I've seen around the world. Honestly, you don't get to see this everywhere. We've got great fans around the world, but this is... you guys really create this atmosphere, so big thank you. I did everything I could. I had a good start. I don't really know what happened at Turn 3, but I gave him plenty of room. I tried my hardest to come back. Just a big thank you to my family, to my team – Mercedes have been incredible for the past five years and I'm so proud to be a part of it.

You've had time to think about this championship, does it mean than the previous three, now that you are in an elite club of only five men that have achieved that amazing record?

LH: Honestly, it doesn't feel real, man. Obviously that's not the kind of race that I want, when you're 40 seconds behind or something. But you know, I never gave up and that's really what's important, what's in my heart. I kept going right to the end. I'm grateful for today and I just want to lift it up to my family and to God and, as I said, my team.

Congratulations, Lewis Hamilton, our four-time world champion. Max, meanwhile, you won your third grand prix. Impeccable start to that race, that's really what made that opportunity. You won by a massive gap, you must be delighted?

Max VERSTAPPEN: yeah, of course the start was very crucial, I went around the outside, so that worked out well. From there on I was just basically looking after the tyres and the car, which just performed brilliant in the race. Of course, a big thanks Red Bull, because of course without them this was not possible. After last week, this is a perfect race.

You don't even have a sweat on your brow, just how good was that race, controlling it out from the front?

MV: Yeah, I was cruising. It was great.

And the start, that was crucial. It was oh, so close. Behind you, you had multiple world champions all touching each other.

MV: yeah, that was good to see for me, and from there on I just pulled away.

Great stuff, Max, enjoy that victory. Valtteri, 20th podium, steady race, but it didn't really look like you had the car under you this afternoon, so what's going on in the cockpit?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Well, first of all, I would say big congrats to Lewis and massive congratulations to our team for winning both titles. It's been really nice to be part of it. And thank you Mexico. Red Bull was just too quick today. We tried everything we could, but we just couldn't match them and this was the result

Kimi, you're a model of consistency, this is your 90th podium. I know you don't really care about that, because you're all about victories but again the start compromised you and then it was just a question of damage limitation?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Yeah, actually the initial start wasn't too bad but then all the guys... I was next to, I think it was Valtteri... but all the guys behind me got a massive tow and I was kind of left alone, and then the people behind me managed to tow past me. It was a disaster after that. But I just had some patience and once the guys in front of us stopped we had enough speed to improve but obviously not a lot happened after that.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Max, the third win of your career, and your second win in the last four races. It seemed it was crucial on that run down to the first corner and what you managed to get done there. Just talk us through the opening 20 seconds of the race.

MV: Yeah, so initially, I don't know, with the pre-start limiter I was a bit too high and I almost touched the limit so my start was not great, but then actually because of that I was in a good position, because then I had a good slipstream from Sebastian. I went on the outside and I was like 'I'm going to try around the outside and see what happens". I just saw we had a little bit of a touch into Turn 2 but luckily nothing happened there. From there onwards I could do my own race. I was pulling away every single lap. The car had a great balance, I could look after the tyres and, yeah, I managed to bring it home like that. Very happy. I knew that the car was good but I didn't know that it was going to be this good in the race.

Any nervous moments? You were the only Renault-powered runner still going at the end of the grand prix?

MV: Well, I think Pierre was also still going, but I could see a lot of cars blowing up and retiring, so I was definitely a bit worried but we looked after our engine and everything seemed to work pretty well.

Well done to you Max. Valtteri, turning to you, you end a three-race streak without a podium, so how good was the Mercedes car in Mexico this afternoon?

VB: Well, in summary, I think it was not good enough. We couldn't keep up with Red Bull, with Max. We couldn't fight for the win today, which is unfortunate. Of course it was a pretty straightforward race, there were no safety cars or anything like that to help us, to give us any opportunity. Handling-wise, it was all not too bad, but just missing grip, sliding a bit around, lacking grip in the corners. I think that's where Red Bull is still at an advantage in places like this. But I really need to say at this point, massive congrats to Lewis for the world title. I think he really deserves it. And also big congrats for the team, winning both titles this year. Of course, for me it's unfortunate it's not me winning the drivers but it is good for Lewis and I'm happy for him.

Kimi, Valtteri says the Mercedes wasn't good enough here in Mexico, how was the performance of the Ferrari?

KR: I don't know really! It's hard to say, because I was on my own most of the race. Again, in the beginning I was stuck behind a Force India and I couldn't get past, but once he went to do his pit stop I had decent speed, but it was quite a handful the handling, it wasn't the nicest. But I don't really know as I was on my own since that point. The guys in front of me were so far [away], and behind there was not really anything. It's hard to say. It wasn't too bad but I kind of expected it after a difficult day yesterday. I think the biggest issue was not being very strong in the start. The initial start wasn't too bad but then I was side by side with Valtteri

and then everybody in the front formed one line and I was outside of it and behind me guys were towing me and I was left kind of alone and then I had a pretty disastrous first two corners. Anyhow, it was what it was.

Can we just a few words from you on the achievement of Lewis Hamilton, now a four-time world champion?

KR: I think you have to go and talk to him.

We will do, but the achievement?

KR: Well, it's great for him, a lot of wins, a lot of championships. Good, but what can I say? I think...

MV: Basically, you don't care, right?

KR: No, I don't! Can we be happy about it? In a way yes, but...

MV: I think we'd prefer to be in that position, right?

KR: You can be happy for him but inside, you know, you...

Max, anything you can add about Hamilton's championship? I appreciate you have won the grand prix and your time will come I'm sure, but just your thoughts on Hamilton please.

MV: Well, I think in general this year he has been the strongest and also the car was the most reliable between Ferrari and Mercedes and if you combine those two things you can achieve great things and that's of course a world championship.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and Speedsport) Max, your teammate retired with some technical problems. Did the team tell you or warn you about anything that might happen?

MV: No, but I saw on the TV screen that he retired and then I saw another Toro Rosso in front of me on fire and I was like "Oh, my God, don't let this happen to me". So we turned down the engine quite a lot and everything seemed to be fine. Luckily, I have quite a new engine, so maybe that helped out quite well, but then again Daniel was with a very new engine as well, so I don't know. I had my bad luck in the beginning of the year, so I'm very happy that this time nothing happened to me.

Q: (Mariana Jiménez – Record) Max, after what happened last weekend in Austin, what does it mean to have this result here for Red Bull and for you and how did it feel to celebrate your victory here in Mexico?

MV: After last week I was very fired up and very motivated to do well, so that's why I was yesterday I think I was giving it everything. Of course I missed out on pole, but I was very determined to win this race and I gave it all in the start, in Turn 1 and it feels great. Of course it makes it very special also here in Mexico with a lot of fans. They are very passionate about Formula One and it's a great podium to be on, which last year I think I should have been on already but I missed out at the very last moment but luckily now no penalties.

Q: (Erwin Jaeggi – Motorsport.com) Max, do you think Red Bull can fight for poles and victories at every track now?

MV: Poles, it's difficult to say, because we don't have this power mode in Q3, but our car in the race has improved a lot, even in qualifying. I think we still miss out a little bit to really be comfortably fighting for pole position but if we have a track where we can overtake then I'm sure we can fight for victories, otherwise you don't win a race like this.

Q: (Jaap de Groot – De Telegraaf) Max, can you tell me a little bit about how you were in curves one, two and three. You knew that was probably the crucial part of the race, so you just said. Can you go into more details?

MV: So, I was in the two of Sebastian and then I went to the left and then I saw Lewis, I think it was, also pulling to the left. So I was just hoping that I had enough top speed and luckily it was alright. And then, under braking, I was on the outside so he can brake a bit deeper into the corner and yeah it worked out quite well, it was on the limit, because it's quite slippery on the outside but then in the next corner you are on the inside. I just saw on the video that we did touch a bit but I didn't really feel anything, so it was a very light brush, but it was very crucial for the race, for sure.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) Valtteri you had a grandstand view of what happened in Turns 1, 2 and 3. How did you see it and did it affect your race at all, or just helped? For Kimi, once you were

on your own, you sort of kept the pace with Valtteri, but were you just keeping the pace or was that as fast as the Ferrari could do today?

VB: Yeah, for me in the start I was going in the second row of cars into Turn 1 on the inside. Lewis was a bit ahead, so he managed to get ahead of me, so there was a bit of a train immediately after Turn 1, but then Turn 2 things started to happen and I could see a couple of cars, I think Sebastian and Max side by side, so personally I decided to go for a good exit out of Turn 3 for Turn 4. I cut the inside line, and for me that was worth it and at the same time I was cutting inside I could see on the outside of Turn 3 some carbon bits and that was it, it all happens quite quickly. After that there was not much action for me in the race. We had to save quite a bit the brakes, the power unit, everything, so it was a bit of a shame. But still, even though full power and flat out we could not have matched Max.

KR: Obviously we were far from anybody and if we really wanted to go faster, for sure we could go a bit but we were so far away that it really didn't make any sense, we really didn't have the speed to catch up 20 seconds, so what can you do? You just end up bringing it home and you try next time.

Q: (Juan Pablo Garcia Noriega – Capital Motor) Kimi, you were closer this season to Mercedes. What is the biggest challenge for 2018?

KR: Obviously I think it's the same for everybody. We try to improve, we try to do things better and make a faster car. Overall we made quite a big step from last year. I think it's small details that made a difference this year, but for sure the aim is always to improve and make things better and you know we are not the only one, everyone is going to do the same and to be honest we are only going to see in the first race next year where everybody is, and who has made what. In testing you get some idea but we have still two races to go and we do them as well as we can and start preparing for next year.

QUESTIONS TO LEWIS HAMILTON

LH: Lewis, many congratulations. This is number four, just give us some of your emotions. What does it mean to you?

LH: Well, firstly, everyone, thank you so much for the warm welcome. It's been a long journey with all you guys, these past ten years. For all the stories, positive or negative I appreciate all the support from all of you. Yeah, it's very difficult to come from a race, one which you, firstly, have not won, which was your target – but I feel still great – but then to be surrounded by so many people. Obviously there's a lot of emotions. I would love to start by thanking my team. Mercedes signed me when I was 13, alongside McLaren and obviously I had exceptional years with McLaren. Very, very special time there, and will always have a special place in my heart. Meeting Ron when I was 10, telling him that one day I wanted to be a world champion in his car, and him giving me that opportunity, wherever he is today I hope he knows how grateful I am for that. And then moving to this team which was obviously such a... people through it was a big risk, and gamble, but I had every belief in my heart, one hundred percent belief in my heart, that it was the right thing to do. Even if in the beginning it may have been difficult, I knew at some stage we would have this kind of success. It's really weird how I had that. And then just to see the team grow. It's trickled down from the top, with great bosses, great board members who support the team one hundred per cent. So to everyone back in Stuttgart, a big, big thank you. The guys back at Brackley and Brixworth, those guys. I mean, when you go there and see what's happening, see all these great creative minds working day and night to do something firstly, that they love, that they've worked for years, obviously going through school and university, and then to see this beautiful piece of art come together in December and January, and I'm one of two people that get to go out and test drive it, it's the greatest feeling in the world. I think the FIA and Formula One did such a great job this year with this car. Whilst it's difficult to overtake, it's still an awesome car to drive. Formula One cars should be faster than anything out there. And yeah, this week I've just been reminiscing a lot about where I came from, y'know? Growing up in Stevenage, dreaming of one day being in Formula One. And where I am now is way beyond my imagination. I think dream big is definitely something we should all do – but to be four-time world champion... four definitely feels a lot better than three, and four is my number, obviously, so yeah. And I've got such great support all around the world and I want to say a big thank you to all the fans. A lot of fans here in Mexico, some Brits, some Mexicans. I love coming out to Mexico, so to do this on Mexican soil, particularly to shine this kind of positive light on the country, since it's going through a very difficult time over the past months. I hope this shines some positivity on everyone. Through the race I was just thinking to myself, '*Still I Rise*, just don't give up'. To never give up. I was going back to when my Dad put me in the boxing ring when I was young and this kid beat the crap out of me. My nose was bleeding and I didn't want to go back in, and it felt very, very similar to Turn Three today. I got the puncture. Could have easily resorted to giving up, making mistakes, but I felt, I remembered that moment and I was like 'I'm not going to give up, I'm going to keep pushing, even if I'm 40 seconds behind, I'm still going to give it everything, so that when I cross the line I can be proud of myself.' And I definitely am.

Q: (Ysef Harding – Xiro Xone News) Lewis, one of our great American sports journalists Howard Cosell always told Muhammad Ali how much he respected him inside and outside the ring, the history that he was making, and I'd like to say that to you. I appreciate being in this business and it's a joy watching you do what you do on track and making the history that you'd made to this generation. Now to my question. Has this come full circle for you, given how you've come up, the history that you've made, being that you've had to struggle through what your family have gone through, has it bought it full circle winning your fourth world championship.

LH: Definitely. In life, in the heat of the moment, when you're going through difficult times, or even good times, you wonder how much further to push. Do you stop, do you turn around, do you turn left or right and go a different direction? I think it's just that when you eventually get there you realise it was all worth it. The way I've prepared this year, contrary to what people may think, training on your own, no-one can train on their own, that's what people would say, travelling around the world the way I do, all these different things, but just doing it your own way and finding your own way I think, it's a day like today, when you win a championship, in front of so many people, it just solidifies your belief in yourself and your families belief in you, and what they stand for. So, I'm proud of all my family and it's crazy to think that I'm continuing to stamp the Hamilton name in the history books. Beyond my time there will be kids that will know the name and that's probably what I'm most proud of. My Dad did... I can't even tell you what my Dad did to help me get where I am today. No matter how many wins I get, no matter how successful I am, I can never pay that back, but I just try and grab it with both hands, the opportunity that they've provided me and know also that there's a lot of kids, a lot of people around the world, that are watching me, whether it's for inspiration or for guidance, and so I'm trying to be the brightest light I can to shine that in their direction.

Q: (Graham Harris – Motorsport Monday) Lewis Hamilton, four times world champion, congratulations. You said four's your magic number. Does that mean there's not a number five?

LH: Actually 44's my magic number but I'd be here a long time to get 44 championships! Four is a part of it. I like four. Jeez... I wonder what the people at my school are thinking, when I was growing up, there's a couple of teachers that said "you're never going to amount to anything," so I wonder what they're thinking now when they watch me today? For sure, they're probably watching. Or at least they'll read the news tomorrow. I wonder what they're thinking? I wonder if they're thinking 'I helped that young lad,' or are they thinking 'you know what, I regret what I said and I've grown from it.' I hope that's really the case. I hope they've grown though it. I hope that whoever's kids they are teaching today, they're encouraging them, rather than pulling them down. But yeah, four is a great number. I want number five now. I'm going to stick with four, enjoy number four but I think, y'know, you just take one step at a time. It's really about embracing, firstly what you love, the people that you work with, your family. It's really about not listening to people who try to tell you what to do. It's about you finding your centre and your core. Because we're all different and we're all unique in our own way, we're all bright stars. There's no-one in this room that's not a star. If you feel that the person next to you is a brighter star, it doesn't mean you can't be as bright as them. If anything, you should use that as inspiration, to shine even brighter. I hope my winning the fourth time, world champion from Stevenage, I hope that's a testimony to show that you really can do something from nowhere. I hope one day I'm able to help find the next me because he's somewhere out there.

Q: (Phil Duncan – PA) Congratulations Lewis, well done. Just going back to the race, you said on the team radio, or you asked on the team radio whether Sebastian had deliberately crashed into you. Do you think that he did hit you on purpose? Do you think it was a bit of desperation from Seb, and would you like to speak to him about it?

LH: I'm going to take the negativity, swing it back and send you positivity dude. It doesn't even matter what happened. Today *Still I Rise* was on the top of my mind, and you get knocked down and you get back up and you keep pushing as hard as you can. Dude, I was 40s behind today and I don't know how it looked from outside. It didn't feel great – but I just never gave up, I just kept pushing. I knew that I couldn't win the race, clearly, but I was 'you know what, I'm going to have the best race I can possibly have from wherever I am. It took forever to catch one guy, and then eventually catch them and so hard to get past – but I enjoyed every battle. I tried to use all my skill. Turn One, I didn't give up. You guys are always wondering if I'm going to take the step back and not push, and I think I was balanced with my aggression in Turns One, Two and Three, I don't think I was too aggressive, didn't lock-up, I didn't make any mistakes and that is something I'm really happy with – 'cos naturally under the pressure, I could have done too much or too little. I was, of course, surprised to be hit and yeah, I left a lot of room so to wonder why the dude behind, that I was fighting, touched me, of course it was on top, y'know, we're great drivers, he's a four-time World Champion, it's quite easy not to hit each other – but in the midst of things it can also be quite easy to touch. So, I don't really care and I don't feel like analysing it. I've enjoyed racing against Sebastian and to race against a four time world

champion, and even today, to have the battle with Fernando, I was like 'this is one tough mofo'. Back and forth, back and forth, I'm like... Formula One, just wait 'til this guy gets a good engine, because the car was great through other sections, and I really hope for McLaren, who I've already told you has a special place in my heart, I really hope next year is a better year for them. I hope they have a stronger engine a stronger car, and Fernando's a tough bugger – a tough cookie, I prefer that word – and I enjoyed the little battle I had with him and I hope we get to have many more like that.

Q: (Rebecca Clancy – The Times) Lewis, congratulations, you're now the most successful British driver ever, you stand alone on four championships, is that something you're able to get your head around? What does that mean to you?

LH: I think at the moment it's too far out of reach. It's like I'm in space. It just really doesn't... it's not registering at the moment. That often happens when you win a championship. Of course there's all the energy from all the people around you and you're riding on Cloud Nine but it's really hard to it's really hard to... it takes a while for it to really, truly sink in. But when I think about everything that's gone on this year, the past two years, and everything that's had to be put in place to produce the results we have today, y'know, I don't sit here... while I'm sitting here on my own, there's over a thousand people who backed me up, who lift me up, who create the machine in which I'm able to exploit my talents, my abilities and for that I'm just so grateful. I wonder how many people in here thought it was the worst move to Mercedes? Of course it's been years already before you've changed your opinion – but isn't it cool. Isn't it cool to see someone take a risk like I did and it to come out the way it has? I'm really, really happy about it and proud of all the people that have helped me achieve it and looking forward to the future.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) Congratulations. This battle was hard-fought this year against Ferrari and your car was up and down. Sometimes you didn't have the best car in the field. Overall, would you say, from a sporting point of view, that was your most valuable championship? Did you have to give more than in the other three?

LH: I think every one has been difficult, different in its own way. Of course, if you look back to 2015, consistency was good and obviously it came in a different way. Still, I think individually, it felt challenging on a personal level – but I think this year is a championship of which I've been hoping for, a little bit like 2008, where you're fighting another team, fighting this historic team, which Michael raced for and won championships in. Ferrari is... the red car... red's my favourite colour so it's such a beautiful car to see on the track – but to fight it with a silver sword is, y'know, it's like the master sword, you want to say. I'm really proud of that and to be able to battle someone else who is a four time world champion, a proven world champion, who's got great skill and a team also that knows how to win championships, to extract the most from my guys, to compete with that. That's how every championship needs to be, and I hope there's more championships like this one where we have this tough battle. I think every single year there's going to be things that are... reliability is always a challenge, which has been exceptional, thanks to the team but fighting the other teams is what we want to see. I think what Formula One wants to see. I remember growing up watching Formula One and that's what I wanted to see. So I'm sorry if the last couple of years weren't the greatest for you but I hope this year was more exciting.

Q: (Inaudible) Toto told us that you asked the team if there was any possibility of Sebastian arriving second and the team said to you, "no". From this moment, did you react in a different way. You were on track, it's looks like the moment you were trying to overtake Alonso and Magnussen.

LH: I don't know how it is for you guys watching this race. It's a great race as a spectacle but it's a very, very challenging race because, one, obviously we're very high so we've got maximum downforce, very small drag, so overtaking is very difficult. Following is, I mean is so difficult, almost impossible to follow another car, we almost need special wings or tyres for this race because a one-stop is boring, so I hope they make some changes. We need specific Mexico tyres, so that we can have more than one stop, and, I don't know, somehow adapt the configuration or have a different strategy that can create overtaking, because there's so many people that come to watch this race. It's one of the most attended grands prix that we have and the energy is spectacular, so... what did you say? What was the question again?

Did you react differently Lewis, once the team had told you...

LH: Oh, no. I could see the TV screens, I could see where I was and, damn, it sucked being 12th. It took forever to get 11th and I was seeing... he was not as unfortunate as I was to get a puncture and be 40 seconds behind, he was at least able to remain in the fight so he had a much better opportunity and obviously drove fantastically well in the race after Turn Three. But I could see he's climbing and I'm thinking, 'Jeez, I know he has to finish second, I knew that Max was 70 seconds up the road, so I don't know. I just try to keep a gauge of what's happening up ahead. I was thinking 'do I have to get eighth to win it? But all I could think of

was trying to get up as high as I could. I'd look back, I'd look at the laps and think 'maybe I could have pushed a little harder here and there' but at the time my soft tyre had to go to the end, and it wasn't feeling good, so I was just trying to look after it initially, that's why I didn't have great pace. Then we had the pitstop and I still went in 26 seconds behind, came out 30 seconds behind and I'm like 'what the hell?' But y'know, this is one of those things that are sent to test me and, as I said, that giving up factor is very, very easy to do. It's always easy to take the easy route, just back off, turn the engine down, not push, hope for the best. But I kept racing and that's what I live for. That's what I started out karting, when I had a crap go-kart, when I first started, I started last and I made my way through, and that's what I tried to do today.

Q: (Mike Doodson – GP Plus) Lewis, let's not beat about the bush here, because we journalists just love a personal feud between drivers. We got one last year with you and your teammate. This year, we were expecting really good fireworks between you and Seb but instead of which, you sit together in press conferences and you really seem to like each other's company, in spite of the fact that you're constantly knocking bits off each other out on the track.

LH: You sound pissed off, man!

Q: (Mike Doodson – GP Plus) Tell us about Seb; what so special and enjoyable about him?

LH: You do sound upset. I'm kidding. Look, we're not 20-year olds, we're grown men now so I think if you watch tennis, you watch the great players, the great golfers, great athletes in the world and the mind is everything. The mind is what is in control, not the things that surround it. Naturally you're having a battle with the guy behind. There's that famous saying, in the art of war, keep your friends close and your enemies closer. I watch Sebastian, I know what he's achieved in the past years, I know how consistent he's been, I know where his strengths and weaknesses are. I know where the strengths and weaknesses of his car are. I do think it's still very very important... if you look at Nadal and... when they came to... the composure that they have through a game, and then also how they present themselves after a win or a lose. I think stars and athletes like that really set an example and I try to follow that, really, take a lot of inspiration from that. I think there's times probably he hates me more than I have any of that feeling... but I try not to contain any negativity in my life, no matter what is written, no matter what people say, I've managed to build this kind of barrier to bounce off negativity because I think love conquers all and positivity conquers all. So whilst you do want that feud after Baku and all of that, and even today, which seems a little bit odd, at the beginning of the race, it doesn't matter. I think what matters is... as I said, it's how you get up. I do hope that many of you here, whether or not you're British, obviously Mercedes is German, so hopefully some of the Germans can still feel grateful but I hope the Brits, I hope you guys... this is not just my win, it's our win, for all of us, wherever. I've got a cap here, it's got a US flag on it. I hope everyone can really enjoy this year and some of the great battles we've all had and I'm not going to try and give even more controversy next year. I hope that we just give you more raw racing, you know? That's what the sport needs, that's what we're struggling towards. I hope today was exciting. The little battles I had... I had so much fun. The one with Fernando was... I was like, really Dude? Come on. It was cool. What's a shame is that Formula One cars, in particular here, overtaking is so difficult and so... there's got to be some way of creating that battle without creating a deficit in engine power or something. There's got to be some other way to have more fight back. We had this great race today and that's the only battle I really remember that I've enjoyed as much.

Q: (Stuart Codling – F1 Racing) Lewis, throughout this year and possibly even more so in the second half of the year you seem to have been able to get more out of what is quite a difficult car than your teammate. What have you found within yourself to do that and why is it such a difficult car to extract this performance from?

LH: It's obviously got great qualities but generally the philosophy of how a car has been designed... over the years it's got some of the same traits of the previous years but being this year bigger tyres, longer car, it's exaggerated some of those things and in a year when the losses are even greater than the previous year... I'm sure you've heard on the radio some of these things we've talked about and some of the things we've talked about in the car, and the loss of downforce which we don't see on the other cars. It's been a great year of course, because we've really sat down in these debriefs, places like after Malaysia, when we sat down and had the longest debrief with the guys. What's amazing is to have guys who really listen to every single thing – feedback – you give back about the car. They're just wanting more information. These engineers, they love that stuff: more numbers, more information the better. So me and Valtteri have really been working hard to give the best feedback. These guys come from Harvard and Cambridge and Oxford so they're on another level to us drivers so to be able to convey what you're feeling is not the easiest. But I'm proud of its flaws because she's not been perfect. Whilst people have written that we've had the best car, I don't believe we've had the best car. I think we've been the best team, we've done the best job but there have been times when we've not had the best car, particularly on race weekends we've done a great job. And times when we've –

Singapore for example – like we're not going to do so well this weekend but we've come out with more than we had hoped for. And really that's what it's been about. I think next year - hopefully it's not too late – but I hope we will improve on some of the fundamental issues we have on this year's car, but then others will come out of woodwork. I think on my side of things, the operational side, working with my engineers, I've had the same engineers for some time. Bono (Pete Bonnington) has been with me from the beginning and his and their commitment... you don't get to see what happens back in the office but they're constantly analysing, just wanting to give the driver the best package. I couldn't have done it without these guys. My guys in the garage, my mechanics, who take the car apart every single week and put the car back together. Do you know how many pieces there are for that car? There are so many components, they're faultless in what they do. I have so much respect for that because I've taken things apart and put them back the wrong way. I'm sure some of you guys have. So it's really exceptional to see people talented like that doing great things. And then when you get in the car, you know that you've got that belief in you and you deliver as they deliver. It's the greatest feeling.

I'm really enjoying giving you long answers.

Q: (Chris Medland – Racer) Lewis, you referenced the fact that Seb was a four time World Champion and people often compare World Champions from different eras but is there almost an added edge and enjoyment that the two of you are going head to head for fourth, fifth and maybe more World titles at this moment in time?

LH: Definitely. Definitely. It's kind of cool to be in this battle with him. He got 50 poles yesterday and I'm kind of like, I don't want to give him any more poles because he gets closer to me. That's inspiration to keep pushing it, you know? Then the same with wins, same with championships and so then I see him sign for another three years with Ferrari and I'm like, Ferrari are not going to like me for the next couple of years. But it's OK, because we're going to make it as hard as it can possibly be for them to win championships but I really am looking forward to that battle with them. They've been such a great team this year, it's been great to see Ferrari back on form and as I said, I really hope others join that battle. Red Bull have been great today, big congratulations to Max, he's really the brightest young star that we've seen for some time and I was hoping today to have a bit of a battle with him but it wasn't meant to be. But there will be many more to come and I hope that in his early era that I can be a good force and a good battle for him.

Q: (Christoph Becker – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) Lewis, picking up on that question; you just said you remembered Michael (Schumacher) racing in the red car and you said a couple of days ago that you're not sure how much longer you want to be racing; you said a couple of years. In this moment, today, at this emotional day, if you listen to your inner voice or to your gut feeling, is there something that says: you know what, I can catch those other records that he holds? I can get to 92 GP victories, I can get to seven or eight World Championships, and I want to do that.

LH: I think, first and foremost, we all know how exceptional Michael was and his records have lasted for so long and he will always... there's one particular record which is going to be very hard for anyone to catch. Each year I don't set a goal to make records. I have a goal of somehow... improving certain areas where you feel you could be better. I love racing, I love the... I'm different. I love my different qualities, compared to the others. That doesn't mean they're better or worse, I'm grateful for the qualities and the abilities I have in the car. It is very very crazy to think that I've matched certain records from people; weekend in, weekend out, someone tells me of a new record that I've crept up on, but there potentially many many more years to go. I do look at my life... I travel so much, there's so much that I do, it's a lot sacrifices. People talk about Michael's singlemindedness about his job but to stand out in the world today, it's a lot harder, I think, to stand out today in this world, because it's all been done before, so to do something different as a Formula One driver, not only be the greatest you can be as a racing driver but also do other things, prepare your afterlife to be just as great, not as good because Formula One is just the pinnacle of the sport. You arrive on the biggest wave and afterwards there are going to be much smaller waves but that doesn't mean you still can't do great things. So doing something different that helps you stand out, that really highlights your individuality I think is really important and that's really something I'm working on, so I'll continue to race while I love it. As I've said, I've enjoyed it this year more than ever. I do think about Jeez, it would be so nice at some stage just to live in one place, a lot more socialising, walking your dogs every day or surfing, whatever it is, but staying in one place for a period of time. But then I'm thinking there's a lot of life to live beyond forty, there's a lot to go and so the balance is: I can't come back to Formula One, so there's going to be a point in which OK, I've had enough. I've already been blessed and had such a wonderful time here in these ten years. Hopefully I have my place here and I'm going to continue to – whilst I'm at my best – continue to try and... and I want to go out on top so that's my goal. Obviously each year, I could do the easy thing like obviously Nico did which is just stop and retreat with these four titles, but I think there's more in me, I think there's more to come, more of a challenge, as there's harder times ahead and I like that, I love that, that's challenging.

Q: (Rafael Bolaños – Televisa Deportes) If you can reflect on your career, how can you compare yourself with your idol, with Ayrton?

LH: I don't myself ever really compare myself to Ayrton. I think it's very hard to compare oneself to previous eras, you know? The cars are always different. What I would say is that ultimately us racing drivers, what we're great at is getting in a car and exploiting its strengths and weaknesses and putting it to the limit. All the drivers back to Fangio, no matter what vehicle you put them in, whether it's a car, jetski, whatever, we will take it to the limit because we have this certain sense of awareness and higher limits than others, I guess. I do feel very proud to be in and amongst those legendary drivers and we're in a different era where safety is so much further ahead but technology also is too. The challenge Ayrton would have faced in his time is a lot different today, mentally, maybe less physically challenged but mentally more with all the electronics that you have to control. It's not one era that is more difficult than another, they're just unique in their own way. I really do think that these great drivers, Ayrton would have continued to win more if he was fortunate enough to have more life to live. That bright life of his was cut short. I've always said it, since I got the first championship, I kind of liked the idea that I'm carrying a baton on and seeing how far we can push it. He inspired me as a kid, arrived at home on the weekend, he'd be the one I would be looking out for. And even when he was gone, I still came back and watched his videos like it was just yesterday he was racing.

Q: (Carlos Jalife – Fast Mag) Keeping a little bit the idea of the last question, can you compare your four mounts, the McLaren, the W05, the W06 and the W08, and tell us which would be your favourite? You don't name them like Sebastian does but which would be your favourite mount among the four cars that have given you the title?

LH: The reason I don't name my car is because it's not the same car you're driving throughout the year. We have four, five, six chassis so it keeps changing, so you would have to have four, five different names and that's a pain in the backside. So I don't name the car. But you still obviously have a close connection with the car that you're in, that keeps you safe. Each one is different. Obviously when I got to Formula One, 2006, so I don't know what chassis that was, the MP4/22 is it, something like that? That was a different car, at the time I thought it was the most physically demanding thing that I had ever come across. And then obviously body then becomes accustomed to it but then we had bigger wings, then we went to lesser downforce, the grip was poor, I think '14, '15, the car was still good but today I think is definitely the best allround car in terms of its size, the tyre size, it looks a lot like the olden days. When you watched the old legendary cars go round today the cool thing you see is the sound, the big tyres that they have, I love that and it's a lot closer to what you dream Formula One being like. I think this, for me, is definitely the best car I've driven but I've had the privilege of driving different cars. I drove Ayrton's car from 1989 which is cool because they had the stick shift, you know? I really wish we had that here. Imagine that battle I had with Fernando, having to take my hand off the steering wheel. That would have been awesome. But it's not meant to be in this world of technology but I hope Formula One grows from here and I hope to be in that period of time where hopefully it grows into a better series than it already is.

Q: (Ramón Treviño – El Universal Autopistas) Going back to the race, was there any time when you were 16th or 12th when you thought I'm World Champion and you think I have Brazil to be the World Champion?

LH: No, neither of those really ever come to mind. I honestly didn't know that... I hadn't calculated what I needed to or where Sebastian had... obviously at some stage they said that he had to finish second so then I'm like OK, I guess if I finish where I am that's enough but for me that's not enough. Backing off in a race is never fun, that's why you see me battling Fernando at the end. I gave it everything, I took risks... a little bit more risk with him than I really needed to but hey man, it could be my last race so I was like I'm going to give it everything. I was pushing right to finish line and that's something I love. I had no tyres left. So there was never a moment that I thought to myself we'll wait to Brazil. I think there was a moment for sure when it did dawn upon me which I may have to... I was like, it doesn't... we touched in turn three, it's OK, I've got two more races and it's not going to happen again, because I'll put myself on pole and make sure I'm ahead, so it's not close enough. But no, I just thought, keep going, keep giving it everything and keep rising.

Q: (Bradley Lord – Mercedes AMG F1.com) Would you like to come and celebrate with your teammates and do a great big photo?

LH: I would love to. I'm enjoying sitting here guys... Thank you.

Ends