



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

## **2018 FIA Formula One World Championship**

### **Russian Grand Prix**

#### **Post-Race Press Conference Transcript**

**30.09.2018**

#### **DRIVERS**

**1 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)**

**2 – Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)**

**3 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)**

#### **TRACK INTERVIEWS**

**(Conducted by Paul Di Resta)**

**Q: Lewis, a pretty solid day at the office again for a Sunday afternoon, a 50-point lead in the championship now over Sebastian. But you can kind of feel a little bit emotional for Valtteri, obviously you switched positions, but you win and lose as a team and I guess that's what you look at today?**

**Lewis HAMILTON:** Yeah, it's actually quite a difficult day. Valtteri did a fantastic job all weekend and he was a real gentleman to let me by. Obviously he's not fighting for the championship, whereas we are. It's just been such a great weekend for the team. The team have done such an exceptional job to have this advantage on Ferrari and to have a one-two. Usually you would be just elated, but I can understand how difficult it is for Valtteri but really he did a fantastic job today and he deserved to win. But championship-wise, as a team we are trying to win both championships and I think today it was a real team effort. Whilst it doesn't feel spectacular, I know he is going to do great in the following races to come.

**Q: Yeah, it takes a special human being to go and congratulate him first and I could see yesterday how happy you were when you got on pole position. but to turn the attention to the battle with Sebastian, obviously down into Turn 2. How did you feel it was? The stewards looked at it and said it was OK, but you got the job done very soon after that and then that's what made your race wasn't it?**

**LH:** It was. Ultimately, for me, he did move over to the inside and then he moved again and nearly put me in the wall. I thought that was a double move. I guess they didn't see that. Nevertheless, fortunately I was able to stay out of the wall and still get round the corner, and then it was a question of who was going to brake earlier in the next corner and I wanted it more at the time. We shouldn't have even been in that position. I don't really understand how we strategically ended up in that place but obviously the overcut or undercut or whatever it is I did... but anyway, ultimately, we're really grateful to be here in Russia. The weather has been fantastic; the crowd has been amazing. The team here and back home, whilst it's difficult, as I said, hopefully they're proud of what they've built and the results that we have been able to achieve with their car.

**Q: Not too long to wait until you go to Japan and take the fight. Valtteri, I'm not really sure what to say to you. You qualified on pole, you were dominating the race, but from a team's point of view a second place is still great and you can everyone is still giving you a round of applause, especially this man standing next to you as well.**

**Valtteri BOTTAS:** Yeah, difficult day. Obviously a good result for us as a team; we got maximum points. But personally, as everyone saw, it was quite a difficult race.

**Q: Is it something you discuss beforehand in the fight for the team to get on top of Sebastian? Is this something you are going to have support Lewis on going forward?**

**VB:** For sure, we always go through all the scenarios, all the facts. Lewis is now fighting for the championship and we are fighting for the Constructors', so we always have a plan, but yeah today is... it's always difficult to predict what's going to happen in the race, how it is going to go, but it is what it is.

**Q: Keep your head up man. From everyone that sees from the outside you did an outstanding job. Sebastian, you didn't have an answer to Mercedes today, but the team did a very good reaction and strategy and you managed to get in front of Lewis and he very quickly retook the position.**

**Sebastian VETTEL:** Yeah, well it was tricky, obviously you saw they worked very good together and at the start I had nowhere to go, no tow. Then I think we surprised them with a very good out lap and managed to jump Lewis but at the same time Valtteri was backing off a bit, and then I was struggling in the last sector, so Lewis was close and then had a run into Turn 2. I managed to cover and then I didn't see him through the left-hander, I wasn't really sure where he was. I saw that he was somewhere on the outside but then I think you also need to be at some stage fair enough and give room, even if I didn't want to, but I had to, to make sure that it remains fair, tough or hard but fair, but then he obviously got past. Then, yeah, I think everybody more or less the same pace. I think we were better with the tyres but probably not better in terms of pace. I tried my best then to put pressure on Valtteri but, yeah, I couldn't get close enough.

**Q: Do you think it was the mistake down at Turn 13 that allowed Lewis to get a run on you later in the lap?**

**Sebastian VETTEL:** Yeah, as I said, obviously Valtteri, as soon as he saw that I was behind, he backed off and I lost like 1.5 seconds to make me run into him, which I didn't mind initially because I thought I could sneak DRS. But I had a tiny lock-up there and then, as I said, the last two corners were in particular difficult, so Lewis was close and he was on really new tyres, mine were just a lap old but not new. Anyway, it was a good race. I think we were closer today but obviously not the result we wanted.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) To the two Mercedes drivers, the way you were able to build a small gap over Sebastian towards the end of the race, did you think you were going to be able to swap positions back or did it feel pretty set in your minds?**

**LH:** Honestly, when I got the call that they had said that to Valtteri, I don't know if you heard me but I said "just tell him to speed up." They told me on the radio that they've... "Valtteri is going to let you go," which is not what I wanted, and I said: "just tell him to speed up," because I had Sebastian on my tail, getting quite close. So, yeah, naturally passing him did not feel good in that instant in Turn 13, and I didn't know what was planned for the end. I was waiting to get some news or something like that but I knew that the team wanted it to end that way. If they had made that call, that confirmed to me they wanted it to end that way. But honestly, it's very, very hard to find the right words. It's very strange feeling. We've had a 1-2, we've dominated as a team this weekend, the team has done an incredible job and it's obviously never, ever in my whole life been the way I've wanted to win a race. I just want to shine it on to Valtteri. There are not many team-mates who would do something like that.

**Valtteri, when that call was made did you know it was like that until the end of the race, at the time?**

**VB:** yeah, I could expect that. Because obviously, Lewis is fighting for the Drivers' Championship, and I'm not. And the way we finished, compared to the beginning, makes no difference to the Constructors' points. So, yeah, I was expecting that.

**Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) Two questions, first for the two Mercedes drivers: you had much fresher tyres than Verstappen but none of you could close the gap enough to try to pass – although Lewis had a bit of a go. Why was that? Is it the nature of the track? And also, for Valtteri, we had the unusual situation of having James Vowles going on the radio to explain to you what they had done. And Toto as well. Does this mean that the scenario that panned out was not one that was properly discussed before the race – or was it discussed and they were just trying to justify themselves?**

**LH:** It's a really beautiful place here in Sochi but the track honestly... on a single lap, when you're on your own it's cool – but it's not very good at all for racing. You've got the really long straight but the characteristics of the circuit mean the first two sectors are quite fast and the last one, the last sector, the rear tyres are so hot, it's impossible to follow another car, so you can't even get close to have a run. I did ask Charlie if he could bring the DRS even earlier, because that maybe would encourage overtaking. You need to be 1.4s faster than the car in front of you – and when you're racing with someone you're not 1.4s faster than him – to overtake. I was just saying in the changing room just now, they should do it in reverse. Go backwards. Go the other way around the track, so you have the slow section first and then the fast sections, maybe... I don't know if it'll make a difference. But otherwise they've got to change the track to make it more racing-like. There are circuits that have which have a much smaller delta to overtake. Was there a lot of overtaking in this race?

**The Red Bulls coming through early on did some overtaking.**

**LH:** They had that 1.4s advantage to the others so...

**Valtteri, same question to you first.**

**VB:** Once I got close to Max, we knew he was going to go long. And we knew he had to stop. And I obviously had a long stint ahead of me. So, yeah, there was no rush. I was managing really. Then I got instruction from the team to close the gap to Max, and try and overtake, so I was getting, step-by-step, closer and then I really started to push a bit more. But yeah, then I got the call to swap places and that was it.

**The second part of the question was that you'd had the radio messages from Toto and James, was the scenario not one that had been planned-out earlier?**

**VB:** Honestly I don't want to talk about what we spoke of before the race. Inside, it's between us – but obviously, it was a little bit confusing, the situation but it's our thing, what we speak inside.

**Q: (Phil Duncan – PA) Lewis, I know you said it was a team decision, the move, but did you personally think you might move out of the way towards the end of the race when you knew you would probably finish ahead of Seb. And Valtteri, do you think that the team made the right decision?**

**LH:** Honestly, at the end of the race I didn't feel anything. When I went past, I told you, I didn't feel good. After that it was all about trying to bring the car home, so I wasn't really thinking of anything else.

**Valtteri, do you think the team made the right decision?**

**VB:** Like I said before, no matter today if I would win, Lewis would win, as long as we're one-two, we will get the maximum points as a team. So, it doesn't make a difference. The difference is that Lewis is fighting for the Drivers' Championship and I'm not. From the team's point of view it was the ideal result today. Maybe not ideal for me but for the team, yes!

**Q: (Livio Oricchio – Globoesporte.com) Lewis, did you expect the undercut would be possible with Sebastian? And after, as you came out of the pits behind him, you were third and Valtteri was first, you had Sebastian between you. How was the manoeuvre to overtake Sebastian? It looked like you complained about something. And Sebastian, your view of the manoeuvre?**

**LH:** Well, naturally I was trying to win the race from the start and I was quite close with Valtteri and then he pitted. Then I had a good lap once I got past. I held on to my tyres a little bit longer than Valtteri potentially, a little bit. He said he had a bit of graining, so that next lap was good and then they kept me out for another lap which I think was ultimately probably not the right decision to make in the end as the tyres dropped off. Sebastian came in the lap before, undercut massively and I lost six tenths or so, once I caught the Williams it may have been. So I lost whatever time I gained there. So it was very risky and for sure it was quite frustrating when I came out behind both of them, I actually thought I was maybe potentially fighting Valtteri but I was fighting both of them and losing position - that's definitely frustrating. So I had grip in the tyres and I've got to take the opportunity now to race with him which I did. And then I slipstreamed down to turn one and I pulled out. From my view, Sebastian moved and then moved again and at the time, if I didn't brake, I would have been in the wall and we would have crashed so it felt, from my cockpit view, that it was a double move which we often talk about that we shouldn't do but anyway, luckily I got away with it and I was quite forceful in the next corner.

**Q: Sebastian, your view on the racing with Lewis?**

**SV:** Which part? I think obviously we undercut him which was good. Then I think it was clear that Valtteri was dropping back to make life difficult, I guess, so they played well together as a team. Yeah, then I had a bit of a wobble into 13, lock up and Lewis was quite close so he got DRS down the straight. I saw him coming, it was very difficult to see with the mirrors but I thought I moved before the braking, so I wanted to make sure I covered the inside. Didn't mean to be – how do you say? – an irritation at any point.

**LH:** I don't feel anything... in the heat of the moment, it always feels one way. I'm sure if we watch afterwards you might watch it and say yes, I moved twice.

**SV:** Then, obviously I had a compromised run out of the second corner, defending my position. Then it was very difficult to see where he was. I couldn't see him for a very very long time and then just saw his tyres and I knew that he was then somewhere there and I didn't want to be a complete arse by pushing him into the dirt and potentially into the wall so I wasn't quite sure where he was and then at some point I had to give in. I thought I could maybe get it back out of turn four but I had to give him the entrance otherwise, you know, at some stage it just becomes silly. Obviously I wasn't happy when I lost the position but I think we did what we could today. We tried to push very hard, obviously and made the undercut but unfortunately lost the position. After that it was very very difficult. I thought I was a bit faster than Valtteri at certain stages in the race but not enough to get close and at the end of the race I had a lapped car which lost (me) 1.5s and then the gap was too big so there was not much point for two laps, I can't close three seconds in two laps, not if you are within the same tenth so that was that.

**Q: (Rebecca Clancy – The Times) Sebastian, the maths in this championship aren't in your favour. There are only five races to go. Do you feel this championship is slipping away at all?**

**SV:** To be honest, I go race by race. Obviously I'm clever enough – I wasn't a genius in maths – but I was clever enough to pay attention to make it up myself but it's not getting easier if we lose points. Well done to both of them, they played very well together as a team. In their defence, all the questions... obviously I know that you guys love controversy and therefore ask some naughty questions to them as individuals but I think in the position they were in it was a no-brainer what they did today so maybe not all the questions are justified. For us, obviously we tried our maximum. I think there was a slim chance to finish ahead of Lewis. I went through the racing bit this afternoon, so we have to be third and settle with that for today. I still believe in our chances; yes, obviously it's not getting bigger, as I said, if you finish behind but who knows, it takes one DNF and then all of a sudden things look different – ideally two! – which I'm not wishing on Lewis but you never know what

happens, so we need to stay on top of our game which maybe we haven't been completely this weekend: make sure that from where we are now we focus on winning the last races.

**Q: (Leonid Khayremdinov – Red Star) Sebastian, how could you explain the extreme tyre choice of your team for your next race in Japan? You will have ten sets of supersoft; even Mercedes will have only seven. Do you think it's risky?**

**SV:** We need to push. No I don't think so. We will see when we get there whether we are right or they are right but I think the last races for us have been quite positive with the choices we made, no regrets really. You should bear in mind that when you make the choice, you are like half a year from the actual race event. I think we should be fine.

**Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Lewis and Valtteri, once this championship is decided one way or another, do you think if such a situation arises, Lewis, where you're in front, Valtteri second, would you consider an act on giving Valtteri the win that you got today and Valtteri, would you accept a win in those circumstances?**

**LH:** I have no problems with that. I don't think he needs to do that. I think he has the possibility of winning many more races himself. At the end of last year I think he won quite a few. I don't know.

**VB:** No, I think it's more fun if we race for it.

Ends