



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2017 FIA Formula One World Championship

Australian Grand Prix

Post-Race Press Conference Transcript

DRIVERS

1 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

2 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

3 – Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)

PODIUM INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Mark Webber)

Q: Sebastian, all those thousands and thousands of hours of work from the whole team over winter testing, you guys have shown the form early in the season, massive victory, how do you feel?

Sebastian VETTEL: Unbelievable. Thank you everyone, it was a fantastic grand prix. It was quite, in a positive way, when I was coming back to the pits and there were people running on track going wild with Ferrari flags. It was unbelievable. Thanks for the support. Like you said, it was what we needed. The whole team has been working really, really hard. The guys didn't get much sleep here and back in the factory. The car is really behaving well, incredible to drive, a beautiful day. Thank you.

Q: We'll move across to second place. Lewis Hamilton, who did everything right, he did everything right. Come on, Australia. Absolutely world class is Lewis. On pole position, phenomenal start, mate. And for me, I think the strategy didn't quite work out for you today. Did you have to pit? Why was it so early? And obviously for you then to get the race victory back off Sebastian was going to be very difficult from then onwards.

Lewis HAMILTON: Yeah, definitely. Firstly, a big congratulations to Ferrari and to Sebastian, they did an amazing job this weekend. It's been a great weekend for us and the team, but just in the race, I struggled with the tyres at the end. I had to pit a lot earlier than these guys because I just ran out of grip. Pitted and I got stuck behind one of the Red Bulls and sometimes that's just the way it goes. But overall, a great race and good points for the team and I mean look at this crowd. Thank you for coming out today and it's always such a great place for us to be.

Q: Well done Lewis and great sportsmanship there and I wouldn't expect anything different from a world champion. Valtteri, first time up here with Mercedes, how does it feel? Big weekend for you, no errors, talk us through it.

Valtteri BOTTAS: Yeah, obviously first race with the team and really want to thank everyone. The team has been so welcoming. We worked really hard for this first race to be ready. Everything went nice and smoothly but it's just that the red guys are a bit too quick, so that means we need to work harder. We are definitely ready for that. I am ready for that. This is just the start, starting with a podium, we can improve it from here, so I'll look forward to the next few races.

Well done mate, we'll finish with Sebastian Vettel. Your 43rd victory. The last time I saw this kind of atmosphere was with both our hero, Michael Schumacher. So emotionally for you it must be massive for you to have all these Italian fans down here in Melbourne, in Italy and around the world, winning the first race of the season and taking the championship fight to this man.

SV: Yeah, it's a long, long way ahead. For now I think we're just over the moon. I think it's been a hard winter and an incredible race today. At the start I wasn't entirely happy. I think I was a little bit too nervous.

I was surprised. I thought you were going to do it.

SV: I had a bit of wheel slip off the line. Lewis was a tiny bit better and then I had to take care of Valtteri in Turn One, but then I had a decent exit. But after that I was really trying to keep the pressure on to make sure that they get that message that we are here and we're here to fight. Obviously got a bit lucky when Lewis came out in traffic but still we were hanging in there, the tyres were still good, the car was working, so excellent job. And as I said, the support around the track: I had a look with 20 laps to go left and right and especially last sector they were always on fire with the flags, so it was really great. Yeah, thank you.

Q: And a quick word on the beast: what are the cars like now compared to last year?

SV: Ah, you could push much harder. Usually the first couple of laps you were pushing last year and then the tyres were dropping off. Now the tyres are still dropping off a bit but you can keep pushing. You can keep braking at the same point. The car is screaming "more, more, more!" Also, at the end with the harder tyres there is hardly any degradation so it's really good fun, especially in the fast corners. You could keep going forever, it was a great race, and I enjoyed it a lot.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Congratulations Sebastian, your second win here in Australia and the 43rd of your Formula One career. Great start to your year. Talk us through the conversation on the radio after Lewis made that early pit stop. What were deliberations in terms of the strategy? And when you came in and went out on the soft tyres, to try to warm that thing up, you had quite a bit of action behind you, tell us about how tense that got?

SV: I think we realised early on that we had decent pace. I was able to follow Lewis and then I think after 10 or 12 laps he was really pushing, trying to open a gap, and he succeeded a bit. I was struggling to keep up, but still hanging in there. And I knew if there was anything to happen around the first stop then I need to be right behind him to either put them under pressure or have a chance to jump into the pits earlier to pass him through the stop. Once it was clear that he went in, there was no point to follow. We stayed out, the tyres were still holding on and the pace looked alright. I wasn't aware of the traffic situation at that point and I just tried to calm down a bit because I was quite hot on the previous laps, but still keep the pace up and hope for an 'overcut' so to say. Then I was told he was facing some traffic, which I didn't know who and how fast the traffic was and whether he would clear but I just tried to hang in there. And then obviously we saw the gap, went into the pits and it worked. It was very tight. I lost a lot of time on the in-lap because I had a lapped car, I think it was a Williams. I lost about a second so I was a bit angry but that's how it goes sometimes and still it was just enough and I had Max right behind me and Lewis as well, so that was quite tight. Turn One was a bit slippery, but I managed to get a decent exit and a decent run down to Turn Three. I just held the inside. I knew that Max would probably try something but I just kept in front. That was obviously crucial for our race. I tried to push for as hard as I could for the one or two [laps] Max was still out because he was slower on the older tyres, to open a bit of a gap and control the race. The car was really good, working well and I could control the gap and the pace, going through traffic and just bringing it home. It was very pleasant. A different race to last year, where you had to manage a lot. Now I think it was a bit more raw, especially the beginning. Even if it wasn't a wheel-to-wheel fight I could see Lewis was pushing really hard. There were some corners where he was on top of me and other corners where I was catching up. It was nice that we could just push and race to let's say the first stop. Then obviously we got a bit lucky with him facing some traffic. But equally we pushed him to the pits and did well. Otherwise, if he had a big lead after 15 laps then he could stay out, control the race and pit into free air. We did a very good race. I'm very happy with the calls today. It worked brilliantly and as I said, big thanks to the team. We say this all the time but I think if you're not part of the team I think it's difficult to realise but what this team has done in the last six months has been really tough, rough as well, not easy to manage the whole team but I think the new car, in general... obviously today is fantastic, a big reward a big relief for everyone. It's just the tip of the iceberg. The foundation has been laid a

long time ago and really proud to see it coming together. This is just one race. I'm sure we'll have a great night, we'll create... we did already, but we will create some great memories tonight and we'll take it from there. I think we enjoy what we do, the spirit is great in the team and that's for us to keep it up.

Q: Congratulations. Lewis, a lot of pressure on you at the start but the getaway looked pretty flawless so talk us through that. Then Sebastian said he felt he pushed you into the pits and you came in relatively early, lap 18, did you have to come in?

LH: We had a really good start, which is fantastic; it's good to have a good getaway. After that, I was struggling with the grip from the get-go. Sebastian was able to always answer in terms of lap time and the majority of the time do faster lap times and then towards the end I got a bit in traffic and the car started to overheat the tyres and I was struggling with grip and it was to the point that I needed to come in. Plus, the gap was closing up and I was sliding around. So it was my call because otherwise he probably would have come by anyway. So then I came in and then I got obviously stuck in traffic, which is a little bit unfortunate but that's motor racing. But a big congratulations to Sebastian and Ferrari. I know it's been a long time coming for them to get a result like this. It shows we are going to have a race on our hands, which we are very happy to have, which is great for the fans. Unfortunately it's harder than ever to get close to cars, which is a shame. We can't even have a close battle but who knows, maybe in the future we will.

Q: Valtteri, so we learned that Ferrari's pace from testing is real. What did you learn this weekend about your new car, your new team and where you yourself can improve going forward?

VB: Well, first of all I think it is a start. There are always things that could have gone better but it is a good starting point for the journey for me driving for Mercedes. I think the main things were obviously yesterday, the qualifying, I didn't get everything perfect but it was the first qualifying with the team and this track really hasn't been fantastic for me ever in qualifying. But there's a long season ahead. Today, I think the race was good. As a team I think we did a good job with the car we have. I think Ferrari was quicker today, there's no doubt about that. They have obviously done a great job and a better job for this race. From my side the main thing today was the first stint. I struggled quite a lot with the ultrasoft tyres. It felt like I was just sliding around, always missing front grip, rear grip, especially after like 10 laps of the first stint. That wasn't easy. But once we put the soft tyres on it was quite a good feeling with the car and the car was behaving really nicely. It was really nice to drive. But it was a bit too late and still missing a bit of pace. Overall, I think not a disastrous first race weekend with the team but I do have my points I will take and I can do better next time and I look forward to that.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Sera) To Sebastian. Can you tell us please which was the road map that the team had to follow to achieve this victory and how much is it a surprise to be on the top now?

SV: I think for all of us it is a positive surprise. I think the road we followed is pretty simple: we didn't look left; we didn't look right; we didn't look forward; we didn't look back. I think we focussed on what we had to do at the time. Obviously there has been a lot of up and down, left and right the last 12 months but I think, especially the last couple of months, things calmed down and we just tried to do our job. Obviously there has been a big reshuffle but, as I said, people are happy, happy to work, working with each other. That's the key. At the end there's no shortcut, you need to get the job done and invest a lot of hours thinking. Passion, I think, is a great driver back in the factory, also here. I think up and down the pitlane the amount of hours the guys are covering is mad. You need to love what you're doing but especially... I said it years ago joining Ferrari, there seems to be an extra passion just working for the Prancing Horse and, I think, just focussing on ourselves really has been the big difference. I think a key to deliver a great car, which we obviously have. The speeds look alright, both on the straights and in the corners we are competitive. As I said, I was able to stay with Lewis. They had a little bit the upper hand yesterday but I knew, y'know, we had much better balance yesterday than on Friday so I knew in the race anything can happen. It's the first race of the season, I'm surprised we didn't have a Safety Car but anything can happen. I wanted to stay in there and make it clear we had the pace. It was nice to see that we have and, as I say, to get the job done.

Q: (Leon Alepidis – F1fan) Question to all of you, now that you have completed a decent sum of laps with 2017 cars around the Circuit de Catalunya and Albert Park, for which track and individual turn are you most looking forward to?

SV: I don't know if I can get all the races together! Probably Silverstone. I think with that amount of grip and downforce. Probably Suzuka as well later on in the year. Also I guess the cars will be even faster from what they are now. So, yeah, I think that would be quite nice. I'm looking forward to that.

Lewis?

LH: Yes, Silverstone, I agree.

Valtteri?

VB: Yeah, I think all the quick ones: Spa; Suzuka; Silverstone will be nice. But I think even street circuits will be a bit more challenging I think – not that it wasn't challenging before, but with these cars it will be nice.

Q: (Lennart Bernke – Bild) Seb, you are always talking about a different spirit inside the team and how you have changed from the last year. Can you tell us how exactly you have managed that or what happened inside the team that made the spirit different this year?

SV: I didn't manage anything, I'm not the team manager so you need to ask other people. In the end it was clear that when we started off two years ago, three years ago that there's a lot to do, a lot to reshuffle. I think the team was at a low. The spirit was very good in the first year, in 2015. I think last year was a very good year. Obviously not for the results but in terms of growing the team. It's good also to hit some lows and go through difficult periods – even though it pretty much sucks – but if you look race-by-race it's not great but seeing what happens in the background is important. I think people always kept the belief and, as I said, the last six months have been very calm. We have done our work and it starts to slowly pay off. Now it peaks and we are at the top of this grand prix but that's a small achievement. If you look at who we are up against, I think Mercedes has been phenomenal the last couple of years: incredible team effort, incredibly by both drivers. I think Valtteri just fitted in and kept doing a fantastic job for the team. No weak link from the outside, not that we can see. They will be the ones to beat but for sure today I'm just happy and we take it as a team. You saw the guys: they were smiling, singing, so I'm sure we'll see more of that tonight.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action / Speed Sport) For all three. The first time with the new clutch rules at the start. None of you lost a position but how did your start go?

Lewis you've already dealt with that. Sebastian?

SV: I had a bit of wheel slip. It's tough, obviously, it's a very fine line. You try to guess where to go. If you get it right it feels fantastic; if not it's... yeah, you're not getting the maximum out of it. Hopefully a better start in China.

Valtteri?

VB: I think mine was quite average. Not the best possible for these conditions but not too bad. So yeah, pretty happy with that all obviously. Would have been nice to jump at least one car but yeah, it was good. Definitely been working hard on the starts and it seems to pay off but for sure we can improve on that.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, in the Championship, is this the most important podium for you so far and was that the most physical also?

VB: Most important podium... I don't know. For sure it is good to start with a podium this season with a new team. I think every position is important for the Championship itself. So it is too early to say if it is the most important. Most physical? I think one of the most physical. This is not one of the most physical tracks – but the new cars definitely make it harder. But yeah, based on what I felt today, some of the circuits will be quite a challenge but I was OK today. It's nice to feel a bit more physical effect and a little bit more fatigue. I like it.

Q: (Chris Medland – Racer) Lewis, just saw you stretching out your left shoulder there a bit. Any discomfort after that race? And also, was it as physical as you guys expected? More? Less? With these new cars over a race distance.

LH: No, I'm just stretching. It was more physical but it was no problem for me and doesn't look like it was for these guys either.

SV: It's not the most physical circuit in the year. I think later on it will be very interesting. Here is very technical. So, first couple of laps, at least for me, were very intense. Obviously it's easy to have an error, get

something wrong under braking, go a bit wide etcetera. Later on I had a bit of a gap and I could control it, and therefore it was a bit easier.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Seb, Ferrari won the first race of the season last time seven years ago. Is this the biggest chance for the team and are you going to refresh your song compilation for victory?

SV: Was that in Bahrain? Yeah. What was the second part of your question? I was thinking about which race it was.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Are you going to refresh your victory song compilation?

SV: Ah, no, no, no, no. I'm not a good singer otherwise I wouldn't be here. I'm pretty sure I will think of something if we're lucky enough to repeat what we did today but no plans. I think it came very spontaneously now two years ago. We'll see. I think that's a very nice problem to have, to worry about which song to sing but for now I think we're very happy with how the race went today.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Lewis, in the second part of the race you seem to have struggled to close the gap to Sebastian even when you had a free track in front of you. At one point you were asking the team 'is there damage to the floor?' Has there been anything with your car or were you just struggling with the tyres?

LH: Not that I know of. In the second part of the race... I had stopped about eight laps before these guys so I just didn't know how long the tyres were going to go so I just took it easy and at the end, obviously, I got more pace but even if I did close the gap, you can't overtake so... and I may not have made it to the end of the race having stopped so early.

Q: (Paul Gover – News Ltd) Sebastian, the last time Ferrari won here in Australia was Kimi and he went on to be World Champion. Do you have any feeling at all yet about how the championship might go for you this year?

SV: No, not interested at this point to be honest. Obviously I was very fortunate so far in my racing career. I've had some good races and good years but definitely the first race is not the time to look at the table. As I've said before, you really have to go step by step. It's good to know that we have a great car but it's just the beginning: new regulations, new generations of cars so there will be a lot of progress. These guys have proved to be the ones to beat for the last couple of years, more and more so. We know that they have a great engine but also they had a great car the last couple of years and they made good steps forward so we are the ones who need to catch up but as I said, for today I am just very happy and for sure whatever happens this year, the race today doesn't hurt.

Q: (Phil Branagan – Auto Action) Lewis, we heard some of the radio communication after your tyre stop; there was a conversation about a switch to plan B and then a switch back to plan A. Did something happen in the car to prompt that change of strategy during the second half of the race?

LH: Strategy A is a one-stop, strategy B was a two-stop and I was in second so they were looking at alternatives of other ways to get me back to first.

Q: (Andre Leslie – DPA) Lewis has now suggested a couple of times that it's very tough to overtake. Can I ask Sebastian and Valtteri if that is what you guys are feeling and can you explain to us why?

VB: I think it is definitely... you know even in the years before it's been difficult to follow once you get within one and a half, one second just because of the turbulent air which messes up the aerodynamics of the car and that way we don't have that much grip. Now, as more of the grip from the car is relying on the aero it's a bigger effect and the cars are wider so I think there's more turbulent air so now I think it's more like two seconds or even two and a half because you actually feel quite a big effect from the car in front and that way in the corners it's more difficult to follow. Obviously you have a bigger slipstream on the straight but if you can't follow in the corners it's tricky to get a slipstream. That's the problem.

SV: Nothing to add.

Q: (Chris Medland – Racer) Lewis and Seb, the two of you have been the dominant drivers of the past decade in terms of World Championships but you've rarely had a year when you have been able to fight

each other in fairly equal machinery. Sat here now, knowing that you've both got cars that are closely matched, is there a bit of anticipation between the two of you to go head to head?

SV: Great respect for Lewis. I think he had an amazing debut here ten years ago. I still remember his move around the outside, when he made other people look a bit silly. I think since then, since day one, he's proved that he's very very quick, very talented but also working hard. I think it was a matter of time before he won the World Championship which I tried to stop him doing in Brazil, as hard as I could, in my Toro Rosso. Great memories - but I don't remember the last ten years. Roughly we've been racing each other but if I have the same outcome as you had on that day...

LH: I'm going to get you back.

SV: Yeah, to cut it short, I have great respect. He's proven to be one of the quickest drivers on the grid and for sure I would love to have a close battle. Obviously right now it looks like we have equal machinery. I hope it stays that way and then we will see how it turns out but it's obviously a lot of fun to race for victories and a lot of fun to race against the best.

LH: Yeah, I second that. Incredible amount of respect for Sebastian and what he's achieved in his career. It's been a privilege to be racing in an era with him and now finally at a period of time when we can actually have a real race. I wish we could race a lot closer in the cars that we have today but still I think the fact that we are similar pacewise, it's going to be a very very hard slog this season I think. It's going to be physically and mentally demanding but as Sebastian said, racing the best is what Formula One is all about and ultimately makes you work that much harder, having to raise the bar and I'm looking forward to that.

Ends