



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

**2017 Russian Grand Prix
Saturday Press Conference Transcript
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DRIVERS

1 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

2 – Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN (Ferrari)

3 – Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)

TV UNILATERAL

Q: Sebastian, it was an incredibly tight battle at the front and a last-minute, do-or-die effort from you seemed to make the difference. Talk us through the session.

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, I had a good start to the session, to qualifying this afternoon. I was feeling reasonably comfortable. But then I think in Q2 I lost a little bit the rhythm, so, my final run in Q2 which I thought would just give me enough of an idea for Q3 for the final segment, would put me in place, and it went wrong. I locked up, lost a bit the rhythm and then in Q3 the first run was not really tidy so I left it to the end and, yeah, got a good lap it. It proved I think in the last sector, I think I made up some time compared to my lap before. I knew it would be tight and I knew I would be the first one across the line and by going quicker than what I saw on the screen before than Kimi I knew, for now, I'm ahead, but then I immediately and asked about everybody else, "tell me about the others". My race engineer Ricardo told me "they are closing the lap, they are closing the lap". I said: "yeah, let me know, let me know, how are the sectors, how are the split times?" The first one I got was Valtteri who didn't manage to improve and then when I got the message that we got it, I was over the moon. So yeah, a big thank you to the team, I think the car was phenomenal this afternoon. It's really a pleasure to take a seat and go around with low fuel and just try and push it to the limit. If you have a rhythm here it feels fantastic, so glad I got it back and big thanks to the team. It's a team effort and it's a great result to have both cars on the front row. But it's only part of the job, the main job is obviously tomorrow but for now it's an important step. We managed to improve a little bit. Maybe the circuit came our

way as well but it's a very good result and I'm sure everybody is very happy and very proud so we'll enjoy that but in a couple of hours we'll start focusing on the race

Q: Many congratulations. Coming to you Kimi, your second place gives Ferrari it's first front row lock-out since the French Grand Prix in 2008. You were so close to Sebastian. How frustrated are you to be on pole?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Obviously the aim is to be on the front. The feeling has been more better this weekend and now we just got some traffic on the pout lap on the last set and couldn't really make the tyres work as well as the first run and it was a bit more tricky. It was thereabouts and then I just got it back in the last corner but it didn't pay off. I'm happier than previous qualifying but obviously I think we had all the tools to be in the front today but a one-two for the team is not bad.

Q: Thank you Kimi. Valtteri, this is the first time this year that a Mercedes hasn't started from pole position. Quite simply, how good is the Mercedes relative to the Ferrari here in Russia?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Well, I think we can clearly see from the result that Ferrari was quicker today. We were close in the end but not quite enough. To be honest all weekend they have had the upper hand and they have been able to extract much more, especially from the ultrasoft tyre, and that's where we really struggled yesterday. We made improvements for today but obviously not quite enough. Still, good team effort to get very close and we're on the second row. As always, tomorrow is the day that really counts and I think a second-row start is that much of a bad thing – it's a pretty long run into Turn One.

Q: Thanks. Coming back to you Sebastian: is Ferrari back?

SV: From where? I think if you look at the first three races then I think we had a good start to the season. Obviously in qualifying Mercedes has been very, very strong. As I touched on, maybe the track, maybe how we handled the tyres, I don't know. It doesn't matter in the end; we are in front which is a good thing. As I said, it's a great achievement. We managed to improve the car a little bit for this race. It will be very close tomorrow, especially over a long run. Valtteri had good pace yesterday. We'll see. But as I said, for now we're full of joy. We're very happy that we're back – at least if you talk about the front row for Saturday and obviously we'll try and take the momentum into the race tomorrow.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Sebastian, how important is it to have your team-mate alongside you on the front row tomorrow?

SV: Well, if I could choose I would put Kimi alongside and I think he would say the same. But I think for the team it's a great day today. Mercedes has been very, very dominant the last years in qualifying, so it's good to get there, get closer. It was again very close with Valtteri. I don't know his last lap but the

Q2 lap and his first lap in Q3 was very, very strong. I think it's been a mega qualifying. The car was really nice to drive and it's a track when the car comes alive it's really pleasant.

Q: Are you surprised to be on pole?

SV: Yes and no. I was eyeing... you are always eyeing for pole when you go into qualifying. I think I was eyeing also the last couple of events but I had to learn harshly that in Q3 we weren't quite ready, so today I don't think I ever looked at it and said: "OK, today we can do it." I knew that we can do well, and I knew the car was good, but I didn't know what they might be able to find for the last part of qualifying, so yeah, to sum it up I knew we were strong, I knew we can do it, but I didn't know how strong in relation to them.

Q: Kimi, different strategies for Ferrari and Mercedes during that session, you guys going out on the supersoft tyres at the start of Q1. Just talk us through how the whole qualifying session played out.

KR: It played out as we planned it. We did what we planned to do and obviously the end result turned out to be pretty OK for the team. We've seen often people run different tyres in the first qualifying. Doesn't really matter which tyres you run most of the time. That's what we chose to do and then just go from there.

Q: How's the race pace of the Ferrari?

KR: I think it was good yesterday but obviously tomorrow is the race and we have to see. I'm sure it's going to be a close fight and we have to make a good job out of it, so let's see.

Q: Valtteri, coming to you, are you surprised by the pace of the Ferrari this weekend?

VB: I think definitely, yeah. Me personally and as a team, coming into this weekend probably we were thinking, y'know, it's going to be better than Bahrain but so far it's turned out to be not so good and Ferrari seems to be doing something better. For sure it's disappointing for us to be... not to be on the pole. I mean we did a good improvement from yesterday to today I think but it wasn't quite enough and we definitely have some work to do but tomorrow is a different story. It's going to be a long race and, again, difficult to predict but I think it's going to be close.

Q: Is there one specific problem with the car or is it just simply that the Ferrari is faster?

VB: You know, I think before the qualifying, the only problems we really had was extracting the most out of the ultrasoft tyre. Like I said, I think we made it better but I don't know if it's because of the tyres or because of the car. For sure they have a very good car and we are struggling to compete with them but we can. It's a long season ahead and tomorrow is another day, so we are going to do everything we can as a team to be in front of them.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Globoesporte.com) To Sebastian and to Kimi, you already said about that in the Q2, in the first exit you didn't get the

maximum out of the car. From the outside we had the impression that both of you didn't reach the limit, maybe thinking of the start of the race, using that tyre for the start of the race, not using the limit of the tyre, not going to the limit of the tyre. Is there any meaning in that?

SV: Not really. I think, yeah, obviously we evaluated two different things Q2, we did one run with only one lap and another run with two laps and I wanted to push the limit on the first one and on the second one, as I said, I was feeling quite well up to the point where I locked the front and went straight into Turn 13. So... yeah, the plan was to go full steam ahead and see how fast we can go. Also because Valtteri had put in a very strong lap already in Q2.

Kimi, anything to add?

KR: No.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) I have a question for Sebastian and Kimi. Sebastian, do you feel that you are in the same condition you were in at Red Bull during their dominant era. Is Ferrari starting a new dominant era like Red Bull when you were there. And for Kimi, if you think this Ferrari seems very close to the Ferrari in that fantastic years 2007-2008.

KR: They're all different cars. There's no way that we can compare. It's ten years ago so different rules, different tyres, different a lot of things. So, maybe we have a good package. Estimating how does it feel comparing to the old cars... doesn't really matter how that plays out as long as we can be faster against the cars that we are racing now.

SV: I think I'd agree with Kimi. It's difficult to compare those kinds of things – but I don't like the word 'dominant'. I think you work hard, you go fast and then you deserve to do well. I think we've been working very hard, last year as well, we didn't go so fast, this year we go a bit faster but it's only a couple of races in. I think at the moment it's more important to enjoy the fact that we are doing well. The spirit is good, that's what we want to keep up. Then, for the remainder of the year... not really interested at this point.

Q: (Kiril Zaytsev – 66.ru) Question for both Ferrari drivers about team orders. Seb, if tomorrow will be in front of you, will you ask the team to pass, and Kimi, will you let Seb pass you without fighting?

SV: I think it's simple. If I'm in front then he wants to pass me, if he's in front I want to pass him. I don't think it makes any sense to ask for help from outside. We know that we're free to race and that's what I believe and I know we're both here to do. Today obviously was very close, I expect it to be very close tomorrow and we see how the race goes.

Kimi?

KR: No more to say about it. We know what we do and we race for Ferrari and that's it.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Sera) To Sebastian, did you expect to need more time to see the car competitive for the pole position? Or it's the proper time so you achieve this result at the proper time?

SV: Well, let's put it this way, coming here I think on paper Mercedes looks very strong. I think they are very strong, they looked very strong yesterday. As Valtteri touched on, maybe they weren't completely comfortable with the tyre treatment, whatever, getting up to temperature. Makes a big difference around here, whether you have the confidence or not. On our side, we focussed on what we had to do. I think we had a plan, we executed it well, I believe and had a good feeling for the car and obviously it's a great reward to have both cars in the front row. Now, we're not here to look at what other people are doing: we're here to look after ourselves but I'm sure tomorrow it will be tight with Mercedes. But, as I've said many times, I'm happy we got the result today and for the team obviously it's fantastic.

Q: (Jelena Leppanen – Ilta-Sanomat) Question to Kimi, you said already yesterday that you're pretty happy with how the car works out. In which way does it feel better compared to the previous races?

KR: It's always specific for each circuit so you cannot really compare how it is in one place – because what you need in other circuits might be a completely different story. Overall it's just been more easy to... normal to drive. I think we started well, in the correct areas, so it's always more easy to go from there. That side has been much better this weekend so I've been happy and doing some changes and improving. Small things but it makes a big difference in the end.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) Sebastian, how do you explain the good pace on Saturday? Is it that the car improved since the last race? Does the circuit suit you or did you just understand the tyres better?

SV: I think the track, the corners, the layout, is not not bad for us, for sure. I think last year we were very strong here. If you look at the performance in sector two it was strong here last year, it was very strong. Obviously it's completely different but still, some stuff you can compare and we were strong last year, strong this year. As I said, I don't know how much Mercedes were struggling or not but, to be honest, I don't really care. It's more important for us that we do what we need to do and we didn't have any problems. We had smooth sessions so far this weekend and, as I said, the car felt really good. I think it's a track where it's important to have the trust in the car, so you can sort of let go and attack. And I think that was the case for both of us. How much Mercedes were struggling or not... I don't know.

Q: (Victory Gavrilova- Ufa City News) For Kimi: were you angry that the team did not want your training time was finishing yesterday? And did you manage to complete all the work planned for today?

KR: We did what we planned today. I wasn't angry with anybody; I don't know that I got right what you're asking. I was disappointed that we ended up having a bit of traffic but I think everybody knows that here you get the tyres

working or it's a massive difference how the lap time pans out but we ended up having a bit of traffic on our out lap on our last try and it was enough to make it a little bit tricky. I'm happy with second place but we had everything for doing even better. I'll take it but tomorrow is another day. I think over the weekend things have run quite smoothly and that's obviously been a big help.

Q: (Anton Tikhov – The Independent Sports Newspaper) Sebastian, today the weather is rather warm and dry and tomorrow probably it will be the same. If we're talking about a great battle between Mercedes and Ferrari, how do you think... which side it will be better, this type of weather?

SV: I think it's a lot better when it's warm and sunny. I think people in the grandstands enjoy it a lot more so they don't need to bring their umbrellas which is good. For the rest, I think if it's tight and a good race then they also like that, so let's hope for a good one. (To Valtteri) You prefer cold? That's because we're in Russia and it's supposed to be cold! In the end, you have to deal with the conditions that you have. I think it's about twenty degrees. I don't know if that's the warmest it ever gets here but it's nice. The last couple of years it was a bit cooler, so it's nice to have it a bit warmer.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) Valtteri, Mercedes made a step forward since yesterday to today; we saw that in free practice and also in qualifying but you cannot touch the car before the race tomorrow. You found a compromise in your set-up for qualifying and race, do you believe you can be as strong in the race as you were in qualifying?

VB: I think the changes and the improvements we made from yesterday to today should help us in the race also. Everything just went in the right direction with the tyres and yeah, if the conditions are more or less like today I think it's going to be OK. Obviously we're not confident that we have the quickest car around here and that is the case and Ferrari is very strong here. I think, as we've seen in all of the first three races they have a good race pace and we think it's going to be the same case tomorrow so it's going to be a close one again.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sebastian, in Bahrain you said after the race you compromised the qualifying a little bit, thinking about the race. Could you tell us if you worked in a different way here?

SV: I don't remember what I said in Bahrain. I get a lot of questions; I have to come up with a lot of things. You try to improve the car, no matter what. I think the days – maybe when you started and people were talking about qualifying and race set-ups – it's not like that any more. I think you try to extract maximum performance whenever you can, so for sure there are some things that might help you in the race over qualifying but we also made some changes, to get more out of the car, which worked and which will also help us tomorrow. We didn't compromise here one way or the other.

Q: (Slava Karpov – Radio Sport) Kimi, you are a favourite driver among the Russian fans; what do you think of this and do you feel this support?

KR: Obviously I'm happy to have the fans here or anywhere around the world. I must say it's nice to come here. There are not many places that have beautiful mountains behind and snow. The weather is perfect this weekend so it's a great place to come in my view and the circuit is fun. Like I said, I will take any fans that I have, here or anywhere else.

Q: (Kiril Zaytsev – 66.ru) To both Finnish drivers: why are you so successful on this track? We remember Valtteri was on the podium in Sochi, Kimi has been on the podium in Sochi. Why are you so successful here, maybe because it's slippery asphalt and Finnish people love sliding and slipperiness?

VB: It's not actually that slippery asphalt compared to Bahrain, for example. I think we have had more grip here so that's not the explanation. Obviously you like some tracks more than the others but I think in the past, for Williams, this used to be a good track in general and I don't know if I can explain it more than that. I think the track is nice and I enjoy it.

KR: I don't think I have had very good results here. In the past years it's been very slippery, at least for me, but this year the rules and conditions are better. It's not really any different here to any other place.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) To the two Ferrari drivers: the only negative – if you can say that it's negative – point of this weekend is that you have to again change the turbocharger and it's the third element. Do you believe that it will be an issue for the end of the season?

KR: You're always very good to always find negative things about us.

SV: He's Italian, he should be over the moon. Everybody in Italy I'm sure is very happy now and you're the only Italian in the world that finds a reason to be negative. You should be ashamed.

KR: It's a planned change and I'm sure we'll be fine with it. Obviously I've had one failure that we will not be able to use but the others are still fine and we will run it as we want and they are there to be used and re-used whenever you feel like it.

SV: Maybe I think you will have a great chance to get a German passport because usually Germans always find a reason to complain. If there's a hard time when you get back to Italy you're welcome to Germany.

Ends