



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2018 FIA Formula One World Championship

Singapore Grand Prix

Saturday Post-Qualifying Press Conference Transcript

16.09.2018

DRIVERS

1 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

2 – Max VERSTAPPEN (Red Bull Racing)

3 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

TRACK INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Martin Brundle)

Q: Lewis, an astonishing lap – 36.0. Where did that come from?

Lewis HAMILTON: Wow, wow, that was a hardcore qualifying session. That felt like magic. I don't really know where it came from but it all came together. Naturally I want to say a huge thank you to all the team back at the factory. Everyone is working so hard, really, really so hard to pull out all the extra bits. Today I managed, just for that one lap, just to get it right. The next one obviously I was trying a bit more, but it's also great to see so many people here. Singapore is a beautiful track and honestly I'm super overwhelmed, absolutely overwhelmed, my heart is racing, I might have an anxiety attack in a second. I'm really happy.

Q: As the laps was unfolding, was it, were you thinking 'hang on, this is feeling something special'?

LH: Yeah, definitely. Honestly I don't there was a moment in the lap that we went wide or there were any problems, it was just perfectly to the limit. It felt like one of the best laps I remember feeling. Did you guys enjoy it? They're happy, so we're good.

Q: Second, Max. Still can't quite be the youngest pole sitter ever but you must be so, so satisfied with that lap?

Max VERSTAPPEN: Honestly this feels like a victory. The amount of problems I've had today and even in qualifying with the engine, just not having a smooth run, cutting in torque, to be second is unbelievable and that just shows we have an amazing car.

Q: Yeah, ahead of the Ferraris, ahead of one of the Mercedes and your team-mate. Last year you were so unlucky in this position. You've got a great chance this weekend?

MV: Absolutely. We just need to make sure that we have a clean start and from there everything is possible. We do have to sort out the engine for tomorrow but at least I'm very happy with the car.

Q: Well done. Sebastian, third on the grid. Take us through qualifying for you?

Sebastian VETTEL: Well, not ideal, obviously we wanted to get pole but we didn't. I think for us it was a bit of a messy qualifying session but in the end there was too much time missing, so no better than third.

Q: You seemed to need to attack the out lap where the other cars were going very slowly. Did it compromise your approach a little bit?

SV: Yeah, it's never ideal if you have a mini-race on the out lap, but there were a lot of cars always around. You can't blame it on that. In the end we had two laps and they were both not good enough. Not what I wanted and not what we wanted today.

Q: Have you got a good race car?

SV: I think so. Obviously it's a bit more difficult further back, but, yeah, I think we have.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Well Lewis, it looked like we witnessed something pretty special out there tonight. Can you just talk us through it ?

LH: I'll tell you this track is epic. It's so difficult this track. It is the most challenging circuit for us in the year. It's Monaco on steroids really, being that it's a lot longer, a lot more corners. Yesterday was looking really good for us and then we came into today, we made some changes and we didn't have a good session. Everyone was starting on the hypersofts and they were getting the experience and we were starting on the softs and there is a huge difference compared to the hyper. Then I was a bit nervous going into qualifying because I didn't think we had the pace, we were half a second behind these guys and I was thinking 'there is no way I'm going to be able to find half a second'. And as we were going through the qualifying session again, it was a really challenge on the ultra. Then we obviously got into that last session and it was just about pulling all the little bits you found through practice and trying to see if you could put it into a perfect puzzle and 99.9% of time it doesn't go right, but that lap, honestly, I didn't have a wheel spin, I didn't have a snap anywhere. The car was just underneath me and I managed to maximise on pretty much any corner. I can't remember one where I thought I could do more. And it's so physical here, so naturally after the session you're shaking, your heart's racing. The second lap I tried to obviously go that little bit more, just half a metre braking later, but it was just too much and the car wasn't going to have it, so I really do feel I got absolutely everything possible on that first lap. I was definitely nervous when I came in at the end because naturally you want to deliver each time you have an opportunity. But I'm just so grateful; the team have been working so hard. I'm sure that everyone's team is, but the guys have just been flat out trying to see if we can bring little bits here and there and we knew we would come to this and the Ferrari's particularly but also the Red Bulls would be hard to beat, so this is an incredible moment for us to be on pole here considering the circumstances.

Q: Max, your second consecutive front row in Singapore. Given all of the technical issues you had coming into this session...

MV: Have! Still have!

...talk us through, how satisfying is this P2?

MV: Totally unexpected. From FP3 onwards I was shaking with anger but now I'm just shaking with happiness. FP3, so many problems. I mean I was going into false neutral; car was stopping on the track; while driving in my fast laps just bogging down, and qualifying was exactly the same story, so we had to detune the engine – lost a bit of time there – to try and make the driveability better but it still didn't work like it should do. So, when I was going into Q3 I felt the car was working really well. I didn't really have anything to complain. So, when I saw second on the board I was actually quite surprised. With the problems I had. And then on my final run I tried to push a bit more, and I was another two-tenths up and then I arrived to 16-17, and when I had to short-shift again, the engine just cut out, so I had to abort. If it was going to be enough for pole, I'm not so sure – but at least it would have been closer than three-tenths. I'm already surprised to be second with all the issues I'm having. The only thing I can say is that it was a great qualifying. I think the best I've ever done and the car was also working really well. That definitely put us second today.

Q: Sebastian, a frustrating session for you, can you just talk us through it, and also talk about your prospects in the race and how competitive you think the Ferrari will be on Sunday.

SV: The race is a different story so I think by tomorrow things will look different but for sure not happy with how today went. I think qualifying today wasn't as smooth as it should have been, so yeah, I think other people obviously did better than us, and that's why we are third.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Stuart Codling – Autosport) Sebastian, just to pick up on your previous comment, we saw in Q2 you tried to run on ultrasofts, it didn't work. How damaging is it for your prospects, given that looked like you were going to go for a one stop strategy, how damaging is it for you to have to abandon that and then to qualify third on the grid?

SV: Well, one doesn't have to do anything with the other. So obviously in Q3 is when you qualify your position and Q2 is when you qualify your tyre. So obviously it was clear what we tried to do. It didn't work, so... but overall I think qualifying for us today wasn't as smooth as it should have been so, difficult to get a rhythm, difficult to get a feel for the car and in the end the gap is quite big. I'm not worried about the gap because I don't think that shows how strong we are. Just disappointing obviously today that we didn't get the maximum out of our package.

Q: (Christian Menath – Motorsport-Magazin.com) Questions for Seb. Can you talk us through your problems? Obviously there were some problems on the car just before the start of the qualifying.

SV: No.

No problems? Because we've seen the floor was taken off...

SV: No problems, just final checks but no problems with the car.

And then in Q3, I think after the first try, you said you were in a 'nasty spot'. Can you explain how you prepared the car or the tyres, for the first and the second attempt in Q3?

SV: Erm... no! Well, I think, as I tried to explain, for us the qualifying didn't go the way I think we planned it to be. Not just in terms of result – obviously we were hoping for more than third on the grid – but I think that's one thing. I think obviously the gap is quite big, which is one. I think Lewis had a really good lap, so congrats to him for the lap. I'm sure it was a good one. But I don't think he was unbeatable but for us today, the way we composed qualifying, I think it was difficult to get a rhythm. I was struggling in Q1, Q2, Q3. As I said before, I think other people did a better job. That's including Lewis' lap as an individual but also them as a team. And obviously it's not what we wanted today to get third.

Q: (Luke Smith – Crash.net) Lewis, we saw Ferrari try and fail to get through Q2 on the ultrasofts. You did the same thing in Q1 but you managed to get through. Were you ever concerned that you might drop out in that session or were you always confident you would be able to get through?

LH: Yeah, I definitely was a little bit concerned but we were aware that we came here with the wrong tyre strategy in the sense that others had more hypers than us so we needed to get rid of a soft in P3 I think it was. Already from practice we weren't best prepared. Others started on softer tyres in P1 and also in P2 and P3 is where we had that. So we definitely lost some running because the tyres are massive, massive... you could see it's two or three seconds or whatever it was between the tyres. Then we got into qualifying and we had to start on the... We believed that in order to give us hypersofts in Q2 and Q3, that's the tyre we went out on and we definitely didn't expect to be on the pace that we were but the delta between the tyres was even bigger, once we got to qualifying. So yeah, and I couldn't go quicker so I was definitely a little bit nervous, but then we went back out and I'm not quite sure why the Ferraris did the run on that tyre – I don't know if they had four new sets of hypers, probably unlikely, so that's probably why they had to take another tyre, probably, but you could already have seen from our run that you were not going to get through there, so that just leaves me to believe that they probably just didn't have an extra tyre. But the Q2 was good and once we got to Q3 it was nice but the extra run that others got, I think they had an advantage going into qualifying just by having the extra run on the hypersoft.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – Associated Press) Sebastian, you said other people did a better job, including Lewis's lap as an individual, but also them as a team. In which area or areas do you think your team should have done better?

SV: As I tried to explain, obviously I don't want to take anything from Lewis's lap and their efforts as a team - they did great and that's why they are on pole by quite a margin so that is not for debate. I think for us, it's clear that we could have done better and therefore we can't be happy. Now, going into detail I don't think there's much point. For sure here and there we could have done better, maybe preparing the lap, the qualifying but in the end I had the laps and they obviously weren't strong enough and good enough to be near.

Q: (Joe Klausmann – Racingline.hu) Lewis, are you comfortable with the outside line into turn one tomorrow?

LH: The racing line, you mean? Pretty happy with it. I'll see where it goes tomorrow but it's the racing line. Obviously starts are always a difficult one but being on the racing line that we drive past hopefully it's equally as good as the inside starting line. You would normally chose to be on the outside for turn one.

Q: (Arjan Schouten – AD) Max, we heard a lot of complaints about the engine on the radio. You also said already there are still some issues to fix. Will you go to bed as a happy man because of this surprise or also as a worried man because of the engine?

MV: I think normally in the race you have to turn down the power anyway. It's just when you go to the limit of the engine where we seem to struggle this weekend with it, with driveability and torque mapping and stuff. For example yesterday in the long runs I didn't have the problem. And if it breaks it breaks. You can't really change that so we will find out tomorrow.

Q: (Erik van Haren - De Telegraaf) Max, with all the problems in mind today and yesterday, when you look at yourself as a driver, does it look like a perfect lap today?

MV: Well, like I said before, I think I feel like I've done my best qualifying ever in F1 so far. I think it was definitely a good lap which I can be very happy with.

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