



Press Information

2019 Bahrain Grand Prix Saturday Press Conference Transcript 30.03.2019

DRIVERS

1 – Charles LECLERC (Ferrari)

2 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

3 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

TRACK INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Paul Di Resta)

Q: Charles, it's your first ever pole position in Formula One, your second grand prix with Ferrari, you've looked in control all weekend, and you've got the job done.

Charles LECLERC: Yeah, I'm extremely happy. Obviously in the last race I was not very happy with my qualifying – I did some mistakes in Q3 – and I really worked hard to try to not do the same mistakes here. It seems we did quite a good job, a front-row lockout and yeah, extremely happy.

Q: How hard is it to come to grand prix tracks and be up against a four-time world champion in the same car and try and get that task and take that [pole]?

CL: It's obviously extremely hard because Seb is an amazing driver and I've learned a lot from him and I will probably learn all year long with him. But today I am very happy to be in front of him, so yeah, it's a good day for me.

Q: And the plan tonight.

CL: Oh, going to sleep and work hard for the race tomorrow.

Q: Sebastian, you line up on the first row of the grid. You had to use an extra set of tyres in Q2. Did that compromise your last run and leave a bit of safety there?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, of course. You have to first of all make it to the end. Maybe I was a bit shy in the second sector but in the end I think Charles did a very good job today and he deserves to be on pole, so happy with the one run I had at the end to get second and it puts us in a good place for tomorrow.

Q: And I guess happy to think that pace in Barcelona and what happened in Melbourne, to come here and dominate so far this weekend with Ferrari?

SV: Yeah, definitely. As I said that's the main thing. I also said to the team that the main thing is that we got the job done, so this weekend the car felt a lot better all throughout the weekend, and it's only getting better. Hopefully we can carry that into the race tomorrow.

Q: Good luck tomorrow. Lewis, you had a job this weekend; Ferrari have been on a different level. I guess you can be happy that you got closer but the hard work starts tomorrow again?

Lewis HAMILTON: Yeah, definitely. I really enjoyed qualifying and it was great to see the progression for us over the weekend. The Ferraris have been incredibly quick. Charles did an incredible job, so congratulations to him. It was very close between me and Sebastian. The last lap, there was a little bit of time there, but that's the fun of the whole game. Tomorrow's the important day and it will be interesting to see how we do but we're going to give them a good fight that's for sure.

Q: Do you still believe you can win this race after the pace they've shown this weekend?

LH: They've shown incredible pace but it doesn't mean that they can't be beat. We're going to work at it; we'll just keep our heads down and see what happens.

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Q: Charles, many congratulations, a huge day for you. Can you just describe your emotions right now?

CL: Well, a lot of emotions. I'm trying to stay as cool as possible because, unfortunately, there are no points awarded for the pole position and all points will be awarded tomorrow. So, of course I'll enjoy the moment, it has been a great day and a great weekend overall until now for us, and I hope it will continue tomorrow. The target now is to focus on the race and try to do the best race possible – but obviously it's amazing to be here.

Q: You were fastest in all three segments of qualifying. You set a new track record. Leave anything on the table or was that last lap in Q3 perfect?

CL: Yeah, I think you can always do better. I am overall very happy with my lap in Q3. I think that was my weakness in the first race and yeah, I was disappointed after qualifying because of this. Today I am very satisfied. I think I put all three of my best sectors together, which is what I wanted. Then, of course, you can always do better but I'm extremely happy.

Q: Sebastian, compromised in Q3 by getting just that one run. I was just wondering if we could get a few thoughts from you about the turnaround by Ferrari from Melbourne two weeks ago. You're now first and second on the grid and it wasn't the same back there.

SV: No, I mean obviously we're both much happier with the car this weekend. I think, the credit really goes to the team because it's a team effort. I mean, in the end, we didn't feel very happy with the car in Melbourne and the team has done very, very hard work trying to understand why, and I think we had some answers coming here,

proving today that we are running at the front and fighting for pole. Locking out the front row for Ferrari is, yeah, a great testament of their work, first of all. Happy, obviously, not exactly my day but that's how it goes, so I look forward to tomorrow.

Q: And a quick word about the man on your left?

SV: Well congratulations, I said to him earlier to suck it in, enjoy it. It's his day in the end of the day. Certainly my day was not ideal but even, I think, with an ideal day, it would have been very difficult to beat him today. So, well done. My first pole is a while ago but certainly it's a day you never forget.

Q: Lewis, pole position in Melbourne two weeks ago, third today. A few thoughts from you about how that session went and the performance of the Mercedes.

LH: Firstly, congratulations to Charles. He did an incredible job, really really happy for him. The first pole is a dream that you set for yourself when you're young. It only comes once, so he truly deserves it. I had a pretty good session in general. Yesterday was a real struggle. All weekend we've seen incredible pace from the Ferraris. Honestly I didn't know if we'd be as close as we were at the end because they were pulling some serious speeds on the straights, which is generally where we lost a lot of the time today. It was just in straight line. Great turnaround for them. I think my sessions went relatively smoothly. I've got the extra tyre for tomorrow, which I'm happy about and... yeah... I'm just excited because it was a close battle and that's really how it should be. Three-thousandths, or whatever it was between myself and Sebastian. I definitely had it in that lap, the excitement of being on the edge and kind of having it and not having it is what makes it exciting. I couldn't have done the same time as Charles, so we've got work to do but tomorrow is where the points are bagged. So, we will just focus, keep our heads down, try to maximise our strategy and our tyres tomorrow.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Question to Lewis and Sebastian: when you had your first pole, you won. What are your expectations for Charles tomorrow?

SV: I think we both hope he doesn't win! Straightforward! Obviously we're racing for the same team, so I think for both of us, we're hoping to have a strong race tomorrow. If you start one-two, you want to finish one-two, so yeah, that's the objective for tomorrow. Nevertheless, it's a long race. I think taking care of the tyres will be crucial. I think on one-lap pace we looked very, very strong this weekend so far, so yeah, quali was all about confirming that and for the race I think it will be a very, very close battle with Mercedes – and also Red Bull.

Lewis, anything to add?

LH: I commented earlier on his laps. He was quickest in every session so its very clear he had the pace and did a great job.

Q: Do you think you have the pace to beat them tomorrow?

LH: From my pace yesterday, no – but I made changes to the car overnight and during the day today so I'm hopeful the car is in a better position. This is honestly a weak

circuit for me. That's why I'm a little more upbeat – because I had a deficit of three-tenths at least all day yesterday to Valtteri and managed to turn that around a little bit. The race here last year was quite strong. Ultimately, I had a gearbox penalty but now we're in a much better fighting position. It's very, very hard this race. It's very tough on the tyres and it's a physically-challenging circuit. It is incredibly challenging for the car as well, so I just hope that there's some excitement tomorrow – one way or another.

Q: (Ben Anderson – F1 Racing) To both Ferrari drivers: Mattia Binotto clarified yesterday that it's very important that the two drivers are not fighting, taking risks and battling each other. So in that context, how will you approach the start and turn one in tomorrow's race, considering that you're on the front row?

CL: Well, to be completely honest, we haven't done the pre-race meeting yet so at the moment I don't know. If you ask me, I will do absolutely everything to keep my first place but obviously, as you said, we are a team also, we need to work together and this will work, for sure.

SV: I think it's pretty clear that from the team's point of view we got the front row today and we obviously have a very very tough race ahead of us tomorrow so I think we need to work as a team and try to make sure we stay first and second. I think the order is irrelevant for the team so I think it's pretty clear. Obviously Charles starts ahead so he has the advantage of pole position and then we will see how it goes.

Q: (Christian Menarth – motorsportmagazin.com) Sebastian, can you explain what happened in the first run in Q2, that you have to do the second run, and did you feel that you lost the tyre set already yesterday because you took a set of softs less than the others?

SV: No, nothing to do with the strategy yesterday and this afternoon. Obviously it was a bit hectic in Q2 and I was just in an unfortunate slot which sometimes is very difficult to control so I got unlucky and didn't have an option other than following Daniel for the lap and it was very marginal so we had to go again and then we lost a set that we were planning to run in Q3. Not ideal, preparing qualifying and I committed to one run at the end and it was crucial to get that lap to the finish. Second, I think, is alright. Obviously I was hoping for more but I think that is how the day went. I'm quite happy so for tomorrow I think it should be a new day and a different start.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Seb, can you tell us what problems you had? You seemed to have a few lock-ups in Q1 and Q2.

SV: Yeah, I think overall the car was very strong so far this weekend. I've been a little bit more vocal about the rear not being exactly where I wanted it to be. Maybe Charles felt a little bit more confident all weekend but I think our qualifying slipped away a little bit with what happened in Q2 so you lose the rhythm a little bit. It wasn't ideal but it's not about, at this point, sitting here now, being P2, is not about arguing here and arguing there. I think you have to give credit to the pole-sitter, especially as it's his first pole, so again, congrats and the focus should be on Charles today.

Q: (Jacques Deschenaux – Grand Prix Guide) Charles, you are the second youngest pole man in the history of Formula One after Sebastian and the first from Monaco. Did you imagine one month ago that your career with Ferrari would begin and be launched so quickly?

CL: Not really. I didn't have any particular expectations from it. I was completely aware of how much of a big step there is, obviously team-wise and also competition-wise because obviously the drivers I'm fighting with now are the best so yeah, I didn't have any expectations. I'm extremely happy that it has started like this but again, as I said, it's only qualifying. I hope I will end up and have strong points tomorrow which is the most important (thing) so yeah, we will see, but I am extremely happy to start like this.

Q: (Ben Anderson – F1 Racing) Lewis, you mentioned the struggles yesterday and this track not being a particularly strong one for you. What is it about this circuit that you find difficult and that the team has found difficult this weekend?

LH: I don't really know where the performance has gone. As I said, a lot of it is on the straights, if not all of it. So somehow they've managed to find a lot more speed on the straights but I think for us, the car has felt OK. It's just... I'm just thinking that over the years it's not been a circuit that particularly suited our car, for whatever reason, but I think we got into quite a nice place today and as I said, I think it's the straight (line) speed was really where we lost a lot of time. In sector one, we're losing three tenths, two tenths, whatever it is, just on the straightline speed, so that's a significant amount. We've got work to do but I think the race pace was better for Valtteri yesterday, he had a really good long run. I think he had the best on the soft, I believe, so I'm hopeful that we have that performance tomorrow.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Are you confident with your race pace, in the case of Ferrari on soft tyres and in the case of Mercedes on the medium tyres and what does the strategy depend on, a one or a two stop strategy? What does it depend on?

CL: Yeah, I am satisfied with the race run we have done yesterday, also with the softs. I think it was pretty close between... Valtteri, I think, did a long run on soft and myself... so yeah, I think we are pretty strong on that and then on the one stop or two stops again, we will review that tomorrow morning before the race so for now, I don't know.

SV: Nothing to add.

LH: You will find out in the morning!

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