



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2017 FIA Formula One World Championship Belgian Grand Prix Saturday Post-Qualifying Press Conference Transcript 26.08.17

DRIVERS

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GRID INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Will Buxton)

Q: Lewis, Ross Brawn just wants to have a couple of words with you to congratulate you on this achievement.

Ross BRAUN: I'm here to deliver a very special message from Corinna Schumacher and the Schumacher family, who want to congratulate you on equalling Michael's record and as they said, Michael always said records are there to be beaten, so they want to send their very special thanks. Congratulations, Lewis, well done.

Q: So, Lewis, that was some lap. It was mighty. Tell all the fans, tell everyone at home, how good does it feel to hook one up like that around here?

Lewis HAMILTON: Well, first of all, I want to give a big shout out to all the fans here, they're always amazing here every year we come here. There are a lot of Brits, a lot of people from the Netherlands, from all over, so thank you so much for coming out. I can't believe it. First of all, a big thank you to my tea, Ross [Brawn] was a big part of me being here at this team, so the success we have had he is much a part of that as well. But the team have done an amazing job. Valtteri did a great job to be up here ahead of the Ferraris, an amazing feeling. This is one of my favourite circuits, so to come here and put a lap together like that, it's a dream. I've got the best job in the world, so I'm just grateful to be here.

Q: And to equal Michael Schumacher's record on the track where he made his debut, the track where he took his first grand prix victory is something special too.

LH: It is and to hear the message that Ross just gave, I just have to say a big thank you and pray for Michael and his family all the time. I've had the privilege of racing with him, from karting days in Kerpen to on the track and always admired him, and still do today, so I'm just honoured to be up there with him now in the poles, but he will still be one of the greatest of all time.

Q: Congratulations. Seb, that was some lap at the end to get on the front row, you needed that didn't you?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, it was the right time. I had a very good feeling in Q1, the get go was really go but then I lost that feeling a little bit, I had a bit light front end, especially then through sector two with the medium-, high-speed corners. I was lacking a little bit of response. But the last lap the car was a little bit more alive, immediately I could feel it turning into Turn 1. And then I have to also admit that I was a bit lucky with Kimi, he had to abort his lap but he gave me a very, very nice tow, which I think made it a bit more comfortable with Valtteri. Obviously it's very important. Good position today, great job from the team, very happy, so looking forward to the race.

Q: We know these guys are worried about your long-run pace. Are you confident in it?

SV: They should be! So far it has been looking pretty good, so I hope we can keep it up. The car, on one lap, I thought all weekend it was a bit trickier to get it together. Consecutive laps with high fuel I felt really good, so let's see what we can do with the strategy tomorrow as well, but for sure Mercedes will be quick. But, we don't have to hide. We are on the front row for a reason. We have the speed and we should have it in the race.

Q: Congratulations. Valtteri, are you annoyed that he just pipped you at the end there? As he said, he got a tow from Kimi coming up the back and without that it might have been an all-Mercedes front row.

Valtteri BOTTAS: Yeah, of course it would have been nice to be one-two tomorrow, but it's not a bad starting place. I was aiming for pole today, but to be honest Lewis has been doing an absolutely perfect job all weekend and for some reason I've been struggling and I just haven't been able to get close enough, so we'll need to investigate why. That's something we'll need to understand but already my thoughts are for tomorrow.

Q: Everyone is focusing on those two guys for the title, but you are in the hunt for the title as much as both of them. How much do you want the win tomorrow to prove to everybody, as much as to them, that you're here, you're fighting and it's as much yours as it is theirs?

VB: Getting my first couple of wins this year you just want more, so of course that is going to be the mission for me tomorrow and main thing as a team is that we get a strong result. But I'll do everything I can and I don't mind if they are being looked at more than me, I'll just keep doing my job and trying to get better and better.

Q: Can't wait for tomorrow. Lewis, you've got the championship leader on the front row with you, you've got your team-mate inches behind you and he's very much in the hunt for this title as well, really the second half of the season couldn't be starting any better for Formula One could it?

LH: Well, we had a great holiday and we've come back feeling fresh and this is the perfect way to start the weekend. The second half is going to be tough for all of us, the team, the people back at the factory, but we're geared up for the second half, so I hope that we can bring it.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Lewis, many congratulations, a day I'm sure you've been looking forward to for some time. The magic number – 68 – you've equalled the all-time record of Michael Schumacher. And what a place to do it – a track that is so synonymous with Schumacher, and with a record fastest ever lap of track. Your feelings?

LH: Yeah, it's a special day, definitely. To be honest, I knew it was on the horizon and I knew at some stage I'd be getting that 68th pole but I really hadn't thought about it very much. I didn't apply pressure, I was like "it could come soon, it could take a long time", but now being there, it's an unusual place to be. I remember coming here in 1996, my first grand prix, and watching Michael come by out of Turn 1 and the engine just shook my rib cage – it was incredible. And that was when my love for the sport took another step. And to think that God knows how long later I'm now equal to him on poles, it's very surreal and very much a humbling experience, particularly knowing that Michael is such a legend. It's an incredible feat that he achieved and I feel very proud to be up there with him.

Q: It's a special day generally in numbers – 4.2 seconds faster this year's pole compared to last years. The average generally this year has been around 2-2.5s, can you break it down for us why this weekend is so far much faster around this track with these cars?

LH: It's a medium-high downforce circuit so it's to do this engine being more powerful than it was last year, for all of us. We've got a lot more downforce, so the speed that we are going through the corners, it's so much faster than it was last year. It's a longer circuit, there's more time at full throttle,

so DRS counts for more than it perhaps has done at other places. A combination of those I would assume. Yeah, it feels amazing around this track. It always does, but to have a car as we have here and the set-up I was able to work with my engineers, to achieve the balance was great, and to really be able to lean on the car around this circuit, I've never had such a feeling. Pouhon, Turn 10, was nearly flat, which is insane, I've definitely never experienced that in my time whilst in Formula One. We're just like Ricky Bobby – we want to go faster, and it is a great feeling when you do.

Q: Congratulations, very special day. Sebastian, it was important for Mercedes today that they get two cars on the front row and it was very important for you that they didn't. It took you a while to get there, so under the circumstances would you class that a very special lap on your behalf?

SV: Not just on my behalf. I think I had a little bit of help from a friend. Kimi had to abort his lap and he was very generous in giving me a tow in the last sector and that got me about two tenths so that helped and it made it a bit more comfortable with Valtteri looking at the result. Q1 I was really happy, the car was amazing. Q2 the main job was to get through, and then Q3 first lap I was missing a little bit the feel for the front. The second run in Q3 was better in that regard. So I was very happy with the last lap and as I said obviously with a little bit of a help it was quite nice. It was then tricky getting into the last corner, because knowing that you arrive so much faster with the tow and braking is never easy, it's easy to miss it for the last corner. But I managed to get it right and to get it across the line so that was useful. The pace has been good this weekend. I think less for one lap, more so for long runs, so let's see what we can do tomorrow.

Q: Your long-run pace yesterday looked very promising compared to the Mercedes so does that give you some hope for tomorrow. There is a strange start to this race as well, because you don't necessarily always want to be the first car down the straight in the opening stages as there is an opportunity for P2 to get ahead?

SV: Yeah that's right. Well, we'll see when we get to that. I think the start is still very important and you try to do your best there and try to take it from there. I think the long run pace looked good yesterday, also this morning. Obviously we didn't do a lot of laps overall this weekend, it's a long lap, so the amount of laps you get is not that much compared to other tracks. But, as I said, the car was really good, especially for the race, so now we hope to confirm that. Tomorrow will be a tough day though, I mean start, first laps, as you said big straights, tows and in general strategy around here so we will see what happens.

Q: Coming to you Valtteri, you had second place, again it took you a while to get to that point, and then obviously Sebastian took it away from you. He's explained that the tow had a part to play in it – but did you feel you were on your A-game today?

VB: Yeah, first of all congrats to Lewis for the pole and for the 69th [68th] it's a mega-achievement. I've only got two so some way to go. This whole weekend for some reason I've been not really close enough to be able to challenge for that pole. For sure Lewis has been really on it but I'm slightly confused why I've not been able to get quite close enough. Still need to find some answers for me. The balance of the car has been feeling really good. Been just really lacking overall grip and that way, losing a lot of time in the high-speed corners in Sector Two. So, yeah, was always going to be a bit tricky to challenge for the pole, unfortunately. Would have been nice to at least be second but Sebastian got ahead. But still, second row and I'm sure as a team we can do good tomorrow.

Q: As we were just saying, the Ferrari, the long run pace on the ultrasoft yesterday and again the long run pace this morning looked pretty handy, but what was striking about you guys is that your soft tyre pace is pretty strong. Presumably, strategy-wise, you're counting on that tomorrow to get in front of Sebastian before the chequered flag.

VB: Yeah, it is going to be a long race and here we know always anything can happen and you never know with the weather as well. It's going to be a day full of opportunities for me as well, starting third. Probably going to see different behaviour with the different cars, with the different tyre compounds. So, should be interesting.

Q: (Angelique Belokopytov – Autodigest) First of all, congratulations Lewis for this special day, special record too, so question to all three of you, could you please share with us a special memorable moment shared with Michael please?

SV: It's not fair to pick one moment. I think the fact we're both from the same country makes it easier to in a way get closer to him. I know him for a very, very long time, the age of six or seven I met him for the very first time, he was handing over the trophies to the kids at the go-kart track in Kerpen, his home track, not far away from here. Yeah, it was massive. We were more than a hundred kids and he took the time to shake all our hands, hand over the trophies, so as a child I think that was indescribable. Obviously he was my hero. I had his posters everywhere in my room and he was pretty much the only guy I followed when I was young. So, yeah, big inspiration and we then I think we had a lot of good moments, a lot of fun moments. As a child it's different, you're star-struck in a way. It's my hero, what do I say? I don't know. And then later on I got to know him and yeah, we really got a long. He's a great guy, good fun and I think the admiration for his skills is the same as day one. We shared a lot of good moments at the Race of Champions together and even if you can argue about the format and so on, still you have to drive different cars, adapt and the way he drives a go-kart is... I don't know... it's just so different to everybody else I've ever seen. So, I don't know how I look from the outside but I guess I don't look that, so yeah, many moments. Sober and not sober. It's hard to pick one.

Lewis?

LH: I think I already mentioned earlier on my find and probably favourite memory of seeing Michael come by but just like Sebastian, I grew up watching him and I would play him, I would always be... particularly when he was in a Ferrari, when I was racing in computer games I was Michael a lot, the majority of the time. Having the privilege, I raced with him in Kerpen many, many years ago and yeah, just trying to think of the best moment. I've always had good, fond memories of him. Another really good one was Abu Dhabi, just before he left. I plucked up the courage to go ask if he would swap helmets with me. He was welcoming and did, so yeah, that's definitely one of the coolest things in my house.

Valtteri?

VB: I remember watching on TV all the battles he used to have in the 1990s with Häkkinen. That was really good to watch and remember how excited I was every Sunday morning. Sunday afternoon, waking up and knowing it's going to be another proper battle on track. And I also remember, it's not even so far ago, 2012, when I did Friday practice for Williams and, for the first time I was the same time on track with Michael. For me, that was quite special.

Q: (Mike Doodson – Honorary) Sebastian, you mentioned Kimi's generous gesture to you. We didn't see it on TV and I was wondering if it happened spontaneously or if you had to position yourself on the track or did that just happen by good chance?

SV: As far as I understand, he had a mistake on his last flying lap, his last attempt, so it wasn't planned; he wanted obviously to finish that lap but when he, I guess when he did the mistake and just because of where we were positions, he obviously cruised back to the pits. I guess the team didn't even tell him anything. I think he just saw a red car in the mirror and thought 'I'll hand him a tow,' which was quite nice. It was obviously quite useful for me – but it wasn't planned. I saw some other teams playing around with tows previously in qualifying – but usually it's one of those things you can't really plan so we tend to stay away from it. To answer your question, I think it was very spontaneous.

Q: (Ysef Harding – Xiro Xone News) First off, congratulations Lewis. You went into Beast Mode in Q3, you talked about that moment with Michael. How does it feel that now, you creating this moment and building this legacy of yours, that you're inspiring that next generation, who will sit here say the same thing, that they were inspired by what you did here today?

LH: Well, thank you. I think it's a good question. I've not really sat and thought too much about it because obviously I'm here right now – but it is the case, y'know. Many, many years from now they'll

be some kid, some grown-up sitting here... maybe it's not many, many years from now –

Sebastian's not far behind on the poles, could catch-up, but yeah, I think it's amazing, it's a real privilege for all of us to be up here, knowing that even currently that there are kids, even adults that are looking up to us for inspiration in their daily lives but also setting goals. For me, I always try to put out positive energy. I think success comes a lot with a real positive frame of mind. It's very easy for all of us to be negative on occasions – but the most important thing is to wake-up in the morning and try to find that positive energy, wherever you get it from, and apply that to whatever it is that you're trying to work or achieve. I think we're all born as stars with the opportunity to do something special. It's all about finding and using that positive energy.

Q: (Livio Orriochio – globoesporte.com) Lewis, in your last set of tyres, you didn't get the best in the T1, the first part of the track, but you did a wonderful T2. Did you change the car in the final part of the qualifying, the Q3?

LH: You mean the last lap? No. Well, you can't change the car, the only thing I could do is wing but that doesn't affect the first sector. I was up as far as I'm aware. My dashboard, it said I was up 0.8 of a tenth, or something like that, nearly a tenth in sector one, so I'm not really sure what you're relating to. Maybe it was down but my delta said it was up. But I didn't change anything. I did pretty much the same sector – but the second sector particularly and a little bit in the last sector was really where I made the gains. That middle sector, Turn Ten, it's nearly flat, as I mentioned. That was pretty awesome.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, how crucial is it tomorrow to beat at least one of these guys behind... I mean in front of you, for your championship hopes?

VB: Hopefully at least one behind, so I'm not last. Yeah, for sure we're all fighting for the title. Obviously it is nine races to do so there are a massive amount of points still available. So this is only one race but every race counts. For sure try to gain any positions possible. For us as a team, we know that it is a strong circuit for us. So we really need to capitalise. We want, as a team, to be one-two. That's going to be the mission.

Q: (Bas Holtkamp – Raceexpress.com) Question to Lewis. Now you've achieved this goal for the most pole positions ever – almost, you've equalled Michael – what is your next goal. Do you have a magic number in mind? Like, are you going for the 80 or 100 or whatever?

LH: No, I haven't... I generally take my days one days at a time so I haven't planned for anything further than for what I already have – but I plan on being here for some time so I will work towards whatever number it could possibly be. When I came across the line on that slow-down lap, it was a real moment to reflect on my team, who did such a great job, who have worked so hard through the year to enable me, to give me the car of my dreams. That's the car that we all... that's the car that us three up here have dreamed of racing. There's so many people back at the factory, and people watching TV just don't even have the even the faintest idea. There's so much work that goes on back home, there's so many people. Every day I go to the factory I find a new little workshop that's underneath the stairs, and I've been walking past that for five years and didn't even know it was there – and five people come out of that little space and they'd have been there for 20 years. So, yeah, I've been really fortunate to work with some really great people and I'm just really just a small link in the chain but I'm proud of my link in the chain and I plan to continue to propel this car and this team forward. I believe that we can get many more – so that's the goal. Sky's the limit really.

Q:(Flavio Vanetti – Corriera della Sera) Sebastian, we know that you signed a long term contract and I would like to know if in some way it's the same trust that Michael had towards the team? And secondly, if you had any moment in which you had doubts about Ferrari and maybe you thought to quit the team?

SV: I don't know what trust Michael had. I never actually spoke with him about that. Yeah, unfortunately, as you all know I didn't have the opportunity. I think he would have been one of the first people to ask back in 2014 and probably have to consult also you know, now in terms of... I

don't know, through the course of this year for the future, whatever. I love this team, I love the people who are working for this brand. Obviously Lewis touched on the effort that is going into building a Formula One car. I think for most of the teams it's probably the same but still I believe Ferrari has something unique, something that other teams don't have. People talk about a legend, to me it appears that this legend is still alive because of the people who work for it, day in, day out. I'm sure you have been to Maranello, probably most of you haven't but if you walk down the streets in Maranello, the presence of Ferrari is huge but if you see the people working at Ferrari and meet them, then it's even bigger, what they carry inside them, the passion for the brand and that's I think and I'm convinced, allowing every single one of them to go an extra step compared to other people, other teams. That's my conviction and extremely grateful to be part of that family. In a way, it was a no-brainer to continue. We haven't yet achieved what we what we wanted to achieve but things are looking pretty good and obviously we have a long road ahead of us.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – Associated Press) Lewis, if you take pole position at Monza, you'll break Michael's record. Would that be the ultimate tribute to him, the ultimate place to do it in front of all the Ferrari fans to pay tribute to his greatness?

LH: I'm not really sure whether that, how... my next step, how that applies to anyone else. If I dedicate it to him, yeah, could be the best tribute being that he had so much success at Ferrari and in Italy. Yeah, I've not really thought of it to be honest. Don't have an answer for you there.

Q: (Graham Harris – Motorsport Monday, Motorsport Week.com) Sebastian, speculation before you signed was that you were going to possibly sign a one year deal with Ferrari. Now they've come out and announced that you've signed at least three years. Do you see yourself ending your career at Maranello?

SV: Well, I don't know, since we learned last year that these things can happen fairly quickly and spontaneously you never know. But yeah, obviously now I don't need to think and spend time about thinking about the future so that's clear and then I think we cross that bridge when we get to it. It's a long time, a lot of things can happen so we will see. Also then you can never say never. You retire and then, I don't I know, might get bored, come back. We may see Nico back in a couple of years, who knows? Michael obviously decided to come back at some point because he loved racing but that's all far far away so not really a topic.

Q: (Ben Hunt – The Sun) Sebastian, yesterday you said that there would be no news on your contract for two weeks. I just wanted to know what changed in 24 hours for you?

SV: Nothing personal, I don't like the Sun. I saw a clip yesterday of a funny interview with Jurgen Klopp and he doesn't like the Sun either so maybe I will jump on the bandwagon. Maybe I give you a last answer. Yeah, I didn't think that it's probably the right time so I didn't rush or push but things were coming along together fairly quickly in the end and we decided to go for it and make the call. So yeah, I know it wasn't the best in terms of one day and then the other but that's how it was.

Q: (Andrew Benson – BBC Sport) Perhaps you will like the BBC, Sebastian. Did you actually sign it this weekend? How did you decide to sign for three years? And did you have any talks with or thoughts about joining Mercedes?

SV: Well, I mean I have been around in the paddock for a while so I know people and it's natural that you talk but it's never been more than chatting, mostly about other stuff, to be honest but yeah, I've been talking for a while with Ferrari. As I said, my intention was to stay. We haven't succeeded so the mission is still ongoing. I want to win in red. We talked about inspiration earlier about Michael, he was mostly dressed in red. He won most of his races in red and his championships. I don't want to step in his footsteps. I think the whole generation of the Ferrari team today wants to leave their own footsteps but certainly there's a huge inspiration so something for me is now the biggest challenge, the biggest dream that I have and what I want to achieve. I think, to answer your question at the beginning, since I like the BBC, is yes, I actually signed it this weekend.

Q: (Louis Dekker – NOS) Do you think tomorrow will be a Ferrari-Mercedes battle again or do you fear Red Bull might interfere?

LH: Yeah, he just said where are they? I don't... where did they qualify?

SV: Five and six.

LH: I've not seen their pace, so as far as I'm aware they've been a bit down on power, they've tried different... lower and higher range of wings. I think they've been a little bit off the pace as far as I'm aware but you never know. Whatever conditions we're faced with tomorrow, I think the pace of us at the moment, both Ferrari and Mercedes, is pretty strong so...

SV: Well, it wouldn't be the first time that we see significant increase in race pace for Red Bull so obviously in qualifying, also round here, it might not be their strongest track but tomorrow, come race, lot of laps, looking after the tyres, I think they've proven in the past that they're very strong so you should never under-estimate and forget about them.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – Associated Press) Valtteri, is it frustrating seeing everybody else signing new contracts?

VB: No. Good for them.

LH: Who's everybody else, anyways? This one dude here.

Q: Kimi, Vandoorne.

LH: Not everyone else.

VB: No, I'm just really focusing on my own things. I know where we are with everything. I don't need to worry if other people are doing contracts. I'm only interested in what I'm going to do and what the team is going to do and that's what matters. Like I said, there's no rush really because for this season I joined in January, so there's still plenty of time.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) To both Mercedes drivers: no problems with tyre temperatures considering the ultrasoft tyres on the flying laps and also long runs, and Sebastian, Lauda said today that he stopped talking to you two months ago. What went wrong that the conversations didn't go ahead?

LH: Can he answer first? I'm interested to hear his...

SV: Nothing. Nothing went wrong. I think I'm very happy. I think Niki is generally a happy guy so... nothing went wrong.

LH: For us, we didn't have any problems with the tyres. I haven't struggled with tyre temps so far this weekend and I think it wasn't a problem throughout qualifying as well. It was very easy to get temperatures. The tyres have been giving quite a lot of grip. I think it feels like, particularly for qualifying, that the one step softer was a good direction but it will be interesting to see how it works out tomorrow.

VB: Yeah, definitely, I think right choices from Pirelli for this weekend, to go with the softest compounds. Even with the ultrasofts no big problems, little bit of overheating during the lap but it's not massive, it's pretty normal so it was good.

Ends