



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2017 FIA Formula One World Championship

Azerbaijan Grand Prix

Saturday Post-Qualifying Press Conference Transcript

DRIVERS

1 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

2 – Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)

3 – Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN (Ferrari)

TRACKSIDE INTERVIEWS (Conducted by Davide Valsecchi)

Q: Incredibly exciting qualifying. How was that for you Lewis?

Lewis HAMILTON: I made a mistake in the last corner. A lot of pressure because we have been struggling to get temperature in these tyres, we don't know if it's a one-lap tyre, so it was all or nothing. But the lap just got better and better throughout. I saw Valtteri ahead and I knew he was doing a good lap, but I came across... I remember coming down from the last corner and I was like "please be enough" and I'm ecstatic, I'm so happy.

Q: And it was enough. It was unbelievable. Very well done. Congratulations. Valtteri please, really good quali for you. How was it from your point of view. You were on pole and then on the last lap maybe you miss just one tenth?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Yeah, disappointing obviously. I was going for the pole and just the lap in the end wasn't quite that perfect. I was struggling a lot with the front-left temperature. Yeah, Lewis had a good lap at that point and I didn't. Disappointing, but second place is not that bad.

Q: Very well done. It was a great quali. Kimi: what a quali because you were struggling a bit and then at the end, the last lap, with only one warming lap, you got third position, the second line. It will be good for you, no?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Obviously it's better than where I was before, but it has been difficult with the tyres to switch them on and it's been a struggle every time. It either works a little bit better or not so good and luckily the last set was slightly more a better feeling, just on the warm-up side. Still not perfect but I think if you switch them on you can go a lot faster. Obviously we are close enough with Mercedes but I think it's a lot to do with how you switch on the tyres.

Q: Congratulations. Very well done. Lewis, tell me what is in your mind about the race tomorrow, because your contender Sebastian Vettel struggled a bit today, so tomorrow, first corner, great race it will be, how are you going approach the race?

LH: I've got some fans here from Iran; I just want to send you some love. Lots of Brits are out here I've got amazing support out here, which I'm grateful for and as I said, I'm so pumped with that. That's how qualifying should be. I'm just thankful that I was able to pull a lap together. The team did a great job to make our cars and put us out in the right times, so big thank you to them. Yeah, tomorrow is going to be a long, hard race but we are in the best position to start.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Lewis, let's start with you. That was a mighty lap. Given where you were yesterday after practice, were you surprised by the lap time?

LH: I wouldn't say I was surprised by the lap time. I hadn't really thought about what we could do here, but I would say definitely yesterday we were at a bit of a loss as we started in the wrong place and we had to make a lot of changes overnight. So to come in this morning not really knowing if those changes were going to be right or not... of course we've got full confidence in the team but it's still very difficult with these tyres as to whether you switch them on or not. But the changes... the guys did fantastic work and analysis again last night and we made fantastic changes to the car and it went in the right direction and it just progressed from there into P3 and into Qualifying. That lap was... obviously the lap before I had was very good and went into the last corner and it was so weird because literally just before I went into it I was going 'I'm up quite a lot here, just don't be greedy' and of course I was greedy and I locked up and I lost pole position there. A lot of pressure went onto getting that last run in with only a minute left basically. All weekend we've not been able to do a one-lap for us, some others had, but it was all or nothing, so I had to give it everything I had. Valtteri was just up ahead of me and I could see he was obviously on a great lap as well. I came across the line so happy because even if I was second it was still an awesome one, single lap, which I was really proud of. I just want to say a big thank you to the guys who worked all really super late last night to make sure the cars are where they are today. Yeah, excited. For me that lap was... my last lap in Montreal was pretty special but I think this one topped it.

Q: As I've already said, it was your fifth pole position of 2017, it's also the 66th pole position of your career, which means you've now surpassed the total of your hero Ayrton Senna. What does that mean to you?

LH: Well, I mean it's already an amazing thing to have matched him. The crazy thing is the hunger for another pole... I thought maybe once I matched him maybe it would fade but I was hungrier than ever today, even more hungry than I was before, so that's a good thing, and I'm grateful for that 'cos that's what drives me and yeah, hopefully I'll continue to grow and get better as a driver – and as a human being. That's the goal. Everyday.

Q: Valtteri, it was a great session by you. Just how clean was that final lap for you?

VB: Definitely not clean enough. I think Lewis had a really good lap and I didn't. I wasn't quite comfortable with the tyre temperatures. It was the first lap with the tyre set that we actually tried to go for, and just didn't get them to work as well as Lewis and, yeah, just couldn't get enough grip. All the running before that was good and before the red flag everything was going OK but yeah, so, disappointing in the end to lose the pole position. That was the target personally for me today but, what I'm really proud of is that we made quite big changes through the practice sessions. We were quite lost, to be honest, in the beginning and managed to turn that around so, for that, I'm really, really pleased – and

definitely for tomorrow we have, as a team, a great starting position and we're definitely going to have a good fight and try to get another one-two for the season.

Q: How much did that red flag with just three-and-a-half minutes of Q3 remaining affect your rhythm in the cockpit?

VB: It didn't really affect the rhythm. There was just kind of an extra opportunity. Before that... it was like two qualifying's really. We managed to go for another run and Lewis managed to get a better lap during that run than I, and that was it.

Q: Kimi, third on the grid, talk us through your session. Did you manage to get the maximum out of your car?

KR: I don't think we did. I think the biggest issue is the tyres. It's a bit on edge, they kind of work a little bit but kind of really switched them off, well enough, it's kind of... if you get them working well it's going to make a massive lap-time difference and you can actually push, and now you are a bit on edge all the time because it works or not. That's the most difficult challenge. The car is behaving well, once we get the tyres working but it was not easy. I think today has been a bit more tricky than yesterday. The last lap was better but it's still feels like if we could make the tyres work on one lap it would be a lot better. I think we got the maximum out of it with all the things. This is what we've got and tomorrow is another day. It's going to be a long race so away we go.

Q: Looking ahead to tomorrow do you think the Ferrari will be closer in terms of pace to the Mercedes than it was today?

KR: That's usually what we expect but who knows? I think it's a lot to do with the tyres and people who can make them work. The car feels good and with more laps in the race it's easier to make the tyres work and then it should be OK?

Q: Lewis, where do you think the biggest threat is going to come from tomorrow. Is it your team-mate, is it Ferrari? What are you expecting?

LH: Well, obviously Valtteri has been doing a fantastic job all weekend. He's shown great speed and today he did a great, great job and it was a nice battle with him to get the pole. I think the Ferraris... I've not seen the exact gap but as Kimi was saying, the tyre temperatures is a real big issue – which is unusual because that's something they don't usually struggle with, so that's an interesting factor, that we have to take into account. I think in the race it's a lot different when the car is heavy. I think it's going to be between... are the Red Bull's close? Who's close?

It's a silver front row and a red second row.

LH: OK, I think the Ferraris are going to be there. It's generally a one-stop race so it's going to be about consistency, it's going to be about how you look after these tyres. The strategy will definitely come into play but it's not easy. Considering how long that main straight is, it's not actually the easiest place to overtake, as you saw in the last race here. So, I think it's still going to be a close race and we've put ourselves in the best position as a team and hopefully we can utilise that tomorrow.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte . com) Lewis, do you agree that the greatest news for your team is the fact that you established the pole position on the first lap of the tyre? That you get the pole on the first lap of the tyre?

LH: Yeah, that's a new find for us. We have tried all weekend to get the one lap but it was, like, for both of us it was impossible for us, we're struggling on multiple laps to get the tyres

to work so of course for me, imagine when I was on the pole lap on the first run which was only going to be the main run, and made a mistake and obviously lost the time and we're second and then knowing that we were only going to have that short amount of time and thinking of the pressure and it's so easy to lock up, make a mistake when these tyres are cold, do we get the temperature into the tyre, unlikely but somehow where there's a will there's a way. Hope is a powerful thing. I think I just went in with a lot of hope and it worked, just used every tool that I possibly had and more to get the temperature in, get the gap and it was do or die and it was really about if there was ever a time of need to be perfect then that was the time. Every now and then you call upon it and you don't actually extract it but I think it was a perfect lap.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Kimi, how important will the first corner be for you and Seb? Are you going for a risky move and are you confident in the starting system of your car?

KR: I think the start should be OK. Obviously it depends on many things, we cannot plan most of the things, so we need to make a good jump, luckily I'm on the inside so that's a good thing and then see how it pans out as always. It's pointless to make some plans because it only needs one car to be in a different place than you expect, you have to figure it out when it comes. I think it should be a better race for us but who knows? It will be a tricky race and we will try to make the best out of it.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) To the two Mercedes drivers, did the red flag change the plan or were you always going to do two runs with different sets?

LH: That's something you just have to think about for a long time and make a guess. There were two options. I think timewise it was very difficult to do two runs so I don't know what other people's plans were but it was definitely... particularly as it is so hard to get temperature into the tyres, the easiest thing was just to stay out. But that's why, then had the mistake then the red flag; it really threw a spanner, a big spanner in the works so much to my surprise and excitement we were able to get the lap which was not expected.

VB: We were not planning for another run so it was just try to go for that one lap which was not bad.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Can you tell us if there's some time to gain in the red corner to enter the castle? Are there are many different lines or did you try that in FP3 or is there only one line to go through there?

LH: Which corner? Going up before the hill? There's pretty much just one line, I think. It's very narrow there, it's quite slow and it just depends on how much kerb your car can absorb. I guess the easiest thing is to avoid it as much as you can.

Q: Kimi, did you experiment with lines through there?

KR: Not an awful lot, just try to go as straight as I can, stay off the wall. No more than that.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) Valtteri, still talking about turn eight: did you feel the impact on your run and were you confident there was no damage whatsoever after that light touch?

VB: It's plastic wall in the end and if you touch it a little bit it's no... I could feel it a little bit but it was not such a big impact that I thought there was anything wrong with the car, so it was OK. Obviously we are going close through there as well as in other places but in a way that is less risky because it's flexing a little bit.

Ends