



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2017 FIA Formula One World Championship

Australian Grand Prix

Post-Qualifying Press Conference Transcript

DRIVERS – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes), Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari), Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)

TV UNILATERAL

Q: Lewis, many, many congratulations, sixth Australian Grand Prix pole, the first time with these incredible looking new Formula One cars. How good was that?

Lewis HAMILTON: It's been a fantastic weekend so far. It's quite amazing to come here for, I think, the 11th time. It feels like only yesterday that I came and had my first race here, in 2007. So, such a great journey and I'm just incredibly proud of my team. This rule change has been huge and such a massive challenge for everyone. The guys have just worked so hard to make this car what it is today and to be up here representing them, you know Valtteri Bottas did a fantastic job, being that it is his first qualifying session with the team. He has done a great job and it's great for us, for Mercedes. Looking forward to the race and obviously it's close between us all and as you can see there's going to be a tight race this year I think.

Q: Thank you for that. Sebastian, coming to you. Less than three tenths of a second behind Lewis. Last year it was over eight tenths of second Ferrari were behind Mercedes. Encouragement for you in that and also an opportunity for you at the start.

Sebastian VETTEL: Definitely. We have a good car, we are working well as a team, things are improving, so obviously it's nice to see things are working, the car is working. We had a mixed day yesterday but the confidence in the car was there from testing and we showed it again today. In the end I was not entirely happy with my lap. I was pretty happy with the end, maybe not the opening of the lap, where we lost a bit too much, but I think Lewis did a very good lap so... I would have loved to but I don't think pole was out for grasp. But tomorrow I think we can do something in the race, as I said, the car feels good, we've improved it, so the pace should be much better than it was yesterday, when we had some practice. So looking forward to it. It's been a big winter for us. A lot of change we have been through as a team the last 12 months, to the better I think. The team is getting stronger. Of course everybody has been pushing very hard. It's not so easy coming here with the long journey to get to Australia but I think people are fired up and people are motivated for tomorrow as you said at the start, I think it's the first good opportunity.

Q: Very well done. Coming to you Valtteri, I think 15th was your previous best starting position here at Albert Park, so third on your Mercedes debut and Lewis saying you did a great job. Are you satisfied?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Well, third position is not ideal I think in general I'm not happy for the result. But what I am really happy about and proud about, as Lewis said, is what the team has done, again, with this car. I only saw a very small part of the preparation of the new car in the new era of Formula One and it's really nice to see that all the work has paid off and we're fighting at the very front. Obviously it seems to be very close this year, at least here. Just myself, I didn't get any perfect laps in, so not that satisfied. Tomorrow is the day that matters. It seems that in the race starts we have been quite strong, so hopefully we can keep that form like what we have had in the practice, have a nice and clean race and get some really, really good points.

Q: Back to the pole sitter: Lewis, when you arrived this morning I spoke to you at the fan autograph area and you said to me “I’m here for one thing and one thing only and that’s to win”, so tomorrow is really all about stamping your authority on this championship?

LH: Definitely. I think tomorrow is about putting [together] all the work that’s gone on over winter, all the work that’s gone through testing and over this whole weekend and really put it to work tomorrow. Make sure we get a good night’s sleep and come back stronger than ever.

Q: Lewis, the analysis shows these cars, in the lower-speed corners, are about 20km/h faster than last year’s; in the high-speed corners like Turn 11 about 30km/h faster than last year’s. Give us a window in: what does it feel like?

LH: It’s incredible. It’s the best that I’ve ever experienced here. Obviously the grip is fantastic, the aero is... it just makes such a drastic difference. You can really push deep into these corners. It’s amazing to not have the car skating around on the low grip kind of tyres that we had in the past. So, very exciting and fun to drive. Yeah.

Q: Sebastian, you touched on it very briefly but maybe you’d like to drill down into it a little bit more: this year another one of the changes is the start. Very much more under the control of the driver. You’re starting alongside Lewis. Ferrari traditionally has pretty good starts anyway, do you feel reasonably optimistic that’s going to give you a chance? I think the stat is also that pole has only won here once in the last five years. You’ve done it five years ago, he’s done it within the last five years, how do you feel?

SV: I think you’re right saying it’s harder for us. It’s in our hands, basically, whereas previous years... it was as well, to be fair, but I think we were relying a bit more to the settings. So, yeah, I hope we can keep the tradition up and good memories definitely. I think last year’s start was very good. Let’s hope we can have a similar start compared to the rest around... from P2 this year. I don’t think there’s any guarantee to have a good start so we have to work for it. I think we’ve prepared well so hopefully we can have a good launch, both of us. I think Kimi’s sitting in fourth, so it would be great to challenge Mercedes already into the first corner but then, as I said, the race is quite a bit longer than that. It’s the first race of the season: new tyres; new cars; nearly new everything so it will be a long race so hopefully we can kick off well.

Q: Let’s just develop that thought with Valtteri. How will it be to race these cars around this circuit. Overtaking, what’s your analysis on how easy or hard that’s going to be? Strategy options: is it relatively simple or is there a couple of different ways to do this race for you?

VB: I honestly think it’s going to be quite difficult to overtake here. I think you need quite a big pace difference between the cars to be able to do that – or a mistake. It’s quite tricky to follow – at least in practice – the other cars, but obviously we will see very soon. In 24 hours, we are much more clever with that. But, I think, strategy-wise, from what we see, you can do different things, definitely. But it’s difficult to see. Best to see tomorrow.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Seff Harding – Xero Xone News) Lewis, you stepped to it this weekend, you were focussed, you looked ready and you had absolutely no problem adjusting to these 2017 regulations – you can correct me if I’m wrong. And, to make a Dragon Ball Z reference, it looks like you’re ready to go Super Saiyan in tomorrow’s race. Did everything go according to plan for you today?

LH: I think it definitely didn’t start out the best day for me. I’ve been feeling great all week and today felt like a bit of an off-day – but as it got to qualifying I felt a lot better. Generally, it went very well and, of course, we can always try to improve. The laps are never perfect, there are little bits of time here and there – but very, very happy with how it’s gone and it puts us in a great state for tomorrow. So, now it’s really about focussing and making sure we do our homework tonight and making sure we’ve got an answer for these guys.

Q: (Jawad Yaqub – The Roar) Lewis, starts were a big thorn in the side for you last year, just want to know how confident you are going into this season and, of course, tomorrow, that you’ll be leading at the end of Turn One.

LH: Well we’ve done a lot of work over the winter, particularly knowing that the rules have changed this year. So, we’ve done as much as we can and we feel that we’ve prepared the best we possibly can. Definitely there

were times last year where we would arrive and perhaps it wasn't the case. So, we made sure that we put a lot of effort into making sure we are prepared this year – or I am.

Q: (Patrick Wedes – Otomotif) Valtteri, congratulations on your position where you are today. Could you tell me why you're not happy? You don't look happy. What is it?

VB: I'd prefer to be in the middle. I think as a team what we don't want is to get another car from another team in between us, I think. I'm always optimistic, for a little while I can be disappointed. I know we can do good things tomorrow and it's tomorrow that matters. But just my own performance. I set the bar very high; targets very high, I didn't quite meet those today but a long race ahead of us tomorrow.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Seb, watching qualifying today, we had the same impression that we had some weekends in 2015 – not last year. It gives much more motivation - extra motivation - to you? Ferrari is really chasing Mercedes again.

SV: Hopefully. I think it's very early to tell but I think clearly Mercedes is in a very very strong form, despite the rule change. They've done a very very good job. I think they've come up with a great car. I think both drivers are doing well. Yeah, for us, obviously it's good news. We've felt quite good with the car straight away but we know there's still a lot, a lot, a lot of work. As a team, I think if you look back in the last twelve months we've grown a lot, so a lot of positives. Obviously there was quite a lot of change but I think the motivation is super-high in the factory. People really want to build a strong car and make sure we get back to where we belong, so Mercedes is doing well but we try to do better than them. The season is very long so time will tell but I think for a start we're very happy. I think qualifying on the first row is a very good opening to – as I said – a long, long season.

And then, just a point. Where is the gentlemen, asking the question before to Valtteri? What was your name again? I'd recommend you to travel to Finland and then you will find out that people... the culture is different, so I think he looks full of joy today! I've been there many times. It's definitely worth a trip. It's a beautiful country, very nice people.

Q: (Heikku Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, how different would your feeling have been if you had been on the front row instead of P3?

VB: I think it would be a much better starting point for us as a team and for me personally any position is important. But, like I said, now qualifying is done, we're starting first and third and I think it's still a very good starting position for the race tomorrow. We're both on the clean side of the grid – if you look at all the positives – it's what it is. It's third place for me and what I am now really doing is starting to look ahead to the race.

Q: (Phil Branagan – Auto Action) Lewis, 1m22.1s. There's been a lot of talk over the winter about how much faster these cars would be. Is that been exaggerated or did you think there was slightly more speed to come today than a low 1m22s?

LH: I don't really know. How much quicker were we than last year?

(Last year's pole was a 1m 23.837s)

LH: Of course we thought it would be more than that. I'm not really sure why it's so close. Yeah, it's the track, it was cool today. I'm sure during the year it's going to ramp up much quicker; development with this car - being that it's a new car - development is going to be at a much faster rate than last year.

Q: (Chris Medland – Racer) To all three of you, based on what we saw in qualifying... Seb and Valtteri both said you weren't happy with your laps. We saw Daniel put it in the wall in Q3. Are these cars very much right on the edge when you're pushing for that final lap, that you're right on the verge of a big mistake rather than a small error?

SV: Not really. I don't think so. I think they're much faster, they're much more fun to drive so I think it's much more what we're here to do, pushing the boundaries of what's possible, what has been achieved before. I think Lewis obviously started in the generation where cars were, I think, similar to now in terms of grip. I just started before it started to change so I got a hint of an experience. I think those are the fastest cars we've ever driven and arguably the fastest cars we've ever had. In terms of mistakes – yeah, probably if you do a high speed spin, it's more difficult to catch whereas before, as Lewis said as well, if you're sliding a bit more

on the tyres then it's more of a powerslide or a slide in general rather than a snap and then losing the car, so in that regard maybe it's a bit trickier. You have to be quicker to react but as I said, I would still go for it because it's much more fun.

LH: Yeah, there's not much to add to it but our job is to put the car where it is most uncomfortable. We're not there to make it sit on rails so we've got to take it over the edge or just hold it on the edge of that cliff through the whole lap and that's the fun of what we do.

VB: Yeah, I think that's it really.

Ends